

IMPLOSION OF A POET  
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I first met Becky while traveling with my friends' band, Headroom, to Dallas for a show in Deep Ellum. She was working in a CD store in Norman, and she was Jeremy's latest screw, and he had arranged to pick her up on the way. We had passed four fat joints between us, and I was catatonic, laughing mostly about Mike the drummer's new mowhawk and that engine kept cutting out every ten miles or so.

Stoned or sober, Becky's voice was that of a baby doll groupie, the kind that I'd seen a million times after a show that would hang around bands and try to hook up with local celebrities that were never going anywhere.

Daniel, the lead singer, had arranged for his sister to take our stoned and broke asses in to her suburban Fort Worth home which was the cleanest I'd ever seen. But Becky surprised me. She was the first girl I knew who became bored with Jeremy after getting past his guitar and his eternal supply of weed. Out on the patio, we talked about Nietzsche and art, and how the world didn't understand anything. She was an immigrant, brought to Oklahoma at the age of three and spoke impeccable German. I told her I wrote and hung out at Galileo's, a bar and local coffee house that hosted poetry nights in the arts district of Oklahoma City. I

had never read there, but liked the atmosphere. We exchange numbers and she told me she had a poet friend that she thought I should meet. He became the reason I never respected anyone calling himself a poet again.

After two solid days and nights of beer saturation in Dallas, she called, and I met her at Galileo's on Wednesday for open mic night. He was there, the poet, or so he like to be called. Steven stands about 5'9, waif frame, reminding one of femininity with brown, slightly thinning, hair. He first jumped on me as he rolled his own cigarettes and licked the papers with his tongue. He asked me what poets I liked. I said the Beats and as far as poets were concerned, I thought Ginsberg and Whitman were mystics.

"What else?" he replied with a little condescension in his voice. I was early in my writing, but had won a short story contest in Arkansas, but I was still in a little awe of people that read at this whole coffee house scene, and the ones that had the balls to get up at the mic. "What else?" he said again.

I said Rimbaud. And he stopped me and corrected me cold, "It's *Rimbo*."

I drew back in my hole, and he took over the conversation, going down the list of what translations of poets he had read and that I needed to read more. I told him that doing a lot of reading fucked up my inner voice. He dismissed that, and by the time we had exchanged numbers, I crawled out of the bar with barely my balls.

Two weeks passed, and Becky called again for an invite to her twenty-third birthday party at Galileo's. I'd just gotten about five rejections in the mail from pretty obscure lit journals, but I reluctantly said yes, though I wasn't up for any

celebration. And Steven was there, sitting obscurely in the corner with about ten bottles tipped over in front of him on the table. He targeted me when I approached the table, slurring every other word.

“I want to show you some of my poems.” He had dyed his hair in a jet-black Goth color, and hung a rolled cigarette from the corner of his mouth. I starved for writers in this city, and Headroom’s after parties of weed and forty year old strippers were beginning to lose their luster. Maybe he’d be good to give me a critique on my writing, and mine on his.

We tipped some more back and through the fourth Jagermeister we decided to hang out more. I gave him ten of my stories from the back seat of my car, two of which had gotten published and thought they were on fire. I called him four days later to hear an outside voice and get away from my inner one. He never answered. I called Becky, and she told me what went down. Steven was in jail. He was hooked on pills and had broken into his neighbor’s house and nearly got shot. He’d be out on bond in a week. I didn’t care. I wanted to hear what he thought of my writing, seeking validation.

Out of the blue, on a Wednesday, I believe, he called and asked if I’d come and pick him up down at County. I did, and he was broke, so I said I’d treat him to a cup of coffee.

“So what did you think of my stories?” I asked him. He rolled that creepy little cigarette of his and fired it. “It’s shitty,” he said.

“Well, let me see some of yours.”

“I’ll type some up.” That was the last thing he said to me for a while.

Six weeks had passed. We met by accident out at Hawaiian Don’s bar, and his sister was buying him one of the big, tropical drinks that came in sizes like fish bowls. After the place was swarming and I had been through my fifth beer, I came up to him and wrapped my arm around his sister.

“So,” I said, “when are you going to show me your work?”

“Next week. I’ll meet you at Galileo’s at nine o’clock.”

That night was long, and my recollection was blurry, only remembering that I’d pissed in the hallway of a girl I picked up and her screaming and kicking me out. That, and I slept on her porch until the sun came up.

So a week passed, and I made it to Galileo’s early, putting my name on the list to read then scratching it off. He showed up like he promised with three pages in his hand and a confident smile.

“I’m gonna read these tonight,” he said when he handed them to me and walked to the list to write his name.

The first went like this.

We enter through wombs

And exit through tombs.

And at the bottom he wrote, “Submit” in quotations to Paris Review, Atlantic Monthly, Harpers, etc.

The second was this.

Kill today! kill tomorrow!

Watch it all die, become a

Spectator, and do nothing about it.

In pen was inked “Good” and “Send to Paris Review, Atlantic Monthly, The New Yorker,” etc.

The third I didn’t even bother to read. When he came back, he took his seat and rolled that shitty little cigarette and asked me what I thought.

“I don’t know, their pretty short,” I told him.

“That’s how most of mine are,” he said.

After sitting in awkward silence for about ten minutes, I excused myself to the bathroom. I threw his poems in the toilet and pried open the window in the stall, and went home.

I never talked to a poet again.

*work can be found at [oraculartree.com](http://oraculartree.com)., [slowtrains.com](http://slowtrains.com), [cerebralcatalyst.com](http://cerebralcatalyst.com), [foliate oak at the university of arkansas](http://foliateoak.com), [reddirtreview.org](http://reddirtreview.org), [absolute literary anthology](http://absolute-literary-anthology.com), [crybloxsome.com](http://crybloxsome.com), [admit2.net](http://admit2.net), and soon to be in [bathouse.com](http://bathouse.com) at eastern michigan university and [63channels.com](http://63channels.com). I'm looking for a publisher for a book of short stories, both fiction and non fiction. Anyone interested email me at [dharmadweller@cox.net](mailto:dharmadweller@cox.net) .....thanks P.L.*