

MISS X

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1. Have you ever wondered what it's like to walk around without a heart?

2. When I traipse into alleys, into bars, into hotel rooms, into cars, I hear the gilded cages stop jangling, hanging on tendrils springing from the skin of my waist, like a petticoat. When, in the residual silence, I tune into the arrhythmic beating of my prey, it is almost as if I had a pulse.

3. When I was a mannequin, I used to pose before the store window and every morning wait for the girl who decided what I was to be that day. There I stood, solid, stolid, staring at the stiletto heels of passersby. The slippered often lingered to stare back at me. The girl, after work, would always stand outside and look in, as I, motionless in the darkness, longed to dance for her, because each day, she leaned on the counter and looked at mirrors and smiled, but I never saw her dance, nor hear her sing or talk very much. A small, silent corner seemed enough for who knows what thoughts scuttled around in her head.

One night, the new moon found her stripping off my designer dress, my strappy heels, and slipping into them herself. She took my place by the window as I tumbled down my pedestal, grabbed her rubber slippers, and ran away.

4. And then I met a man, I met him by the quay. I remember his silhouette in the light of a street lamp, and waves gently rolling across, licking, lapping, the shore. In the ebbing tide, he kissed my feet and gave me glass shoes and left, fading into the

mist down a crooked street. I waited until daybreak lit up the cobblestones. I didn't wait for him; I waited for what he took with him. But I never got it back. I flung his gift toward the bay and watched them shatter against the rocks into a million shards that disappeared into the sea like moonstones melting into foam.

5. The face of every man I meet morphs into his.

6. You may have seen me before. I am the girl with blue hair standing on the train, gripping a steel pole with one hand, and a comic book with the other; I am the woman in the sidewalk café, red lips kissing a cigarette, tight rice paper skin bathing in ghostly smoke; I am the smirking pin-up on your wall fondling a bottle of rum against my inner thigh; a teenage schoolgirl with eyes wide open, pouting prettily on your laptop screen; your boss in a tailored jacket over a little black dress stepping into the elevator alone with you; I am the forsaken lady in a red cheongsam crooning a love song for a run-down bar.

7. My name is Lilith, but I tell men to call me X, or any other woman's name. And when they hang their necks upon the scent of my throat (they always do) I turn off all lights that they may not have to see me. What matters in the dark is not my face, much less my name, but these: the feel of my hands, my lips, my hips mounting theirs, sliding over their chests, their tongues.

8. But above all what matters is the fantasy—of me, of him, of me on him and him in me, of this room, this bed, this rug, this, this, this—*don't you dare stop*—this.

9. It is the last moan that I relish, the last rapturous grasp for breath that comes one moment before the realization that I am not what he thought I was, what I let him believe me to be.

10. After the fiction must come the livid whiteness of a blank page, as inevitably as death follows pleasure.

11. In the end, the only thing he knows for sure is that I am sitting cross-legged on his chest, in the dark, weighing heavy on his heart that is now mine, mine, mine. And he can only lie still.

12. The dream slips into a nightmare that ends with the morning that turns into night.

13. Each night finds me in a different club, a different dress; to a different man, a different familiar face.
