It was somehow fitting to lose my virginity

in the plush freshman September of Tampa Bay to someone with a sword torn from a car's suspension, who carried it around with her, even when she wasn't fighting on a human chessboard in a Renaissance Faire.

Everyone was smarter and made me feel like a Victorian urchin with a smudged percent sign on my cheek. I literally could not speak in the class that trudged back to the soporific moral instruction of the very first novel: Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, which postulated a world wherein rape could be thwarted by winsome letter writing.

There were black widows scribbling in the brick work. My roommate was learning Krav Maga, that pitiless Israeli martial art, which he liked because *most fights end up on the ground anyway*.

It made me remember the prep school wrestlers sweating necromantically in garbage bags the night before a match to lose their water weight, then scraping their opponents into flaming oblivion on the mat.

But my roommate directed his friend the sword maiden to remove the vacuum seal on my carnal failure. My hair was a sine wave. I loved stick figures and their geometric irony.

I seemed to walk on spindly, backward-facing hooves into the past, where someone slightly bored in leather pirate boots waited, annotated by the dank industrial perfume of Marlboro Reds, like a proof that in the end all metaphors failed their making.