

2007

A Grizzly Tale

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Recommended Citation

Sonnenschein, Dana (2007) "A Grizzly Tale," *PoemMemoirStory*. Vol. 07, Article 19.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.library.uab.edu/pms/vol07/iss2007/19>

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A GRIZZLY TALE

Sarah tells her mother to tell me the one about the bear, about the kid and the bear. You were supposed to be in bed, her mother says. They wanted a picture, she says, these parents wanted a picture of their little boy with a bear. So they smeared one of his cheeks with honey and one with jam and left him standing in a clearing. A brown bear came up and licked the honey off one side of his face, and they were taking pictures, and the bear licked the other side of his face, and they were taking pictures, and then they were screaming because their kid, he didn't have a face anymore. No one would be that dumb, I say; it's a tourist joke gone wrong. But they don't hear me. Sarah waits right there, and her mother fears she's made some mistake, she'll turn to see the darkness slouching toward her golden daughter, reaching out a paw like a hand, each claw as long as one of her fingers.