

In A-B-C Order

by Tracy Lucas

When she was four, her uncle was twelve. He'd race her around the living room in elaborate games of cops-and-robbers, zoo escape (with every stuffed animal in the house), and "boy Barbies", or G.I. Joes, depending who was asked.

When she was ten, her twenty-something sisters gave birth to children of their own. She was an aunt two times before junior high, and reveled in the boxes that came of seasonal clothes each time her sisters broke down and admitted they'd never again wear the pre-motherhood things they'd saved. First the boxes were size 10 women's, then size 8's, then finally things she could show off at school.

When she was fifteen, her parents went easy on her, having been through a flock of teenagers before her time. She drove, without fanfare, to and from her birthday party. It was just what fifteen-year-old girls did, had always done, would always do. The reality of movement, of huge vehicle versus the world, of the looming life-or-death maybe behind being responsible for such a massive hunk of metal was no surprise to anyone, save her.

When she was nineteen, she began to brew a baby in her belly. She named it, and sang to it, and organized the leftover hand-me-downs that hadn't been worn ragged through by the first seven sets of recipients. She labeled the blue and the pink, sorted by size, and swirled around the upstairs bedroom of her small apartment with the soft yarn blankets to her chest as if she were ten again and holding a hairbrush microphone.

When she was nineteen-and-a-half, her baby came before the calendar was ready.

It was no bother, they said. By the end of the year, there were three more grandchildren to replace him.

