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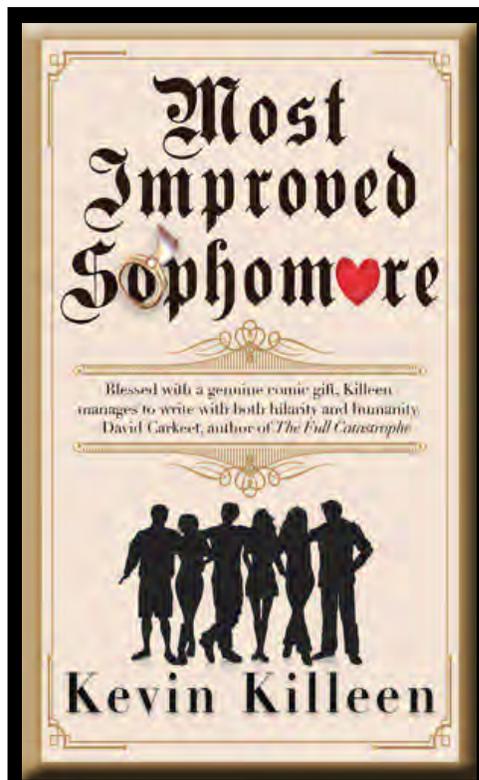
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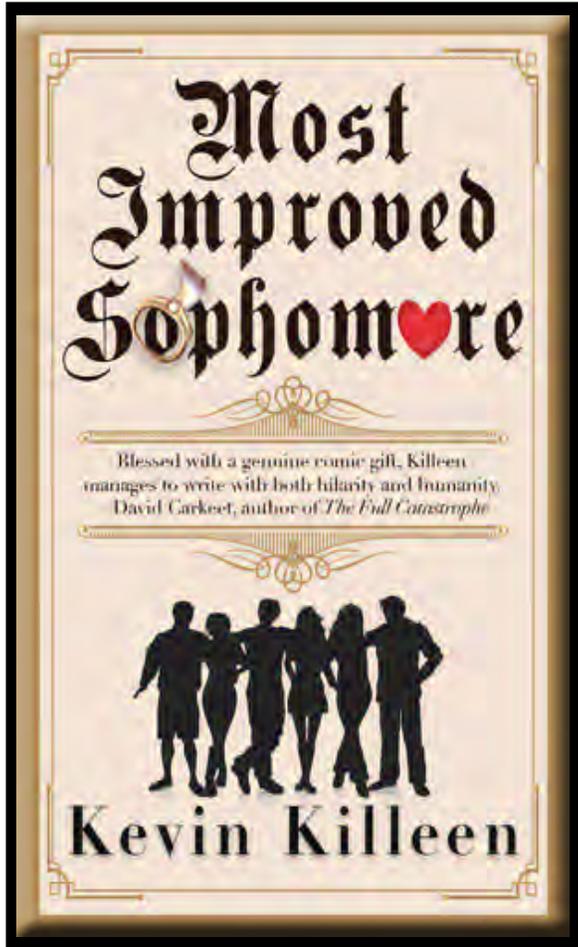
### *Most Improved Sophomore*

by Kevin Killeen

LOVE, DEATH, SEX, HOMEWORK

IT'S ALL PART OF THE SAME PROBLEM WHEN YOU'RE JUST SIXTEEN





*Most Improved Sophomore* takes the reader on a hilarious ride through the world of St. Louis in the 1970s: high school partying, soul searching, and the one thing all sophomore boys want: True Love. A comic novel loaded with laughs, but also a serious exploration about what it means to go all the way in love and friendship.

“ Kevin Killeen is one of the most respected newsmen in St. Louis. But it is his sense of humor that sets him apart - *Most Improved Sophomore* is sure to entertain and inform. And the '70s — A golden age for the color orange.

— Joe Buck, Fox Sports broadcaster

LOVE, DEATH, SEX AND HOMEWORK. IT'S ALL PART OF THE SAME PROBLEM WHEN YOU'RE SIXTEEN.

humorous, coming of age, Catholic, St. Louis

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A comic novelist who writes about family life, growing up and Catholic schools, Kevin Killeen has won awards for humor in his first two books, *Never Hug a Nun* and *Try to Kiss a Girl*. Since 1995, Killeen has worked as a reporter for CBS Radio in St.

