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Untitled

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Jennifer Fuqua

*Woods*

Beside my three-story house with red brick, country blue siding, big shutters and an apple blossom tree in the front that blooms an illuminating pink and white, is a small plot of rolling land densely packed with different shapes and sizes of trees. Possibly forty in all, it makes an excellent hide-away when I want to be hidden from my neighbors. It's not uncommon to find children climbing our wooden fence so they can sit in the extraordinarily green blades of healthy grass, to see a family of rabbits feasting on the vegetation that grows plentifully under the shelter of the trees or to see my dad napping on a blanket, hat covering his head and incessant snoring, after he has finished cutting the grass. One of the trees reaches up beside my bedroom window and I can't remember a summer morning when a family of cardinals or chic birds haven't woken me up with the morning sun.

*The Swing Club*

My best friend, Megan, called earlier today jabbering away about the no cover charge at the Swing Club in downtown Wheeling and how everyone would be there to see the special light show D.J. Steve-E was throwing in for no extra charge to the management. He's a new one on the Brooke County scene -- probably trying to get a good rap. She also pointed out that Thursday night was when they served Rolling Rock from a bottle instead of the tall cans.

What I wanted to know was -- who's everybody? The Brooke High School juniors and seniors, stomping and squealing their way through the door of the bar like a mass of hungry pigs? The students who pretend they live the rebellious city life. The girls in their new starched tight halter tops, short-shorts, and white sandals. The guys in their Levi's, pegged

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above their high tops and too-tight t-shirts. All of them rebels because they are hitting the only dance bar in Wheeling -- hungry for the beer that is illegally served to seventeen and eighteen year olds...hungry for the thrill of seeing who's dressed the best...hungry to meet that special someone even though they could list everyone that's going to be there...hungry for the thrill of having something to do.

*Hey, that's just me*

No thanks. I told her I'd rather have a beer in a frat back at school with my real friends. The one's who don't mind if I don't have make-up on or who I'm dating. The one's who accept my alternative music and my lines of poetry and book titles I seem to remember when my head is spinning from a 6-pack. The friends who don't laugh or stare dumbfounded when I say I want to be a writer so I can save the environment, inspire the youth, run the country, change the world.

Megan understands. She wishes she could get out like I did. Megan has been my best friend since our sophomore year in high school when we struggled through geometry together. In our four years of friendship I've come to appreciate her ability to fool those who don't know her well. Long chestnut hair flowing half way down her back, neatly arched eyebrows that give her an intimidating look, and face perfectly painted with Mary Kay cosmetics give Mae an outward sophisticated appearance. I laugh at her adult-friendly persona and her polite responses because I know how she talks to me.

I think I'll spend my Thursday night at home with my mom. We'll probably walk my golden retriever, Katie, after it gets dark. I'll see a car of neighborhood teens drive by in a boat-long olive green car for their big evening; Mom will fill me in on what's happening with the Nolan's, the Graham's, the Forrester's and the Hull's as we pass their houses; my dog will speed up when she sees the open field at the end of the road where she's allowed to relieve herself at will. My mom and I will talk about life, school, writing, history, West Virginia -- in a different way than I do when I talk about these things at school. It's the environment, I think. It's usually on these walks that Mom finds out about my rebellious behavior when I was younger.

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*the cigarette*

One evening I admitted to the scandal that two of my middle school friends and I had plotted. Jill was to steal one cigarette from her mom's ever-present pack and Kim and I were to walk into the college bookstore and steal the free matchbooks. Jill knew her mother would miss that one cigarette and Kim and I knew that everyone in the bookstore know exactly what we were up to when we grabbed the free books. We met at the end of the road, in the woods, and sat on a fallen log laughing nervously at our mischief. Jill whipped out the cigarette -- it was alone in a plastic baggy -- and I found it very ugly and intimidating. I couldn't light matches so Kim went through almost an entire book trying to light one. Eventually, she lit the fat white stick in her fingers, and we all stared at the burning end. Panic struck when we thought someone might see the smoke through the trees.

No one had the courage to actually take a puff, and we walked out of the woods feeling defeated and prude. Sixth grade was a tough year. Mom loved the story.

Yea, I think I'll skip the bar.

*A West Virginia Secret*

About four summers ago, I awoke to my alarm at 4:30 a.m., so I could finish packing for Florida. We were leaving at 6:00 a.m. I rolled over and looked out my window as I did every morning -- a habit I obtained in the winter hoping for snow days and cancellations from school -- and saw through the tree tops a black mass lingering over my yard. It floated there, almost gently, like a parachute just before it hits the ground. Every once in a while it appeared to lose a piece that relocated elsewhere. I put my ear to my screen and strained for a clue. The quiet sound of grass rustling in the breeze was all I could detect. I headed for a downstairs window and was mesmerized at what I saw. A herd of about twenty deer had found security and breakfast in the midst of my wooded yard. Their strong, lean bodies, poised and alert, had led them to feed on our healthily grown grass before they bounded back into the woods.

I'll never forget it.

