

ALL LEGS & CURIOSITY

In the back of the cavernous echoing convocation in August for the shy freshmen dipping their toes into the roaring river of the University of Portland for the first time there were also of course a raft of outwardly calm but inwardly rattled parents of every gender, and I got to talking to a tiny mother, and as soon as she started talking about her daughter she burst into tears, right there by the women's bathroom, but she recovered fast, and started talking faster, and I think you should hear what she said.

This is the greatest moment and the worst moment, she said. I was just changing her diapers a moment ago. Now she's all legs and curiosity. I can't believe she's not coming home tonight. I'll get ready to send her a text message at midnight *where are you*, come on home, and she won't come home tonight. She'll be here with you all. I love that. I can't bear that. Her father can't stop crying. He's out in the truck. These are our *babies*. All these tall babies. Will you take care of her? Will you know if she's sad and scared? She's scared more than she admits. She brought her baby blanket, you know. In the bottom of her luggage. She doesn't think I know but I know. I held it against my face and it smelled like her and I cried and cried. I hope you know how great she is. She's the greatest kid in the history of the world. She wanted to come here so badly. The day the letter came she danced right out the front door and across the grass and around the neighborhood waving the letter at the neighbors and everyone was laughing and pouring out of their houses to give her a hug because everybody loves her. You'll love her too, you'll see. You better take care of her. She didn't want to go anywhere else. We tried to be sensible but she wouldn't hear of it. She knew this was the place for her. She knew she would get in. She knew you would know what she wanted more than anything. She never wears socks. She'll get sick twice this year, mark my words. October and February. Are you writing this down? Can you tell the nurses here? She wants to be a nurse. Her grandmother was a nurse. My husband's mother. He's still out in the truck crying. He says he'll be fine by dinner. He won't be fine by dinner. He used to carry her on his back all the time when she was little. They would climb mountains that way. He makes fish just the way she likes it. He says he's going to go talk to your chefs here about how they cook fish. She'll be the best nurse there ever was. She has the biggest heart of anyone God ever made in a million years. I can't stand it that she's not coming home tonight. She's not coming home as a kid ever again, is she? Will you take the very best care of her that you can? Do you swear? Because I spent every minute of every day since she was born thanking God for the gift of that kid, and even when she was bad she was the best kid there ever was. Promise me you'll take care of her. I can't bear this. You'll know her – she's tall with long hair and blue jeans and a smile like the sun. You can't miss her. When you meet her you'll know who she is. *You'll* know. Trust me. Once you meet her you'll never forget her the rest of your life. Trust me.

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Brian Doyle, Editor

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