Louis, covering crime, politics and human interest features. He has also written and directed some twenty humorous, full-length radio plays for the KMOX Holiday Radio Show. In his third novel, *Snow Globes and Hand Grenades*, Killeen for the first time shifted the boys in the background and tells a story whose main character is a girl, and in this latest novel, *Most Improved Sophomore*, he tells the tale from multiple points of view.

Kevin connects with his readers through [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).



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## AMPHORAE PUBLISHING GROUP

For more information, contact Lisa Miller at 314-606-7981; [info@amphoraepublishing.com](mailto:info@amphoraepublishing.com). High-res image of the cover available [here](#). High-res image of author available [here](#).

### **Comic Novel Takes Readers Back to High School in the 70s** *Most Improved Sophomore*, by Kevin Killeen, to be available June 6, 2017

ST. LOUIS, MO – Blank Slate Press, an imprint of Amphorae Publishing Group, announces ***Most Improved Sophomore*** by Kevin Killeen will be published June 6, 2017. ***Most Improved Sophomore*** is available for pre-order at retailers and on-line in paperback for \$15.95 and as an e-book for \$7.99. In this fourth installment to the very successful Cantwell and Company series, *Sophomore*, returns to the lives of Tony Vivamano and Patrick Cantwell. When the two sophomores race out on a Friday night in “The Love Machine” to pick up girls trouble soon follows.

***Most Improved Sophomore*** takes the reader back to the 1970s, where teenage boys and girls spend their time driving cars, hanging out, and looking for love in all the wrong places. This comic novel is loaded with laughs, but also a serious exploration about what it means to go all the way in love and friendship. Fox News broadcaster, Joe Buck, says “Kevin Killeen is one of the most respected news men in Saint Louis. But it is his sense of humor that sets him apart ... *Most Improved Sophomore* is sure to entertain.”

#### **About the Author**

A comic novelist who writes about family life, growing up and Catholic schools, Kevin Killeen has won awards for humor in his first two books, *Never Hug a Nun* and *Try to Kiss a Girl*. Since 1995, Killeen has worked as a reporter for CBS Radio in St. Louis, covering crime, politics and human interest features. He has also written and directed some twenty humorous, full-length radio plays for the KMOX Holiday Radio Show. In his third novel, *Snow Globes and Hand Grenades*, Killeen, for the first time, put the boys in the background and tells a story whose main character is a girl, and in this latest novel, *Most Improved Sophomore*, he tells the tale from multiple points of view.

#### **About Amphorae Publishing Group**

Amphorae Publishing Group is an independent publisher located in Saint Louis, Missouri. Amphorae publishes trade fiction, literary fiction, young adult, and children’s books through its three imprints: Blank Slate Press, Walrus Publishing, and Treehouse Publishing Group. Amphorae Publishing Group is open to submissions through its website at [amphoraepublishing.com](http://amphoraepublishing.com).

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## Questions and Answers with Kevin Killeen

**How much of *Most Improved Sophomore* is inspired by your own teenage years growing up in St. Louis?**

A lot of this stuff really happened, but of course much is made up because the characters got bored with me and wanted a life of their own far more interesting than mine. We did, however, have this double life of being good Catholic boys Monday through Friday and going wild on the weekends.

**What is your favorite part of *Most Improved Sophomore*? What did you enjoy writing about the most? Why?**

My favorite part? I'm happy to hear the people who read it laughed out loud a lot. But also I think the book captures the sadness of being sixteen and not knowing the answers to so many things—all the while you have to keep going and going, keep up with homework, keep up with romance, and keep up with thoughts about the future. So I would say my favorite part is that the book does whiplash the reader back to what it was like to be a teenager: the good parts and the bad.

The four main characters have a lot to do with that. Of the two boys, one is an introvert trying to improve himself and “be good,” and the other is a hedonist who makes speeches about his theory that the Industrial Age has ruined his sex life. Of the two main female characters, one is hopeful of finding true love; the other is cynical and believes all guys are fakes and you have to be your own best friend. The story has to do with how these four characters come together on a Saturday night, and scheme to deceive each other and avoid the police.

