

Marry Me

by Kyle Hemmings

My mother told me never to trust girls who speak from the side of their mouths. But Kat, with her rainbow bracelets and flat vans, can't speak any other way. A creature of A.D.D. and zip up leather, studded belt and the next No Wave, has mistaken me for the last fuzz boy guitarist who dumped her over a groupie into Goth and 50's horror films that are HYSTERICAL. So it's Saturday afternoon in a life of endless afternoons, waiting for balloons to fall, or poppies to emit milky juice through terminal pores. I mean I'm bored. So Kat calls and says what's up and yadda yadda yadda and I'm definitely leaving for school at the end of the summer and yadda yadda yadda and why is love such an ugly brute and yadda yadda yadda and I'm like Why not? So we're standing in the throng of a Central Park crowd, sweating in our skinny jeans. It's a free concert-- Blackie Stark and the Undertones-- who are from the Michigan area and formed as a high school band back in '64 and who have since recorded three singles but can't get picked up by a major label. And Kat is looking too cute with her chubby thighs and Ultra-glow pink lip gloss and I'm thinking of flowers falling but are they free? An announcer enters the stage and lists upcoming acts for the summer. Kat is whispering some crazy shit in my ear, like how she would marry a boy who was her best friend or some lines from her poetry like how the sky raped her but she lusted for the sun, or how the mushroom is not a symbol of the penis, it's just a vegetable that grows in her poems and I say, Kat, like you're tickling my ear. *Sorry. Sorry. Sorry.* Blackie comes on stage dressed as some glitter cowboy with shades. I'm starting to think what the Fall will be like with Kat gone. It was always a thing of Almost Love or there's somebody else just a notch above you and that somebody will break your heart. Kat is bobbing her head to Blackie's tune about devil women. Kat is holding my hand. Kat tongues my ear and smiles as if to say Fuck it,

right? Blackie asks for a volunteer for his next song. But where is Kat? She's joining a commune. She becomes a shadow underneath your everything. I'm having flashbacks of Kat on a tricycle. We even shared raspberry popiscles at the age of eight. Was it so wrong? I'm raking through the crowd. I'm interrogating faces. Where did you hide Kat? My mother's voice answers: *She will not be the girl you will marry. Honey, She's Been Around.* No, mom, she's just a showy girl with too much black eyeliner. Inside she's crumpled petals. I was always unripe. I push my way to the stage. There is Kat belting out a Blackie tune. There is Kat on stage, outrageous and flirting with the crowd, making them beg for her smile. There is Kat looking down at me. I love you, Raspberry, she sings. Marry me, I shout back. She throws her brassiere into the crowd and I jump into space like the guitar solo I never could play.

