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circles

Erin Malone
Denison University

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circles

1

like a runner, your life turned
in circles for too long.
your feet kicked up the same stones,
leaving tracks like the scars that
mark your arms.

2

what excited us about math that year
was not Arithmetic Barbie.
we were too old
for dolls and the PTA mothers
scorned her anyway.
it was the way he punched
the calculator keys,
the way his hand ravished
the blackboard
with the white chalk,
the way the chalk coated his hands, melting:
mixing with the peach sweat of his skin.

3

he coached track and taught seventh grade math.
he divided his smile among us, longways.
our cheeks, flushed,
brightened by Cover Girl
stolen
from lingerie cabinets
of the mothers of the PTA.
in seventh grade we learned to flirt.

4

it's not surprising that i never noticed the
gold band, 360° degrees around his finger.
geometry came in eighth grade
and even then i failed it.

we never knew about you, the other woman.

5

yesterday i passed the old track
down behind the middle school.

i saw him there,
looking for a shadow of you
amongst the runners.

—erin malone '00