## Questions and Answers with Kevin Killeen (Continued)

**This is your fourth book following the life of Patrick Cantwell. Was writing a series your original plan? Do you plan to write more books?**

I consider these four books as stand alones, because I'm afraid readers shy away from making the commitment to read a book that requires them to read three others. Honestly, you can read *Most Improved Sophomore* by itself and never feel like you're missing some reference. This isn't a space opera. Each book has its own story, but you can read them all if you want to backtrack. As for more books . . . this series is now complete, and I have no plans to add to it. I want to write other types of novels, with all new characters.

**How do you balance the humor and the deeper themes of growing up and being a good person?**

Much of the humor comes from the inability of all the characters to be good, despite the moral school they attend or the expectations of their families. I suppose all my books have been comedies about the perils of self redemption. That's been a theme of my humor throughout.

**What do you ultimately want readers to take away from reading *Most Improved Sophomore*?**

I hope they like the book so much that when they're finished, they put it on the shelf so they can read it again. That's all a writer can hope for, to not end up on the curb on recycling night.

**Where can readers find out more about you and your work?**

Readers can connect with me via [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).



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Most  
Improved  
Sophomore



A NOVEL



KEVIN KILLEEN



Blank Slate Press | St. Louis, MO

# Chapter 1

TONY VIVAMANO stepped out of the shower—steaming hot naked—and covered his face with shaving cream. He reached for the razor, but his eyes fell on a half-eaten roast beef sandwich he'd left on the sink. The meat sang to him, red and tempting. He knew he should shave first, but he was hungry. So, he grabbed the sandwich and took a bite.

"I am a hedonist," he told the mirror, practicing a new word from sophomore vocabulary.

Chewing and nodding, he rated his muscles and chest hair. Not bad, not bad at all. A handsome Italian face, too. And look at those eyes, brown and sincere—and eyebrows that, with one twitch, could make a girl forget her curfew. It was clear to him that he was a millionaire in biological gold, and he should be prepared to share his riches. What a shame to put on clothes. What a shame to be banished Monday through Friday to that all-boy high school, St. Aloysius—without a girl in sight. What a shame to suffer another weekend waiting to find out what it means to be fully alive with a woman on his favorite planet, Earth.

"I *will* find a woman," he told the mirror, tearing off another bite, "and she will be proud of me when I show her my—" He stopped. Something was wrong. The bread had dragged shaving cream—with its penetrating menthol formula—inside his mouth. His throat was closing up. He reeled around gagging and spit it all in the toilet.

"She will be proud of me," he said flushing.

Wrapped in just a towel, he hurried to his bedroom, where the most beautiful woman on Earth was waiting for him. Sophia Loren, the movie star, watched

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him from a black and white poster above his dresser. Because of her, the room came alive whenever he flipped on the lights. He looked at her. The cut of her blouse plunged low to reveal almost the full glory of her voluptuous breasts. And it was not just her breasts. Her wild dark hair, her full lips, and flared nostrils—and the look in her eyes: Such desire for him. Tony could sense it. Sophia Loren needed him. Badly. He could almost feel her warm breath. She wanted to step out of the poster and flop on the bed with him and enfold him with her love. Oh, Tony, Tony, Tony . . . He felt sorry for her that she could not join him. He stood before her and blew her a kiss as he put on aftershave.

“Hiya, babe.”

Then, whipping his legs into black underwear and blue jeans, he stepped out into the hallway, bar-chested and barefoot, ready to make a phone call. Tony dialed the avocado rotary phone on the wall and started performing leg squats to limber up. He was calling his longtime accomplice in all matters criminal and social, Patrick Cantwell. Together, they could find some women.

“Hello?” Patrick’s mother said.

Tony had dropped the phone and couldn’t hear her, but Patrick’s mother could hear him—his heavy breathing, his grunting and enormous sigh at the completion of his leg squats. He picked up the phone.

“Hello?”

“Who’s this?”

“It’s me, Tony.”

“What’s going on over there? I hear . . . terrible sounds.”

