

# In The Arms of Veronica

*by* Tiffany R. White

(For Shana Smith)

She really wasn't that great. Her smile was a cliff I stood on, trying to wrangle some kind of hope from the whites of her teeth. I heard the sound of the buzzer from the door on my ward. She stood there, a sickly ash tree, each limb flailing about like she was drowning in my sea of anguish. I lower my head.

"Jenny," she said, limbs outstretched, bearing three years of undue hardships upon her breast. I shifted focus from her arms then face, her glassy green eyes, dewy and sagging, seared a hole in my thoughts. She tilted her head, while tears formed and her bottom lip twitched. I pounded the table with open hands.

"My God, Veronica," I said, looking out of the barred window.

I hated the crying because most of the time I caused it. I slit my wrists; I topped off a bottle of acetaminophen and whiskey. I ran around naked in the snow after my dad raped me. After these things, she cried.

And I stood on the precipice of her being and guffawed. I laughed as she shook, weeping. She wept like a mother who's lost, like a god whose hands were empty.

"Jenny," she said once again. I hated myself more when she said it.

"Jenny, come here," she motioned me with her stringy limbs, her watered eyes dripping with sorrow.

I rolled my eyes. I hated myself and I hated her for loving me. She came over to where I was sitting, crouched in the plastic upholstery. I rocked back and forth, without tears, gripping my arms, pulling the fabric of my gown. She bent over and hugged me, a tight, relentless hug, raw and hard, each tear falling on my shoulder a bit of us, slipping away.

