Fresh Starts
Blake Costello

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope
Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope/vol1999/iss1/19

This Fiction is brought to you for free and open access by the English at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Calliope by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact maira.bundza@wmich.edu.
I stand around on the corner for fifteen minutes before I notice a note taped to the wall directly in front of me. It’s from Jill, saying she’d be an hour late. I need coffee and an hour is too long to wait, so I’ll add a half hour to the note and walk down to the cafe. This cafe is where the artist, or trying-to-be-artist, type students go. It’s not bad. You can ask the waitress to bring you a copy of the paper with your coffee.

I went to the cafe instead of the place down the street where my friend works because free coffee wasn’t as important to me as one more chance to read the paper and be myself. But just as I’d begun to lose myself in the news, the headline caught my eye: "First day of spring."

I started to think how I felt about the season which I was coming upon. Easily excited, easily disappointed. Big ideas, big plans, big worries. Long walks, long days, and letters from long lost friends. It’s best to keep the letters short, though; like a good song or a good fling, it leaves you wanting more. It’s spring in the world right now, and I don’t mean just the weather. The old are young again; washed-up old bands are exciting again; washed-up people are excited again, second chances for everyone. Free refills. It’s never too late to be late.

I stay up late, I sleep in late and still wake up in time for coffee, then soda, and the sun is still shining. Unbelievable. Let’s hear it for cut-off jeans, black tee-shirts, black spray paint, and black and white photographs turning yellow. Lost pride found, lost friends found, and suddenly the past
is just a good story instead of a ball and chain.

It’s spring, brush your teeth and break some bones. Stolen kisses and stolen glances, pretty much anything goes as long as you can get away with it. No one’s worse off for your slyness. Finding money on the sidewalk and bracelets in the pit after the show. Finally hearing the song that’s been stuck in your head for weeks. And reading a good book. Spring also makes me think I can trick time, like I can live for three months and experience a whole year’s worth of experiences, but still be just as young. I realize I’d only spent three months of time but in my mind I still aged a year. What a great trick. I’m seventeen but feel twenty. I realize you have a certain amount of time and a certain amount of living to do, and you can’t take it when and how you want to, although it takes time to understand experience.

I used to be jealous of my friends who, when we were younger, racked up experience in a mad rush. Like Jill. I was jealous of her because she took every chance, pushed every bit of luck, raced time and milked it for all she could. I just sat on the edge of all that life, watching it, reporting it, only passing through the center quickly and quietly. Never in the limelight. Always the friend of whoever was. That feeling was this horrible after-taste I couldn’t shake because I only had a sip while someone else drank the whole bottle.

Thinking about how long a fourth of a year is, I remembered how short an hour and a half was, and realized I was late. When I got to our corner, she still wasn’t there. I waited for a while and then realized what had happened. Someone had ripped the note off the wall. She had never seen it. Yet another missed connection.

Sometimes I think Jill and I should just give it up, stop trying to connect our past with the present, but it’s hard because we still want to be friends. Our lives are just so different. These days, she’s an athlete and a dedicated student. And I’m something else. It’s a good thing we met years ago, because we would never have met now.

Four thirty A.M. I’m lying in bed thinking about how in two months of timing, I could screw up my connection with Jill. I screw up on the first day of a fresh start. But I can’t let it get me down. People are always saying stupid depressing things like, "Everything happens for a reason," which
translates to, "You got what you deserved, and it’s your fault." People seem to find comfort in the idea that they are not in control of their own lives. On the contrary!

But, hey, tomorrow is another day, and it’s the late nineties. And we didn’t die in a nuclear war like we figured we would. Well, at least not yet. And so I’ve had a lot of time since thoughts in younger days to go about doing all the so-called fun stuff they did then, and screw up just as much if not more than they did. Now that I think about it I’m not so jealous anymore, and every day can be a fresh start if need be.