“I’m exercising. A man should be ready, Mrs. Cantrell.”

“Ready for what? Patrick can’t go out.”

Tony thought quickly about what to say. A woman of many births and baptisms, Patrick’s mother was an obstacle to hedonism. Somehow, he had to maneuver around her. Recently, she had caught them watching Bobby Goldsboro on TV, singing, “Summer (The First Time),” a song about a young man who makes love for the first time with an older woman. It was a beautiful song, Tony had thought.

But Patrick’s mother—when she’d heard the song—stormed into the room and slapped off the TV. “Boys!” she said, “that young man committed a mortal sin! The devil laid a trap for him before his wedding night, and now he’s ruined. Don’t let it happen to you, boys, or someday the devil will say to you, ‘You damned fools!’”

Tony cleared his throat and spoke into the phone. “Mrs. Cantwell, it’s good

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to hear your voice." Actually, he couldn't stand her voice. "I was thinking me and Patrick should go out after a long week at school." That should work, he thought. Surely she must have noticed how overworked Patrick was at school, what, with all those fool questions the Jesuits asked. Questions like: Can a man conquer himself and become a new man? Can a Catholic wait until his wedding night? Is there more to life than the five senses? Tony shook his head. Such nonsense.

"I'm sorry," she said, not sounding sorry at all, "but Patrick can't go out tonight. I won't let him. He told me he's working on a paper for school."

"Tell him it's Friday night," Tony said with the same charming chuckle he used on all women. "Tell him life is waiting . . . and I'm coming over to rescue him."

"No, that's out of the question. I forbid you to come over, because—"

"But Mrs. Cantwell . . . the night air is good for a man's blood."

Before she could answer, he laughed and hung up, knowing the Big Guns of her Catholic Mom Logic were too much for him.

## Chapter 2

TONY GOT DRESSED and jumped behind the wheel of his mother's station wagon, an oversized Plymouth, all gassed up and ready to run. A car he proudly called, "The Love Machine." A sturdy, eight-cylinder battlewagon, The Love Machine was capable of doing a hundred-miles-an-hour easily.

Tony parked outside Patrick's house and looked up to the second story windows. Patrick's desk lamp was on. Tony could see the chinks of light a round the drawn shades. He squared his shoulders and walked in the front door without knocking. That was his custom. He could walk into Patrick's house, and Patrick could walk into his. They were like twins, only living with different families. Immediately, Friday night chaos was all around him: the dog barking at him, little kids running by, rock music from Patrick's older brother blaring from the basement, a TV in the backroom belting out the theme song to the *Brady Bunch*.

Patrick's mom darted to the front hallway with a baby in arms to intercept him.

"Tony, I told you not come over tonight. Patrick is working on an important paper." Her eyes were commanding and she nodded toward the door, signaling Tony to turn around and get out. But Tony laughed. A deep, bluffing laugh that made Patrick's dad rustle his newspaper and peer over the top of it from his chair in the living room. That's what Tony wanted, a second opinion. Mr. Cantwell smiled and waved him in.

"Why, Tony, how've you been? Pull up a chair."

Mrs. Cantwell huffed into the kitchen, while Tony pulled up a chair to talk with Patrick's dad, man to man. The living room walls were covered in dark

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paneling, with a beamed ceiling and Civil War Battle prints here and there, and not much light, except for the side table lamp—a man's room.

Mr. Cantwell put down his *Antique Trader* article on the baseball cards of his youth, flopping it atop his corporate briefcase stuffed with the concerns he was trying to escape. He looked at Tony and ran through the usual adult-to-teenager questions: "How's school? How are your folks? What's new with your family?"

Tony knew how to play it—short and easy answers. "Fine. Everything's fine. Nothing new."

Then Mr. Cantwell took a sip of his Old Fashioned, set the glass down, and leaned forward to get down to the point.

"Tony, I'm concerned about Patrick. Does he seem *all right* to you?" Tony detected a hint of worry over Patrick's mental stability.

"Oh, he's fine, maybe just a little . . . introspective lately."

"Introspective. Yes, you're right . . . that's the word."

