

Forgive Me Mamma

by Matt DeVirgiliis

He steps away from the rank taxi — rank just because or because he was in it, he can't tell — and walks up to his Mamma's house. *Will she recognize me? Will she let me in?* Orange flower pots, filled with pink and white pansies line the front porch, and Momma's gardening gloves and kneeling board sit on the first of three steps onto the porch from the concrete walkway. The hall lights shine through her wooden and glass front door. It looks quiet inside — still.

His footing unsure and his clothes covered in vomit, he grabs the railing and stumbles up the three steps. He pulls off his shirt, finds a cleaner area on the puke-covered garment, wipes sweat off his forehead, dripping wet from the humid, stormy night, and stuffs the shirt into the back pocket of his jeans.

He makes it up the first two steps and then falls backward, skinning his elbows. He reaches up and puts the kneeling board down in front of the steps. Kneeling in front of the house, he drops his head into his knees and sobs into his lap. “Mamma, I'm so sorry I failed you,” he cries, shivers, and shakes, almost uncontrollably. A cocktail of beer and shame pushes itself out of his eyes, dampening his jeans in more filth.

The porch light flickers on. “Timmy? Timmy?”

“Momma, I'm sorry. Forgive me. Please forgive me.”

She kneels next to her son and blankets him with her weak arms, bringing him into herself like she did when he fell off his bike or when he banged his head against the coffee table. “My poor Timmy. I forgave you thirty years ago.”

The front of Mamma's nightgown moistens from the sweat and tears and damp air, and her own eyes start to stream small droplets. She holds her son with whatever strength she has left. “Thank you, Mamma,” says Timmy as he passes out. Mamma rocks her son until morning, until the pansies spring upward toward the sun, and the robins and doves chirp, and a new day begins.

