

THE INCIDENT AT DIKE BRIDGE

RACHEL MARIE PATTERSON

It's easy to forget her face,
their final frisk before the free-fall—
no one out on the bridge that night,
no noise, the old 88 edged up
and revving water. It doesn't add up:
the blood on her blouse, her purse
back at the party, no panties when
the divers dragged her up at daybreak
and called her mother on the mainland.
Perhaps it took hours to gasp up
her pocket of air, her ringless fingers
fumbling for the front-door lock,
while her lover wandered the Vineyard
collecting hotel keys, crawling off liquor.
Tonight, her hair surges like seaweed,
singing her secret. Put your ear-bones
to the bridge, hear her hissing in
the low reeds: There's no telling
if he really braved back into the brackish
water and saw her pale cheek pressed
to the passenger window—no counting
the lit homes he lumbered past on that dirt

road at midnight, drenched and dripping,
or the telephones he never touched.