

Wilderness House Literary Review 20/3

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WHAT EVERYONE WANTS

All the time,

I think about how it would feel to be the kind of girl that everyone wants.

All the time I climb like an ape into this fantasy

Of silicone and plastic and labels

And suddenly there I am. I'm *her*.

I am the patchwork of a hundred beautiful bodies,

A combination of things from different weights, heights, ages genes
classes races

That cannot go together but they must, they *must*.

A round ass falls like an upside-down rubber heart from a waist

Too small to fit organs, bones or blood inside.

A pair of thighs like two negative magnets, close but never touching.

But the *curves*.

So many curves—from the shoulders to waist to hips to knees to calves

It is like a desert of sand dunes,

Up and down and up and down

In all the correct places and none of the wrong ones.

A pair of lips, fat and lush, perpetually smiling

Just under the honed nose of a doll.

Glassy blue eyes under thick brows, like two furry caterpillars

Sliced to the right shape.

Hair that never ends, but *only* from the scalp.

And so much skin.

So tight, so pure and tan and fair—a hairless, ironed suit

Vacuum-sealed over everything inside,

All the unimportant parts that do nothing for

Anyone.

These things, for a time,

Are all mine.

Men approach me in the shade of the bus-stop, in the park,

In the magazine aisle of the supermarket, and they ask me my plans

Because they want to have a say in them.

They want to take the wheel of this spotless vehicle I've won.

Wilderness House Literary Review 20/3

I choose only one of them,
The one whose voice comes out the calmest, because now that I am
wanted by all,
I realize what I need is to be loved by
One.
He takes me to a late dinner and picks up the skinny white
Check. Joy twists like gears grinding together inside my stomach.
I like the way he laughs, how he smirks at me, the resigned face he makes
When he speaks of his mother who loves him more than she loves herself.
His clammy hand paws at the perfect knee that belongs to me
Underneath the table. I sit as still as possible, and
I keep enjoying his laugh.
Months pass.
He compliments my body parts, and he touches them, and he says in a
raspy voice that
They belong to him when I'm lying beneath him in my bed.
I cry sometimes, because I enjoy his laugh so much and
I don't think I can live without it anymore.
Then he takes me back to that first restaurant, and he tells me
That he's cheating with another body.
I throw my head back and cackle. He winces.
He hates the sound of my laugh.
But *how?*
I ask him once I've caught my breath.
I am everything.
He laughs back at me like I'm vapid and foolish and says,
I don't want *everything*.
I blink at him
And slump backward into the cracked pleather seat,
Because even though
I am the girl that everyone wants,
I am still not a girl that anyone loves.
The air conditioning is broken in the restaurant and it's hot
So I start to sweat.
I don't want to, people are staring at me, but I can't help it.
I sweat until my clothes are soaked and then I start to melt away,

Wilderness House Literary Review 20/3

My skin bubbling and stretching to make room for real
Flesh as all the delicate threads come undone.
Suddenly I am tall big soft round
And my skin is not smooth and my hair is coarse and frayed.
When I lock eyes with the girl that stares
Up at me from the puddle of sweat on the sticky table,
I find that we are the same,
We are all the same,
We are cursed to be the same,
Because a curse does not care about the difference
Between her and me,
Me and them,
Us and more of us.
Everything.