

Making it Right

by Jane Hammons

Somewhere between Alamogordo and Del Valle, Pammie Rose begins to understand. It's too much blood.

Passengers see her there, every time they stumble to the back of the bus to pee, shit, or puke in the stuffy closet of a bathroom. A girl stretched out on the long backseat of the Greyhound bus, her head resting on a bright pink overnight case decorated with colorful stickers announcing the places she intends to go: Paris Cairo Hong Kong Rome.

Tonight she's riding the midnight bus from El Paso.

Pammie Rose takes her flannel nightgown out of the suitcase and shoves it up under her short denim skirt. If she can hold it in for two more hours, she might make it all the way to Roswell. She wipes her hands on her blouse, bloody fingerprints smear like evidence down the front of it. A sweet eyelet lace Mommy bought her for rush week. She was supposed to pledge Alpha Chi Omega. Mommy had.

Mommy will be upset about the mess. Mommy is already mad that she has to be at the bus depot at 6 a.m. on a Friday morning. Tennis lessons Tuesday. Thursday horseback riding. Wednesday golf. Friday luncheon at the club. Pammie sketches Mommy's calendar across the grimy wall of the bus.

She's going to think about Christmas now. She has the whole rest of the semester until then. Can she get an excused absence?

Her nightgown squishes like a used up Kotex pad. It smells like metal. She hears a heartbeat pulsing between her ears. In her mouth she holds the room where an old woman stuck something inside her and emptied her out like a bucket.

Pammie Rose knows enough Spanish to know that she made the old woman angry. She waited too long. Everyone is mad.

She types her schedule onto the back of the seat in front of her. Western Civ Amer Lit Bio Chem. She crosses the bridge to Juarez at just the right time. One tiny dot plinks into the bucket. One little spot of blood on her panties. She turns the bus around. Puts everything back. Makes it right.

