



Fugazi  
 "Bad Mouth"  
*Fugazi EP*  
 11/1988  
 Dischord

# Bottle Rockets

Hillary Leftwich

Ryan Gardino wants to go down on you. He tells you this over the phone while you're halfway on and halfway off the couch in your basement, nervously wrapping the faded yellow telephone cord around your left ankle, then your right ankle, and now you can't move.

Your dad is working late and your brother is setting off bottle rockets at the neighbor's house two blocks down when Ryan Gardino shows up on your doorstep. He's two years older than you, in the tenth grade, and has a Mohawk. Your hand is stuck to the latch on the screen door as you watch him take a long, relaxed drag off his cigarette. He scrapes the cigarette on the bottom of his black combat boot, tossing the butt into the flower pot next to the door.

You hesitate for a second but open the door to allow him inside. He brushes against you as he walks through the door, a scent-cloud of leather and nicotine floating behind him. His leather jacket jingles from the small chains and music buttons pinned on like war badges. His slow spreading grin stops midway as he asks you if anyone else is home. You tell him you're alone, but your brother might be home soon. You remember last week acting out the entire movie *The Princess Bride* with your best friend. You talked all night; fashion magazines spread out like a picnic blanket, wondering why the girls in your class smeared makeup on their faces and wore Victoria's Secret bras. You are scared shitless of the boys in your class. They walk down the halls in noisy packs, laughing and punching each other, smelling like gym class and cologne.

Ryan's fingers are tapping on the small of your back like a piano as you lead him into your room. You see it through his eyes: puffy pillows, a daybed with a rose comforter, and your favorite stuffed horse your dad won at the school carnival in fifth grade. Panties hang halfway out of the dresser drawer like blue and red bird wings. He walks over to your stereo and flips the switch on, turning the music up as he slides out of his jacket like a snake shedding its skin and stares at you. He has a sideways smirk on his face as he approaches you, hands out, not playing the keyboard of your back any more but still ready to touch you. When he does—touch you—your stomach, already in painful knots; flips and seizes. Your heart is a dying bird in flight. He takes your hand and leads you to your daybed. You can still see your stuffed bear, Mr. Noodles, shoved between the wall and bed frame, gaping at you with a look of abandonment. Before childhood guilt can creep in, you are falling backwards on your pink quilt as he lands on top of you, his mouth on your neck, sucking, leaving hickies—you're almost positive—that you will have to cover up with makeup you don't own yet. There's an oven in between your legs, gobbling its way up until it reaches your throat. You're thinking about how people kiss in the movies and you're trying to imitate them, but your tongue keeps hitting his and you try to stifle your giggles.

Your room faces the baseball field and you can hear the neighbor's boys shouting and the sound of the steel bats as they hit the ground. You try to remember what first base and second base are as he smuggles his hand inside your bra, cupping your A cup breasts that are still in the process of shaping themselves, still growing into their full potential. He plays with your nipples like pegs on a Battleship game board. You swore to your best friend to never let a boy go up your shirt, to never be like the other girls in your class. Now, there is a boy panting on you like a heat exhausted dog and his crotch is a steel

poker between your legs. There are ten of him now, all doing different things to you, and you can't keep track. You feel like your brother's bottle rockets, dizzy as you launch into the sky, exploding into a thousand pieces. This isn't how you imagined it. Your mouth is covered with his mouth as his fingers unbutton your pants and slide them down to your ankles. His hands are giant spiders inside your pink polka dot panties.

You think about your mom and all the men she brought home over the years; how fast she could switch from yelling at you and your brother to laughing at everything when a man showed up at the door, flirting in the kitchen like you weren't there, like you didn't exist, but you were there, standing in the corner in a pink nightgown, holding your glass of chocolate milk.

The distant sound of bottle rockets shooting off can be heard as your room slowly fades into a dirty, yellow haze. Your hands have found their way on either side of his shaved head. You cautiously rub his stubbles, reminding you of the sand on the beach in Florida when you used to visit your grandpa. You don't know if this is right or wrong, if this is where it all starts, or how it is supposed to start. You think you need to listen to your brother and just shut up and grow up. Ryan Gardino's head is moving down now, his Mohawk like the fin of a shark as he drags his tongue past your belly button, blazing a trail like Red Hot Candies down, further down, and somewhere in the background you can hear Fugazi singing: *You can't be what you were, so you better start being just what you are.*

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