

## NURSING HOME

Jeff Wyman\*

M. A. Writing and Literature Program, Rivier College

A nursing home  
metal-mouth and dirty-diaper stench  
is bitten with winter's  
snow-ash promise.

Eyes assault me  
in search of memories, answers—  
salvation.

Their faces  
old, sunken, hopeless,  
homeless—  
forgotten in purgatory  
and awaiting death's parole.

Each gaze too painful  
to meet—  
a you're-bothering-me nurse  
searches the hall  
for *her*  
and points.

My sorrow-sunk Adam's apple  
anchors when I see  
the shell that's a shadow  
of her white-veiled wedding photo.

Her jaundiced skin  
wrinkles around protruding cheekbones  
long hidden  
under life's ripeness.

She looks at me  
not knowing that it's my birthday  
or that she ever gave birth.

She startles as I  
weep a torrent of tears  
like the time I dreamt at age four years  
that I had been forgotten forever  
at the ice cream stand.

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\* **JEFF WYMAN** is a Master of Writing and Literature candidate at Rivier College. His poetry has been published in a forthcoming issue of *Breadcrumbs Scabs* magazine. In addition to writing, he enjoys drinking coffee, pacing around his apartment, and going to the beach during Nor'easters.