

Senior Division, Short Fiction
Molly Clarke, St. John's
Renovation (an excerpt)

I wait in a long line of cars outside Anna's school. Parents aren't allowed in the school anymore; we've got to idle outside in a designated pick-up zone. The "pick-up kids" (as Anna calls them) emerge from a side door, single file, with a teacher who looks equal parts kind and exhausted; somedays more one than the other. Us parents step out of our cars at almost the exact same moment, as if pulled by some magnetic force. Anna stands on tiptoes when she sees me and excitedly waves. I think of how often she rocks up onto the balls of her feet and hope she never grows out of it. The adults form a second, single-file line like a haggard mirror image of our kids. One by one, we sign a sheet with our initials and I reach my hand out to Anna. She hugs my hand to her face, even though it's rough like sandpaper. When we get to the car she jumps into my arms.