

Greyhound

by Scott Bailey

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I find my boyfriend, not in the future tense, but the one I'm dating on a porn site, asking for private photos, poppers and bondage sex, so I jump the gray dog to visit Mama who's sure to console me with her casseroles and cakes, plus I'm a sucker for discipline and told-you-so's, whatever it takes for me to write these experiences up firsthand. I wish I were on that bus that overturned on an exit ramp and slid into a field, killing three cows, a deadbeat father and a penniless addict. According to a survivor in a chat room, one paramedic, remarking about the fast-food wrappers and lottery tickets, said, "Chicken nuggets and gambling's a bad combination." But now, my fellow thrill-seeker, look at this guy who's wearing a cap with bold letters: "My inner child needs a spanking." I wonder if he reads Wordsworth, but before I ask, I'm interrupted. "Don't talk to him," the Goth girl next to me in platform boots, whispers, "I know you just got on, like, and I don't want to scare you, like, but I've been on this bus all night, like, and it's like, ahhh, like a mother-fucking, like, end-of-time movie. And Roberta, like, behind us, like, is on her way to see her aunt who believes we're already, like, dead." I turn around, expecting to see a woman bearing henna tattoos and sitting in the lotus position, but she's pulling a french fry from between her gorilla titties and humming "Wild Thing." But she's not as gassy as the horse-faced man in front of us, quoting Cheech and Chong as if they're a part of God's plan. When I thought he couldn't go on, he stands up and screams, "I'm a paramedic," after a woman with untidy, gray-streaked

hair collapses in the aisle, her hand clutching a photo of a man wearing overalls and holding a Shih Tzu over a birthday cake. It's clear that he doesn't have any training. Not the dog, but this man saying, "Work with me, work with me." I'm reminded of a church service when Brother Roy Ulmer faints in the spirit, shits too, during a testimony. My cousin Sybil, a real paramedic, and the only one to go to college in my church, well, my entire family, says, "This ain't good. He ain't breathing." If you look up death and excretion, and you get a page error, you need faster cable or you have to reset your browser. Apparently, Brother Roy Ulmer has a good connection. After God jumps into Sybil and tells her to do what she's been trained to do—perform CPR—he comes back to life only to live one week longer, enough time to finish refurbishing the pine pews with velvet, and to tell his daughter that she isn't his daughter. Luckily, we're a few miles from the Mobile terminal. While watching this lady's body carried off the bus, I smoke a cigarette. A man walks up to me, shakes his head, and says, "What a shame." Surely is, but he's not talking about this lady: he's complaining about the chicken basket he bought in the station deli. "Shit, look at her," he says, holding up a potato log, "Ain't this the most droopiest thang you ever saw?" Well, I say, I suppose you don't know Tony, but before I finish, we're told to board. An army cadet sits next to me, and says, "Hell, it's about to be nuts to butts up in here." Sounds terrible, I say, What's your name? He's Sam from Arkansas, and he believes in destiny, but also the choice to fuck it up. He tells me a bedtime story: while watching Thriller at his friend's house, his friend told his dad to pour his own whiskey, so his dad pulled down his friend's pants and whipped his hairy butt with a clothes hanger. I'm shameful, I think, for beating my ex-boyfriend like a dog, and telling him that I could care less if he died, but I'm devastated after he throws himself in front of an eighteen-wheeler. Years later, Sam visited that old man being fed through a tube. "You're making the right

choice," Sam says, patting my shoulder, when I throw my cigarettes out the window, my only friends who don't talk back.

