
**First Place
Poetry Arbuckle Award**

2010 - 2011: Sammy Jo and the White Hot Underbelly, Pt 1

Zach Reneau

1.

My hair doesn't grow the way it's supposed to. It grows the opposite way, like you did.

I mean it grows backwards, like you did when the earth fell apart. It grows into my scalp, and when it tickles my brain I take my monthly trip to the salon, where they saw my head open, run their clippers across my skull. They have to cut away the viscera, or at least, I think it's the viscera, I don't know because I failed biology.

But so did you, because you wouldn't cut the cat,

I had to cut the cat. And I stood over it with my scalpel and shopping cart and we made love to it with our thoughts, where the cat had been and where it was now. But you didn't like cutting the cat, you threw up on the blackboard, on the bus.

The bus rides were more fun when your shorts caught fire.

And we smeared our hands in it and drew our lives out, but yours was always better. You were the artist. I wasn't the artist. You were Edvard Munch. I was Queen Isabella and my skirt was plaid but you wouldn't give me the safety pin in your lip to keep it tied down. Everyone got a glimpse of the Spanish Inquisition.

2.

You were such a dirty girl.

And the cockroaches thought so too

Is what your father said when he gave me the talk and the handgun. The talk was for then. The handgun was for later.

I don't know what to do with her, it's not my job.

But it wasn't

mine either,

It was Jackson's and Peggy's and Kaya's and Clark's.

I worked

in the shrimping business and when I got Wednesdays off I'd court your sons and daughters at the roller derby.

3.

This is the part where you would put your arms around me and undo the latches on the bookcase.

And when I wasn't looking

you'd kiss Patrick Henry's mother and

hide

under the ocean of covers with me, and we'd kick and scream and pretend that we were ballet dancers pretending to be nuns.

And maybe if you'd stop bleeding out for five seconds, you'd be pregnant by now.

4.

This was supposed to be the part where we danced in a submarine together and talked about our dreams, and our Jamaican god children, but it's not, it's not anything,

except for a jungle cruise with a bottle of tonic and the Milky Way's vagina. But the tonic was yours.

Everything was always yours.

5.

Next is the part where I lie on a bed of nails while you run my ribs over with a pontoon boat, and Penny licks the specks of blood and soot

off my nose. You asked me if

this was my favorite part, and I'd have to agree because in the right light,

when the clouds cover the

sun's penis and the moon sodomizes a goat with its fist, your finger nail polish does wonders for your eyes.

And if you're waiting for the part where I kiss your tongue with a syringe and draw roses, you're reading the wrong story.