Tony jabbed his chest with his thumb. "They taught us that one in vocabulary class, along with 'procrastinate'."

Mr. Cantwell rubbed his forehead. "He's seems to be under a tremendous strain. He's been reading a lot of heavy material up there in his room this year. I gave him a book on the Marx Brothers and told him to relax, but I don't think he even cracked it open. Do you like the Marx Brothers?"

"Yes, sir, I'm a Chico man myself."

"Well, at least you can name one of them. I don't think Patrick could. I'm not sure *what* he's thinking about up there."

"Maybe he just needs to get with some girls, *if* you know what I mean." Tony wiggled his eyebrows like Groucho Marx.

Mr. Cantwell drew back. "What exactly do you mean?"

Afraid he'd gone too far, Tony conjured up a sincere look on his face. "You know, good Catholic girls."

That was the right answer. Parish girls. Girls who make curfew. Girls who would make a good wife someday.

"All right." Mr. Cantwell patted Tony on the knee. "Go see if you can get him out of the house. You're a good man, Tony."



Upstairs, Patrick, sat hunched over his student's desk. He wore an old bathrobe, the hood cupped around his head. The only light in the room from a

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plaster, desktop lamp—a Portuguese Man-o-War tossing in the waves. Strewn about the desk were various books: a Freudian primer, Carl Jung's essays on archetypes, the biography of St. Aloysius, and another book he had just checked out but not yet read, *What is Man?* by Mark Twain.

Amid the clutter sat a cup of tepid tea and scribbled notes on key passages he could use in his paper on wisdom, which wasn't due for another week. But, he wanted to understand it more for himself than the grade. Human nature, good, evil, self-improvement—man's search for something more—the whole thing was overwhelming in its complexity. If it were a physics problem, he would have had a chalkboard in his room filled with equations from top to bottom, with no resolution. Head down, he ripped out the notebook page on which he had been trying to draw a perfect circle without a compass and threw it in the trashcan. The paper landed atop a copy of the morning newspaper folded open to an ad for Famous Barr bras. He went back to the book in his hands, *Good News for Modern Man*, and wrote down a possible passage for his paper:

*I do not understand what I do; for I don't do what I would like to do, but instead I do what I hate . . . Who will rescue me from this body that is taking me to death?*

There was a knock at the door. Tony burst in grinning, an unlit Camel non-filter in his mouth, and disco-danced over to Patrick. "Hey, bathrobe boy, are you ready?"

Patrick looked over his shoulder. "Ready for what?"

"Life."

Life—the source of all his problems—which along with death, were the two main things for which he was not ready. "I need to stay home tonight."

"No you don't."

Patrick turned back to his book. "Yes, I do. I've made up my mind."

"Your mind! Your mind needs some rest. And you can only find rest in the arms of some beautiful girl, who right now, this very minute, is out there somewhere waiting to meet you. We can't procrastinate." Tony slapped Patrick on the back and leaned over the desk to see what he was writing. "What are you working on? A love letter?"

Patrick closed his notebook and moved his chair around to face Tony. "No. I'm working on a paper."

"On a Friday night?" Tony covered his face with his hands and opened his fingers a crack to peek at Patrick. Poor Patrick. There he was, his face hooded in the bathrobe. He looked pale and feverish. Tony clapped his hands together

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ready to reason with him, to pry him free from the desk with his animal charm and logic. "What paper?"

"For Father Murphy's class."

"A religion paper? Hell, that's not due for a while. C'mon, really, what are you doing up here? This room stinks." He opened a window and the cool October air swept in, lousy with fallen oak leaves.

"Why are you bothering me? What do you want?" Patrick said.

"What do I want? I want what's good for you."

Patrick laughed. "You know what's good for me?"

Tony lit up his cigarette and blew the smoke out the window. "You want one?"

"No thanks. I quit, remember?"

"Oh, I forgot . . . how long?"

"Since last weekend." Patrick stared at the cigarette as Tony took a drag.

"Five days? Ha! A tobacco person should never quit. It will only make you smoke more when you start up again. Here . . ." Tony turned the butt-end of the cigarette and offered it to Patrick.

Patrick turned away from him. "Can't a person change?"

