

Combinatorics

by Maggie Sokolik

"So, let me get this straight..."

Jess sat wedged between Leo and Gabriel in the Chevy pickup, her feet straddling the hump.

"You," she pointed her right hand at Gabriel on her left. "And you," she pointed at Leo with her left hand. Her arms made an X across her chest. "Since when?"

"I brought cigars," Leo said, opening the glove box. He lit them one at a time and handed one to her and one to Gabriel. Jess pulled a silver flask out of her Frye boot and motioned with it towards the screen.

"Movie's starting," she said.

She stared first at Leo, with his Beatle-boy haircut, aquiline nose, and backseat moves. She looked at Gabriel. Oh, elegant Gabe. Gabe on the beach in the moonlight.

"Just previews," said Gabriel. "So, what are you thinking about?"

Jess took a sip of bourbon, and asked Leo to roll the window down. She fanned the blue cigar smoke out into the night. It was almost raining again, the mist as soft as hairspray.

"I'm thinking about math class," she said. "The solution to three factorial."

"Easy," Leo said.

"I know," she said. She felt Gabe's hand behind her, his soft fingertips inching up under her t-shirt. Leo slid his hand in from the other side, and grasped Gabriel's hand at the small of her back.

"Easy," Gabriel repeated. "Three times two times one."

