

Session Fifteen

by S.H. Gall

"I've told a lot of other therapists about my early sexual development, and they always want to fixate on the one thing that's not true."

"And what is that one thing?"

"That it was my stepdad's fault."

"But you were raped, or at least taken advantage of."

"No. It wasn't even his *idea*! It was my initiative. I seduced him."

Another retelling of my past, another depressed, confused therapist. Here is what I tell her (in the present tense, for maximum impact).

"I am thirteen years old, with unusually large breasts — already DD - father long gone, and a new stepfather I am helpless to resist. I go to him. I want this rich, overweight middle-aged man to prefer me to my bitch mother. I win. She winds up in a psych ward in the ghetto.

"I visit her there on Wednesdays, and with nothing better to do, comb her hair. She sometimes speaks, and I never hear. I close myself off to all personal communication, studying each brittle strand of her scab-colored hair. The light tubes hum above us like they're alive, observing us like giant insects, or alien insects.

"Leaving, I call a friend from the trash-strewn parking lot of the loony bin. Pick me up in half an hour, I tell her.

"Will do!" Kim squeals everything she says, just like that. Irritating, right? Anyway, there's a big party at the guest house of one of our friends.

"Home from the party, not drunk, not high, I find him on the couch with his fly conveniently half-open. I straddle him and it all happens as planned.

"Afterward, I tell my stepdad, who's panting and can't stop grinning, that he's the best I've ever had."

This therapist, like all the others, looks skeptical. After a few seconds I spare her dilemma, and run out of the office as if troubled or upset.

My monologue, practiced and rehearsed, continues in my head. Maybe I'll let the next therapist hear the ending, but probably not. It makes me out to be obnoxious, affected, which I likely am. It also makes the whole thing sound even more improbable, more like something real only in print, although it isn't. It all happened exactly like this.

In the steamy master bath I study my reflection. There are no eyes, no lips or nostrils, cheeks or eyebrows. Just long lustrous red hair, circling blindly with peculiar malevolence.

404 words

Seth Gall has had work published in China, Canada, and the U.S. His work has appeared in Word Riot, SmokeLong Quarterly, and Nanoism. He is S.H. Gall in decomP Magazine, Nanoism, issues one and 27 of SmokeLong Quarterly, Five Star Literary Stories, and Fictionaut.