"Only his underwear. Hey, look out the window; The Love Machine is waiting. Remember that time—"

"I remember."

"What were their names?"

"I don't think they gave us their names."

"That was the beauty of it. No names. Just two males and two females . . . a meeting of the species. You in the back with yours; me in the front with mine. They only went *so far*, but it was better than sitting in your room writing a paper . . . on what? What's so important on a Friday night?"

Patrick straightened up his desktop, aligning some books in a neat stack and putting his pen in a cup full of more pens. "I'm trying to write a paper on . . ." Patrick's voice trailed off to a whisper on the last word: ". . . on wisdom."

"Wisdom?!" Tony choked on the cigarette and laughed so hard he leaned on Patrick's dresser to keep from falling over. He yanked open the top drawer. One after another, Tony threw white Fruit of the Loom briefs at Patrick. In seconds, underwear covered the floor and the desk.

"Stop it! You're acting like a fool."

"Hey, we're all fools in the end," Tony said.

"Another line you stole from a movie. Don't you want to know for yourself what life is all about?"

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The underwear drawer now empty, Tony looked out the window, inhaled the cigarette until it glowed orange and hot. He was getting impatient. He blew the smoke out the window again and came to the point.

"Look, Patrick Cantwell, you need to stop playing with yourself and all these books up here in your room." Tony reached over and plucked the hood from Patrick's head. His shoulder length brown hair fell down, uncombed and sweaty. "Look at you, sipping tea like a monk, when you know you should be out enjoying cold beer and girls. Who do you think you are? St. Aloysius?"

There it was. The problem exactly.

Patrick nodded in agreement. Choir music from a school Mass echoed in his brain, mocking him. Who was he kidding? St. Aloysius, the namesake of their all-boys prep school whose plaster statute stood by the entranceway drinking fountain, gazing at them piously every morning as they arrived. Aloysius, the boy saint, who had renounced his riches and took a vow of virginity, only to die tending Bubonic Plague patients at the age of twenty-three. How did he do it? What was his strength? It seemed everyone else at the school—including Patrick—wanted only to find riches and lose their virginity as soon as possible.

"What do you want?" Patrick asked Tony, his green eyes staring at the underwear dotting the floor.

Tony softened, shrugging. He turned his hands upward to show Patrick he was not trying to be harsh. "Look, man, I don't want to take you away from wisdom and all your studies. I just think that God wants you go with me tonight."

"Ha! He does? Did God phone you? Did he call long distance to send you over here to get me?"

"You know what I mean. . . . God wants to forgive you for everything you've ever done, right?"

"I guess."

"Well, if you never get out of your room and do something big, well, how can you have any proper sins to confess?"

"You're crazy."

"You're right. *And* I'm 'a fool.' But maybe you can learn something for your paper by going out and spending time with me. I'll wrestle you for it." Tony grinned. "Unless you're afraid."

Patrick sprung from his chair, tromped over, and jammed his elbow on the dresser top. Tony stuck the cigarette in his mouth and said, "Now you're talking." He plopped his elbow down next to Patrick's and grabbed his hand. Smoke squiggled up between the two boys.

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They were an even match: back and forth, up and down—grunting and squinting at each other through gritted teeth. Tony, still smiling, struggled to pin Patrick's hand onto the dresser. Patrick was winning, but then he began to ease up. Maybe, he thought, it would be useful to see the world on a Friday night. Maybe, just maybe, in the midst of some Friday-night revelry some truth would leap out, perhaps the missing part of his paper. He gave in.

With one last snap, Tony forced Patrick's hand down on the dresser and laughed. Patrick sighed and looked out the window at *The Love Machine*, a warm harem on wheels waiting in the driveway.

## Chapter 3

PATRICK SAVORED a Camel non-filter while Tony drove and they listened to the song "Space Cowboy" throbbing from the dashboard of The Love Machine. He was clean-shaven and combed down now, with nonchalant weekend clothes on—a clean blue-plaid shirt and some khaki pants, and sneakers, along with a windbreaker. The night air from the open car window felt cool and snappy. Still, Patrick felt uneasy. Maybe he should have stayed home, he thought. He felt withdrawn and unable to make small talk with Tony.

