

Champagne Toasts and a Bottle of Raid

Audrey Rose slit her wrists horizontally, in order to suck the blood filled with poison. She had emptied most of the remaining contents of a bottle of Raid into a champagne glass, a plastic one but one somehow still elegant to her. Before the first sip, she raised her glass in the air made a toast. The first sip burned her tongue, her throat tried to constrict, but she forced the liquid down. She used a Budweiser to chase it. After the first swallow, she didn't need a chaser. Her mouth was numb, she couldn't taste a thing.

Night was the only time anything seemed bright. She sat on her floor, watching the space with no door, brightness of candles spilling into the dark. Moths, and crickets would tentatively approach and she would welcome them in. They kept her company.

When she finished her cocktail, her body wanted to throw up, but she wouldn't let it. Audrey Rose wanted to make sure the poison was really traveling around in her blood stream. She was feeling woozy, thought relief would come at any moment, so the line she scratched into her wrist was wavy, uneven. The tip of her tongue felt out the blood, still a little numb, like her feet were beginning to feel.

For her second attempt, she let her lips cover the stark red wound and she sucked like she sucked her first boyfriend's neck when she gave him a hickey. The blood tasted salty and warm, tomato soup. The liquid moving through her mouth had a little kick to it, a sure sign the poison was spreading. Confident now, she rested her head on the floor, arranged her summer dress around her, tucking her feet up under it and stared at the ceiling, waiting. Shadows played across the ceiling, casting circles and stars, or maybe the stars were in her head. Her eyes gently closed once, then twice, a strange dream descending. Her entire body convulsed. Acid and Raid shot across the room, dripping

down the walls. Her stomach cramped, she tried to keep it back down, but her body fought back, filled her mouth, forced the poison through her clenched teeth and out her tightly shut mouth. Again and again. When she thought there was nothing left inside, her body taught her differently. Dribble ran down her chin, her eyes watered. No insects were venturing inside tonight.

Her house was on a piece of No-Man's land. She planted flowers that never bloomed and an orange tree that did. Behind the house she started a vegetable garden. Some would call it organic. Audrey Rose would call it hers.

She started noticing the bugs, the kind she didn't like, getting into her garden, little green ones and ants, ooh how she hated ants. There could be so many of them all at once, marching, marching, eating their dead. She began by spraying lines of Raid around the garden. When they found ways to get through her lines, she sprayed the vegetables directly. This kept them off for a while and they still tasted juicy. She yelled at the ants, pleaded with them to just leave her alone, but it was as if they didn't understand her.

She gave up and surrendered. For a full day Audrey Rose stood in her garden, arms outstretched like a vine and waited. Eventually the ants started climbing up her leg in a single outstretched line. She flicked them and ate some, but they kept coming, so finally she lay down and let them crawl over her. They didn't hurt her or bite her, they just swarmed over her, in her hair, over the soft skin of her armpits which made her giggle. They went in holes and mostly came back out. When she had enough, she ran to

the drum where she collected rain water and climbed in. She curled in tightly and held her breath until she felt like she was going to pop. Nothing was on her but everything was moving.

The next day she decided to try to be friends with the ants. She sliced up bits of cucumber and carrots and left them as offerings. She felt so badly about poisoning them that she wanted to learn how it felt. She started by spraying her toes with Raid. This didn't do much more than dry them out until they cracked. Some days she would spray the Raid on like perfume and wander through the bushes, roll in the dirt to get it off. Finally, she thought she should sacrifice her body to the ants as she had sacrificed their little bodies for her gain.

Audrey Rose's head pounded, her body trembled. She could barely clench anything in, until she got to her hole outside, where her intestines unloaded themselves. When she was done, she crawled to her garden and cried. No ants consoled her, in fact none were in the garden. She let the only purity in her flow down her cheeks and into the soil. Finally, she fell asleep.

A few days later, she awoke feeling refreshed. She was moving to town.