Bénédicte Meillon, Nov 2014

**Version**

Students don’t confide in him. He doesn’t encourage them to. Their lives may be disintegrating, but they don’t tell him. The poetry students confide in Magda Moynahan, who teaches the poetry workshop. But he never hears classroom gossip. Years after the fact, he’s learned that a student was coming unglued and he never noticed. […] He lacks the most basic observational skills. No wonder he can’t write.

Angela says, ‘I think I’ll sit down now.”

“Sure,” says Swenson. “Go ahead.”

Angela flops backward into the leather armchair across form his desk. First she crosses her legs on the seat in a failed attempt at a half lotus, then scoots down and pulls her knees up to her chest, then moves back and puts her feet on the ground and taps her ring on the chair arm. Swenson’s never seen anyone have so much trouble sitting. What’s she on? He doesn’t think drugs. Protracted adolescence. Her leather jacket keeps making the sound of someone tearing off a Band-Aid.

She makes one last try at pretzeling her legs into some sort of yogic twist, then sits up straight and stares at him, a quivering punk Chihuahua. She’s gone easy on the facial jewelry – only a silver coil snaking through the rim of one ear and a thin nose ring studded with a tiny green star that glitters under her nostril like a dab of emerald snot. She’s left off the eyebrow ring and the upper-lip ring, so it’s slightly less upsetting to look at her pale triangular face. Her eyes don’t have a color exactly: a newborn’s gunmetal gray.

“So. What’s the matter with school?” he says.

“My classes suck,” she says.

“All of them?” He asks neutrally. […]

Angela flinches. A fragile flower under all that armor. Often, they’re the most delicate, the green-haired and the pierced. Most Euston students opt for the outdoorsy look of ecologically conscious future CEOs. Angela’s fashion statement represents a decision to abandon all hope of ever fitting in.

**Francine Prose*, Blue Angel*, 2000.**