



Smashing Pumpkins

"Bullet With Butterfly Wings"

Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness

10/1995

Virgin

"These Will Be the Best Years of Your Life"

M. Stone

At fourteen I wore
ugly and weird like prize ribbons. Conformity

became a filthy word.
I fought and lost, sported a busted lip and bloody nose.

Detention, then suspension.
A teacher claimed that fury made my face unrecognizable.

How could I explain the solace I found in a fist?

A sleazy guidance counselor
demanded to know why I seemed withdrawn.

I didn't tell him what I saw
every day: coaches assigned the task of keeping order

turned away when sophomores
circled a scrawny freshman and yanked his shorts down,

and a football player known
for making rape jokes grabbed his girlfriend's wrist,

squeezing delicate bones until she cried stop.

At sixteen I was set free,
sent to community college for my senior year

and a place opened for me
in that calm, in the presence of new friends.

When I later visited
a beloved high school teacher whose classroom

once offered refuge,
she smiled and exclaimed *you are radiant;*

you have thrived.