"So how is everything?" Tony said, smiling.

"Everything? Whew, there's so much to consider when you include *everything*."

"You know what I mean. How the hell are you?"

Patrick thought deeply for half a block and gave an honest answer. "I have no idea."

"Well, never mind. We'll meet some girls soon."

Tony's plan was to go back to school for the Friday night football game. He hated to go near the place before Monday. "But that's where the girls are," he explained. Girls from all around. Girls looking for guys who know how to chat it up and make them feel at ease. "You know," he'd added, "to lay the ground work for later in the night, when the smart ones will drift to the parties for the beer and sofas and necking. And who knows? There might even be necking at the game." Then he cut his eyes over at Patrick. "Just be yourself; keep it *light*. Be pleasant. Smile. Nod and laugh at their jokes. Girls like that sort of thing."

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"OK, I'll try."

When they got to the school, the dark hills surrounding the field were crowded with fans, the field bright as daylight. St. Aloysius was tied 7-7 with Ladue High School. The marching band bellowed from the stands, and the crowd cheered in response. The air was chilly enough to see your breath, which Tony noted was a tactical advantage. They bought a couple of hot chocolates and walked along the crest of the hill looking for girls. Tony spotted two girls wearing Ascending Path Academy sweatshirts sitting on a quilt. He stopped mid-stride. "Target acquired. Ascending Path babes. Nine o'clock."

Patrick stopped and looked. There they were—a blonde and a brunette—two girls from the strict, all-girl school run by nuns, probably hoping to meet some nice boys with good manners. They were both good looking. The brunette had French braids. But the blonde had bigger breasts, which Patrick tried not to notice. "I've always wondered about Ascending Path girls. You know, how their homework load compares to ours."

"Homework load? Forget about homework. Look at the load on that blonde."

As they approached within earshot of the girls, Tony pretended to laugh at something to get their attention, and to announce that someone fun had arrived to save them from a boring evening.

"Ladies, how ya doin'? Who you rootin' for?"

With one eye shut, the blonde looked up at Tony, wondering whether he was from one of the finer zip codes. "Ladue," she said.

"Ladue? So are we," Tony lied, backslapping Patrick's chest. "Mind if we join you on this chilly night? We brought a couple of hot chocolates to share."

"Well, as long as you're from Ladue," the girl in French braids said. She had seen the big homes in Ladue, the kind she'd like to live in some day when she got married. "I guess we can share some hot chocolate. As long as you're not sick."

"Naw, we're bumming with health. I'm Tony, and this is Patrick."

The two boys bookended the girls on the quilt, Tony diving next to the blonde.

"Here, have a drink." Tony handed his hot chocolate to the blonde. She whiffed the steam to check for booze or anything weird. Then she looked at Tony, still wary of him. Tony sent out love beams with his brown eyes and flexed his eyebrows.

The girl with the French braids studied Patrick and waited for him to speak.

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He was awfully quiet. Just staring at the field. When was he going to say something about her hair she'd spent so much time twisting? She waited.

Patrick held his hot chocolate between his hands and pondered what was before his eyes. The game down on the field. The white yard markers. The rules, the time clock. It must have some deeper meaning. It must be some external expression of man's inner condition. He glanced at the St. Aloysius school building in the background and thought of some of the concepts he'd been studying and how they might apply to the game. *Think, Patrick, think*, he demanded of himself.

"Hey, aren't you going to give me any?" the girl in French braids finally said.

"Sorry . . . here."

"Thank you," she said as she took the cup from Patrick. She brushed his hand on purpose to get his attention. But he didn't seem to notice. Then she looked over to see how her friend was doing with Tony.

Tony's date took a sip of her hot cocoa, leaving a red lipstick mark on the cup. She handed it back to Tony, politely turning it so he wouldn't get her germs. But Tony turned the cup around so that her lipstick mark would face his lips. He was sending a signal that their lips should be together. He drank deeply.

The girl next to Patrick saw what Tony had done, so she pressed her lips onto the cup and smeared a big lipstick mark and thrust the cup back to Patrick, to see what he would do.

