

# Oklahoma r e v i e w

Volume Seven | Issue Two | Fall 2006

Robin Merrill

## Purple

The woman in the next booth said you were already  
turning purple when they pulled you from the wreck.

She didn't know I knew you, minutes before  
when your skin was cream. You and I

hadn't talked since the fight so I didn't know  
your plans, that you'd be on that road, in that town.

Nor had she caught your name so I didn't know  
it was you, just that someone was dead

and that it probably didn't matter to me because  
I was seventeen. I was getting my hair styled

for my senior pictures. I was at the salon. I was dying  
my hair fuchsia to shock my Mom, and I couldn't wait

to show you, but you were being pulled from a car,  
a white car, and you were already turning purple,

and traffic was lining up and your parents were pulling up  
and a cosmetologist was massaging mousse into my hair

when someone turned on the radio in the other room  
and provided a name to go with the news

and the woman with her hands in my hair asked me,  
*do you know that name?* Your name, my best friend.

I said yes and made a joke about what a bad  
driver you were to prove I knew you well and I said

you'd bounce back, you always did, and the beautician  
took her hands out of my hair and said, *no, you don't*

*understand, it was fatal.* I stood up, asked for the phone,  
black plastic sheet falling towards my feet, I turned

to claim this grief I knew I could never earn.

Copyright © 2006 The Oklahoma Review