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### *Bubba's*

Bubba isn't human. Bubba is a 6'9", 400 lbs. man who owns the only bar in Bethany. He drives a big, grey van -- nothing fancy -- because he can't fit into a car and is rumored to be a mafia man. He always wears black polyester pants and a black t-shirt and talks with a thick Italian accent even though he's lived in West Virginia all his life. Those of us who go to his bar are nice to him so we'll get served. He threatened to shut down the bar when the community wouldn't let him put in a drive-thru beer carry-out. Just what we need on our windy roads. I knew he wouldn't leave.

### *Cornfield*

Behind my house are rolling hills that light up in the fall with brilliant oranges, reds, and yellows. At the foot of the nearest slope is a cornfield that stretches down the first turn of Buffalo Creek. When it rains, the field floods with muddy creek water and serves as a dam for the houses just in front of it. When the weather's nice, families of deer, rabbits, and woodchucks sneak samples of the delicacies they find as they hide within the long reeds.

In the fall when the stalks are hollow and brown, paths from eager young teens, clad in brown flannels, brown fishing hats, and long green fishing poles, are created through the thick of the field. From my kitchen window, these paths look like animal tracks from a carefree, wandering herd.

### *A home for kittens*

Just up from the cornfield is an old red barn. It stands poetically with the hills as its backdrop. Tall reeds lay on its sides and the green grass around it is always perfectly mowed. It looks like a historical landmark kept preserved because of its beauty.

Now, it's used as a storage for garbage from the Millsop Center next to it. The tan silo to its left is graffitied from the Bethany College students.

Running rampant around the barn is a family of wild kittens. They've lived there as long as I've lived in my house. Every year a new litter of black and white kittens make their way across the street and into my yard to check out my dog and

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make her crazy when they run victoriously out of reach of her chain. Sometimes I think that if the kittens didn't live behind my house, I would want to move. The whole atmosphere is so intricately in place and each element makes my home -- home. Without the silo, the kittens, the trees, the fishers, it just wouldn't be.

### *My X*

Sophomore Sweetheart. Junior Track Star. Senior Drop-Out. Posse Drug Dealer. I saw a write up about him in the paper last summer. God, he looked awful. Now he's in jail.

### *The old man that waves*

Driving out of Bethany to Wellsburg, one takes Route 7. It's a seven mile maze of a road that seems at least twice its length because of all the sharp curves. Brooke County residents who don't live in Bethany always complain about how dangerous it is to drive Route 7, especially at night. I think they're just too lazy to drive seven miles.

If you drive it as much as I do (or did when I was in high school), you take its uniqueness for granted. Coming down Buchanon's Hill, there is a chocolate brown trailer that decorates for every holiday of the year with big, painted, plastic figures. Last Christmas, I noticed that Santa Claus had taken the place of the Angel in the Nativity Scene. On St. Patrick's Day, little green leprechauns that light up at night danced across their front porch. Down a little further are two big farm houses that share a large plot of land. I don't know if both of the families actually share the land, but they both raise heifer cows so it looks that way. Just beyond the big bend that requires a ten mile an hour speed is a small shack, almost like an old-fashioned garage, with a beat up, dirty white trailer behind it. It's grey wood looks so frail -- as if it would blow off into the woods like tumbleweed across a desert plain. Chickens run freely about the place -- even in and out of the trailer. Even frailer-looking is the old bearded man who sits in his lime green and white lawn chair just beside the road. The grey hair from his chin hangs to the middle of his chest and the balding hair from his head hangs to his shoulders. Peering from under his tan cowboy hat are light beady eyes and a thin,

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pointed nose. His appearance reminds me of a 90 year old man who needs the care of a nursing home. But his free spirit and WV pride probably keep him in the only place he calls home. I don't even know if he can walk because I've never seen him move from his lawn chair. But he always nods his head and waves, no matter how many times I drive by, in pure Brooks County style. It's enough for him to know that I live in his beloved state to think of me as a friend.

### *Diet Coke*

Ah -- the splendor. Ohh -- the taste. When I'm working for my mom at Historic Bethany in the summer it's ... 10:00 a.m. Coke Break...12:00 Coke & Lunch...2:00 p.m. Coke Break...6:00 p.m. Finish Work/Coke Reward.

I love my mom.

### *Cows*

bunnies the size of my hand peaking over the long blades of grass beside the road...tiny pink opossums running crazily to and from the dead carcass of what used to be their mom...perky and fat woodchucks, their fuzzy bodies, and the quick turns of their heads to see the passing cars while perched on their hind legs eating away on the feast around them...baby lambs prancing across the hill for their 5 o'clock feeding, tripping merrily as they go...clumsy little goats fighting their heads into the feeding trough because they don't understand there's plenty for all...

### *The Explosion*

My 8th grade year, an explosion sent us to the ground along with paneling from the ceiling. It was the old McCormick house just down the way. It completely blew. There was nothing left but the frame. No one was hurt. Officials say it was a gas leak. The community suspected it was a warning from the Hari Krishna's. I guess Mr. McCormick witnessed a murder in California and he was going to testify. A little too crazy for my town? Maybe not.