

When we first told you

by [Paul Willis](#) in the [July 27, 2004](#) issue

Gail, remember the boy that broke
his neck on the campus lawn—
just kidding around, turning flips
with his college buddies?
He got his diploma this afternoon
and a standing ovation that had to stop.

When we first told you about this boy,
your face turned lost, you thought
of your own at twenty-one,
somersaulted into a field by a Mack truck.

That was a moment I could love you,
though sons-in-law are poor in love.
That was a moment love lay
languishing before you, bleeding
from a crown of thorns
and once more giving up your ghost.