

# The Saga of Sven, Part 1

a poem by Rose Jermusyk

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## Characters

ROSE, a Catholic with a vagina who would someday like to get married and have babies

EMILY, Rose speaking in the style of her sister who is her elder by 13 months

GRACE, Rose speaking in the style of her sister who is younger by four years

SISTERS, Emily and Grace speaking in unison as a sort of Chorus

DAD, Rose speaking in the style of her rightfully-obsessed-with-Bill-Murray father

## Scene

ROSE ( *setting the scene* ): Summer 2001,

northern Delaware replaced southern Ohio as home.

Once that summer

we visited the Waffle House,

I had waffles.

My sisters mocked my waffles,

but to no avail.

Certain times call for certain measures, people:

Waffle House, waffles;

IHOP, pancakes;

Taco Bell, caramel apple empanadas.

Certain times call for certain measures,

mockery being no exception.

You see,  
queer as I am,  
I'm an old-fashioned girl,  
the marrying kind;  
a keeper, if you will.  
I cook and sew and am  
kind of a baby whisperer.  
Truth is, at the ripe old age of 13,  
I knew that I wanted to fall in love and get married and make babies.

My sisters decided to ( *with air quotes* ) “help”  
in that special way  
only sisters can,  
on the blank back of a paper placemat:

9-year-old Gracie indicated how big his red 'fro should be;  
14-year-old Emily drew him tall and scrawny;  
Gracie says

GRACE: He should have braces.

ROSE: I ask why they're giving Ronald McDonald braces.  
They tell me they're not drawing Ronald McDonald.  
They tell me they're drawing my future husband.

I'm not marrying a cartoon.

EMILY: Of course not,  
you're marrying a person  
named Sven.

GRACE: He's a girl.

ROSE: ( *pauses to consider the best way to say this* )  
My sisters  
— queer as we each turned out  
in our own ways —  
did not know what they were saying.

All they knew,  
all I knew,  
was that  
we're Catholic,  
we have vaginas,  
and I specifically want marriage and babies  
which  
— when you're Catholic and have a vagina —  
means partnering off with someone who has a penis.  
That was all  
we knew

and it was all we knew  
Specifically  
When my 14 -year-old elder sister  
took their sketch of Sven  
and drew an arrow to his crotch  
marked

EMILY ( *dramatically* ): No Penis

ROSE: and it was still all we knew  
when my 9-year-old younger sister  
spun the sketch to face her  
and drew an arrow on the other side of the his crotch  
marked

GRACE ( *equally dramatic* ): Vagina Here.

ROSE: Because that's what sisters do, right?

They take the dream  
you hold most dear  
( *miming what is said* ) and twist it like knife  
( *still miming* ) again  
( *and still miming* ) and again.  
( *mimes the last bit of relevant frustration out of her system* )

For six months  
Sven was all I heard about,  
and then there were six months  
of Sven starting to lose his grip  
on my sisters' imaginations,  
and then  
a year and a half  
of Sven only resurfacing  
if I mention the name of any guy ever  
because

EMILY: Uh, Rose, what about Sven?

GRACE: Your husband?

ROSE: ( *"Night Before Christmas" style* ) Then that fateful Christmas came with a new DVD,  
a film with boats starring Bill Murray,  
( *dropping the Christmas cheer* ) and when it got to the bit  
where he introduces the audience  
to his boat  
he also introduces his crew  
including a group of interns  
with one  
particularly tall and lanky fellow  
with a red 'fro  
standing in the back

SISTERS ( *losing their goddamn minds* ): Sven!

Sven is real!

He's real!

We told you, Rose!

We told you!

ROSE: My father hit pause to yell at my sisters  
( *understandingly* ) — for interrupting Bill Murray —  
and they pointed out  
( *mimicking them* ) the tall, scrawny guy

with a red 'fro  
and explained the whole Sventhing.

The rest of the movie was a safari  
with mockery,  
a double-barreled rifle,  
aimed at my face.  
When Sven reappears  
( *does the toe-taps* ) doing “jumping jacks”  
he falls on his ass,  
my father giggles

DAD ( *giggling into clenched fist* ): Sven’s an ha-ha-ha-ha-ass.

ROSE: and my sisters declare I’ve married an idiot.

( *silently protests that she hasn’t married anyone and then gives up* )

Later,  
Bill Murray saves the crew from pirates;  
But, when he shoots one of the pirates,  
The machete the pirate was brandishing  
falls deep into Sven's shoulder.  
Sven cried out in pain  
And the camera suddenly cut away.

My sisters gasped in unison  
and my father looked over to me.

DAD ( *tender throughout* ): Oh, sweetie,  
I don’t think Sven’s gonna make it.

ROSE: ( *a touch sad* ) Bill Murray stood at the rail  
watching the pirates make their exit  
wondering what he’ll do next  
( *intoning heroically* ) when a shoddily bandaged intern enters the screen.

SISTERS ( *losing their goddamn minds once more* ): Sven's alive, Rose!

He isn't dead, Rose!

You're not a widow, Rose!

ROSE: ( *cheers silently and unenthusiastically* )

All the interns go away after that,

except for Sven,

his big line in the movie is that he wants to complete the mission

And then Bill Murray grabs his wounded shoulder

so that he cries out in pain again;

And, my father looks over to me,

laughing,

DAD ( *with great enthusiasm* ): Sven is great.

I love Sven.

We should fucking keep him.

ROSE ( *getting grumpier to the end* ): And,

for better or for worse,

we have;

and that will hold,

til death us do part.