

To Be Young and in Friends with Benefits

BY: MALLORY GUNTHER

To be young and in friends with benefits,
dancing in the dark of the back hall.
We live behind closed doors, sleeping on
springy couches and questionable floors.
But in a crowded kitchen party,
making eyes across the room—
Shot! Shot! Shot!
Shit!
Next I'm shoved up against a closet wall,
with liquor lingering on our lips.

A circle of friends sit,
legs sprawled across the living room.
Girls are giving boys stick-and-poke tattoos,
I can see the needle dipped in ink,
and I can see the needle breaking skin,
creating permanent black pictures
where nothing will grow again.
Boys grimace after each poke,
reminded that heartbreak
isn't the only pain girls invoke.

New Year's came and went,
everyone promised they would quit.
This is the year.
I'm too old for this shit.
But come a call for a smoke break,
and the troops file out the back door,
onto the balcony, stepping over
the remains of cheap shot-gunned beers,
and the maintenance of masculinity.
With smoke in my eyes
and a cigarette swinging from my lips,
my lungs fill with tar, and the party recedes
for one golden minute.

3 AM, railing lines off laminate,
the drip is awful but we endure.
4 AM, losing our words, or
are we losing our minds?
5 AM, on the verge of passing out,
Are you headed home soon?
Your place or mine?
Subtle.

Mallory Gunther is a junior in English and would like to apologize to her mother.