"Thank you," he said lifting the cup to his lips—but he paused—wondering what Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung might think of the action on the field. Patrick had been reading a book on Jung. He lowered the cup and studied the players jostling and fighting over the ball. Of course! The ball must be some archetype. But what? Maybe the ball represents the self, he thought. *That's it*. Old Jung would be proud of him. The realization made him smile inappropriately as his date was studying his face.

Tony handed the hot chocolate back to the blonde, and watched to see where she would land her lips on the cup. Tony decided if she put her lips where his had been, then that was her signal—that he should kiss her right away. The question was—*What kind of kiss should it be?* He decided on a lips-only kiss. But lots of lips—so she'd know he understood. Oh boy, did he understand. She raised the cup and Tony watched her lips, but just then—

"What's wrong with you?!" the girl next to Patrick said. "Aren't you gonna drink some hot chocolate?"

Everyone paused to look over at Patrick. He was deep in thought, consid-

## Most Improved Sophomore

ering that if the ball did, in fact, represent the Jung's concept of the self, the players on opposite teams represented opposing forces in a person's life, the ones trying to control the self. Sometimes the good team you're rooting for controls the self, and other times, the bad team grabs the ball and takes the self in a different direction. It was a tense game . . .

"Hey Patrick! Drink some damned hot chocolate," Tony said leaning over the girls to jab his knee.

"Sorry," he said, absentmindedly drinking from the very spot where the girl with French braids had laid her lipstick mark. Her pupils widened with desire.

Tony's date drank from the same spot where Tony's lips had been, and no sooner did she lower her cup, when Tony's lips met hers, pulsing and puckering, pleading for her to get in the game, to run across the field, to tackle him. She dropped her cup and they sank back onto the hillside quilt kissing.

Patrick's date saw what was happening, so she grabbed the cup from his hands and drank from the same spot where his lips had been. She closed her eyes and lowered the cup from her lips, waiting for his lips to find her.

But Patrick didn't notice any of this. His eyes were fixed on the Ladue coach, an older man, who was yelling obscenities from the sidelines. Patrick wondered: What if the players on the field—the ones suffering to control the self—think they are doing what *they want*, but really they are just being controlled by the coaches? Perhaps all of society was being coached along, by the priests, the bosses and generals yelling from the sidelines. But who's to say the coaches are right? Why, think of the Soviet May Day parade with the troops marching beside long erect missiles, a kind of pep rally before the game. How can any of us know at any moment that the thing we "want" for ourselves is our own idea? It was troubling.

"Hey, shithead, snap out of it!" Patrick's date said, snapping her fingers right in front of his face.

"I'm sorry . . . what?"

Tony and his date stopped necking and bolted upright. Tony thought maybe Patrick had grabbed the girl's breasts too soon.

"What did he do?" Tony said.

"Nothing!" Patrick's date said, throwing the rest of the hot chocolate on the grass. "This guy's on pot or something. I thought he was watching the game, but he's not even reacting to what's happening on the field."

They all looked at Patrick. He knew he had to fake some awareness of the game. Fast. Just then, a St. Aloysius player ran the ball out of bounds and tum-

## Sevin Killeen

bled into a row of Ladue tuba players. Patrick clapped, as if it were a great play.  
“Way to go, St. Al, *Whooooo Hooooo!*”

The girls looked at each other, and then at Tony.

“I thought you were Ladue guys,” the blonde said. “You said you were rooting for Ladue.”

The girl in French braids raised her nose up. “Yeah, where do you go to school?”

“Why, right over there,” Patrick said pointing to St. Aloysius.

Both girls stood up.

“Get off the damn quilt,” Patrick’s date said.

Patrick and Tony stood up, and the girls snatched their quilt and walked away to the other side of the hill in search of Ladue guys.

The game ended. The marching band played, and the cheerleaders ran out onto the field. Patrick looked at the field and thought of how in the winter it would all be covered with snow and quiet. The events of the game by then would be meaningless and forgotten.

“Well, crap,” Tony said. “Patrick, you’re not yourself tonight.”

“I know, I’m sorry. My mind—”

“Forget your mind. We need to find a party and drink.”

