

2001

One Regret

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Recommended Citation

Harris, Nicole (2001) "One Regret," *The Angle*: Vol. 2001: Iss. 3, Article 8.
Available at: <http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol2001/iss3/8>

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One Regret

Cover Page Footnote

Appeared in the issue: April 2001.

Nicole Harris

One Regret

Question: "Do you have any regrets?"

Answer: "Just One."

I had suspected
you were there,
with me,
like a shadow.

You confirmed your presence
in a Taco Bell bathroom.
until then I hoped
that you were just teasing.

Standing in my dirty white uniform,
I didn't have to say anything.
Amanda was there
and she knew
before I could speak.

There was really no decision
to be made.
We were wrong for each other,
or maybe I just wasn't ready
for you.

I knew
I could've made a life for you,
for us.
You'd be better off without me,
and I without you.
I'll spend the rest of my young life
proving just that.

Sitting by the pool,
in the dark,
shivering and wet,
crying,
I apologized.

You deserved a chance,
and I denied it.
Giving you a name made it easier,
more comfortable, more humane.
I was doing you a favor.

Riding to the doctor's I thought
of everything but you.
I gave another name,
not my own,
and waited.

They put me through tests –
blood, urine, AIDS.
I knew what was wrong.
Finally, they believed me,
and made me wait some more.

Amanda couldn't be with me
like she had been before.
But the nurse's voice soothed me
as the doctor said,
"You'll feel some pulling."

After the pulling,
and the nurse's voice,
and the anesthesia stopped,
I got instructions, pills,
and a good talking to.

Other women had new families.
All I had was guilt,
pain,
and a prescription.

I miss you now,
wish that you weren't gone,
wish that I
had chosen you before me.

It's true what people say
about the kind of love
that you have for your children.
It can never be matched.

Question: "Do you want to have kids?"
Answer: "No, I already had my chance, once before."