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Composition 101

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Green Mountain Bluegrass

I took my mum on my first date, or rather, she took me. These are the realities of adolescent dating. The setting was October of ninth grade, and Mum and I had taken a road trip from New Hampshire to central Vermont to scope out the boarding school my boyfriend, a summer camp acquisition, attended. The weather was quintessential of fall in northern New England. On the evening of our second day, the school's principal invited us to attend a bluegrass concert sponsored by a local church. I was loath to be separated from my long-distance love, so I picked up the slightly sticky retro hotel phone and invited Richie to come. Suddenly, I was on my first date with my mum and the high school principal in tow. Things were about to get a lot more rustic.

Vermont roads are their own beast, especially when combined with that deep-seated nausea associated with the jitters. The flat odor of upholstery cleaner masking cigarette smoke in the rental car made my stomach roll over and over again as we meandered around the infinite bends that led to Richie's father's farm. The plethora of odors only increased when Richie, saturated in Polo Ralph Lauren but still emitting his natural clean-farm-boy scent, slid into the back seat. For anyone unfamiliar with the combination, clean farm boy is a musky combination of Suave Clean Rain shampoo, adolescence, hay, and leather. By this time, my palms were less than dry, and I was doing the subtle chicken movements I hoped would reduce the sweat on my blue t-shirt emblazoned with an infantile Eeyore and the words "I need a hug." The thirty-

minute drive to the Old Brick Church was like a vacuum. Richie was not much of a talker, and those bends were still getting the best of my internal organs.

When we stepped out of the car, the October air instantly chilled the sweat on my arms through my pink corduroy jacket. My body took on the c-curve slouch of discomfort, and I tugged at the hem of my t-shirt. The church sanctuary had that meeting-house feel, with short straight-back benches enclosed by swinging doors. The school principal's resounding, and unselfconscious, voice seemed to echo off the balcony as we took our seats. The c-curve deepened. Richie and I sat several inches apart on the faded red cushions while banjo sounds swirled around the rafters. Time had lost its normal momentum, and I picked at the three or four blue jewels on my lightly distressed jeans. The vacuum returned.

On the way home, Richie and I both sat in the back seat. Our equally clammy hands were clasped, and my head rested on his cool leather jacket. The darkness was heavy and starless over the looping pavement of Route 2. Richie was still mute, but Mum occasionally turned to make a comment over Bryan Adams's "Have You Ever Really Ever Loved a Woman?" The sweat had blessedly dissipated, although the slight nausea continued until after we had reached the farm. After, on the way back to the hotel, I dozed with my cheek pressed into the door lock, soft rock tunes still easing from the car's speakers.