

Sketch

Volume 75, Number 2

2011

Article 9

Sweet Release

Ashley Schmuecker*

*Iowa State University

Copyright ©2011 by the authors. *Sketch* is produced by The Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress).
<http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/sketch>

Sweet Release

Ashley Schmuecker

Jesus' arms are opened wide and he's smiling. Of course He knew I was coming.

My hair is pulled back into a neat ponytail and I am wearing my scratchy green dress with the orange flower print. My legs and stomach are itchy, but I know today is special, so I don't fuss. Today is my First Confession; the day that I will tell the priest my sins and he will tell me that I have to say five Hail Mary's and one Our Father so that they will give me the wafer on Sunday for my First Communion.

I hang over the stairs trying to pick a lilac off the bush near the big wooden doors but Grandma said we are late and that I need to go get in line. I stop just inside the church, and stare up at a statue of Him.

I have practiced putting my left hand under my right (only the old women stuck out their tongues) to receive His body. I wonder what it will feel like to put it directly into my mouth. I also speak to him directly, though not out loud of course.

Jesus, don't you ever get sick and tired of watching people eat you all the time? I don't think I could handle it if I just stared down at people every Sunday and watched them drink up all my blood. I heard you taste good. Grandma says your blood tastes so good that Aunt Helena snuck back to where the priest keeps your body after mass to finish off a whole bottle of your blood before lunch.

Grandma is still talking to Sister Katherine about why we are late-how I just *had* to have a glass of water- and she pushes me forward. I dip my hand into the wet sponge by the door and touch the holy water to my forehead. I walk down the rows of wooden pews to where the other kids are forming a line at the confessional. I still don't know what I will tell the priest. I have no idea what I've done wrong, but I know I'd better come up with something before it is my turn. I can feel His all-knowing presence and I am sure he knows that I am thinking of some great lie. In this instant I am struck with a sudden urge to pee.

Grandma waves to me from the entry way and gives me one last stern look before she goes downstairs for coffee and doughnuts with the other parents and old people in the basement.

Sister Katherine swishes past me in her black dress and silly hat and I giggle. She smells like baby powder and hurries up to the other kids and slaps Joel's wrist for pulling on Heidi's left pigtail. I know if I get out of line I will be in trouble. I wander up closer to the other kids, who are already half-way

down the Stations of the Cross.

I wiggle my knees at Station 7 and think about telling the priest that I punched my brother in the face after he stole the last M&M from the candy jar and that Grandma had to rush him to the emergency room so they could perform surgery on his brain. Or maybe that I kicked Mrs. Hill in the knee cap so hard that her leg broke off after she told me I couldn't do my science project on polar bears because Sarah already picked polar bears and I would have to do bats.

I look up and see Jesus on the crucifix.

Jesus, I really wouldn't kick Mrs. Hill in the knee cap, I swear. She's a nice lady and all but I hate bats. They are gross and they get stuck in your hair on purpose when they fly too low. Grandpa says they eat spiders and june bugs. I bet polar bears eat bats.

I tap my toes and put my hands on my hips. I sway back and forth and look at the other kids who are still being bossed around by Sister Katherine. The only bathrooms are in the basement. Daddy long-legs live in the corners of the stalls and they move around when your pee hits the water. Anna said that one time a spider crawled on her shoes and she screamed and screamed until her Mom came in and flicked it off her shin. I get goose bumps just thinking about it.

I twirl around in circles so that the stained glass pictures on the walls blur and it is like I am looking into a kaleidoscope. I spin so fast that a drip of holy water from my forehead starts to trickle down my nose. I stop in mid-spin. I am sure I am going to die if I don't pee in the next two minutes.

The line moves up closer to the confessional. I hang back and duck into a pew near the third station and rest my knees on the little bench and interlock my fingers into prayer pose. It's a good thing I'm at the end of the line.

Sister Katherine pushes Jill, who is crying, by the small of her back into the confession box.

It's now or never.

I sink low into a squat position. He is staring at me, with His arms outstretched. I pull down my underwear and lift the sides of my dress. *Well I can't just pee on myself. Jesus, please don't stare at me. I can't pee if you are looking right at me.* I squeeze my eyes shut and sigh as the warm liquid hits the worn green carpet.

When I am done, I wiggle my legs around to shake off any extra pee. I pull up my underwear and make the sign of the cross. I walk up to the end of the line behind Sarah, who is probably thinking about how polar bear skin is actually black even though the fur is white. I imagine a bat flying into

Sarah's stupid curly black hair.

I am too scared to look at Jesus but can feel His eyes on my back, so I race into another pew and kneel.

Hail Mary, full of Grace, I'm sorry I peed in your house but you really need to clean out the bathrooms. Jesus saw me do it, so you'll probably hear about it from him too. Please don't tell my Grandma otherwise she won't take me to Dairy Queen.

Amen.