

BOB HICOK

*The Edge*

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One day the kid showed up with a tattoo of a stapler on his shoulder. The others had tattoos of geckos and fish and the Incredible Hulk, an emerald Lou Ferigno against a background of fire. He'd have been beaten up except they were dazed by it, not just the precise cursive of the word *Swingline* or the luster of the striking plate but the fact of the stapler itself. He got the last pizza at lunch and was touched on the wrist by a girl at the fountain. This made him believe he was real in a way breathing never had. Over the next few months he stopped feeling he lived on the wrong side of the mirror. There was an election & his name was penciled in on a few ballots. The guy with the red Camaro gave him a ride home and let him pick the music. In second period French he stood to ask what Harcourt Brace new all men wanted to know, if Monique and Evette would join him Saturday on the sailboat. First the teacher cried, then the students sang the Marseillaise because in four years all he'd ever said was *como tallez vous?* No one questioned the tattoo. Who'd believe he got up to pee and it was there, just as the image of the body of Christ appeared one morning on the thigh of St. Barthelme of Flours. Otherwise their stories differ. St. Barthelme was stoned to death. The kid went to homecoming in a tux with blue cumulus cuffs and a girl embarrassed by anything but the slowest dance.