

MATTHEW HARDING

CRYSTAL LAKE

THIRD PLACE, WALLACE STEVENS POETRY CONTEST

Was where I first fell for you;
Crouched behind the vacant tool shed,
Smoking cigarettes stolen from the corner store
While your parents and my mother drank in the kitchen.
You laughed and fanned your hand against
The pale blue smoke that gathered around your head.

Everything about you fascinated me;
The fiery scar that curled beneath your kneecap
Was a beckoning finger,
Even your freckles trailed off into mystery.
I tried not to notice your breasts
Budding beneath the white pullover you wore
And stared instead at your toes
Curled beneath the tall ryegrass.

Afterwards, we walked across the empty yard,
Your hair smelling of pine pitch and tobacco,
Our hands almost touching.
And leaning back
Into the warmth of your mother's dusty Ford,
We listened
As the thin pulsing drone of cicadas
Rose through the air.