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schoolgirl cool

we were only waiting for something to happen, reeling around this four-wall town. we hatch our plan in buzz-lit diners, cheese fries dangling from our fingers as we talk, we fuzz our eyes and imagine them as cigarettes and us ten years older and we can almost believe it, punch-drunk on the summer half-light. freshman year is about to begin, and so we arm ourselves with skinny jeans and crescent-moon smiles, we go to each other's bathrooms to bleach our pasts and hair, determined to erase ourselves, we pray in juicy-fruit whispers, in spit and smoke, our own promise of deliverance.

getting everyone together we steal from the top shelf and mix it with ginger ale *to hide to burn*, we think it is eating our mouths, we imagine the dead skin on our lips burning off, we say nothing. walking down the same streets we always have and watching the way the leaves look darkening against the sky, hyperventilating til we can taste our own bodies, the metal of them, their copper salt bite, *no i really can't go to gym class today, my stomach hurts yes it does i'm not lying i promise can i just lie down for a little bit please*,

walking down the same streets we always have and pissing in the gutter laughing *no i'm not you are*, inhaling and coughing and inhaling again, picking at our nailbeds til they bleed in unison, choruses of hangnails singing hail marys, taking pictures of each other, saying *beautiful*, saying *cheese*, saying *oh jesus christ tell me i don't like like that* hiding sweat stains with black tank-tops, hickies dotting our chests like punctuation marks, walking down the same streets we always have and then walking to each other's houses saying *i need to get out of here saying i'm so sick of waiting for something to happen*,

paint our nails bright red like the inside of our eyelids like cherry lipgloss like we saw in a movie somewhere, crying through each of our math classes saying nothing, ripping the empty pages out of the backs of books, ripping out the old pages of our diaries, ripping our alarm clocks out of their outlets, balancing clear quartz in the hollows of our shoulderblades *for protection i read it in a book somewhere* inhaling and inhaling again, smoothing our shuddering chests, our bones still aching inside of us, stretching taller as we slept, growing pains shooting off our legs, skin stretching, leaving purple dashes on our hips, our chests, our thighs,

holding back each other's hair, learning how to throw up spirits, learning how to stay calm, learning how to apply lipstick and grind weed with nail scissors and a shot glass, learning algebra, learning to bear the unbearable, learning how to make-up ourselves, how to construct identities carefully as wiring a circuit, we knew the power in self-curation. we had to be ready when real life started, we had to be ourselves or not ourselves or ourselves except with angelina jolie's eyebrows, we knew this was only some sort of pre-game, this was years of getting ready before the party. and so we crashed against each other, raised each other, laced our sweat-soaked hands, tapped our fingers against school desks as if coaxing the second-hand to go faster, we collected college brochures to far-away places,

we ran off with a drug dealer *not even a rich one* our sophomore year and no-one knew where we went, we got into art schools in new york, we went to community college and learned psychology, one of us became rich, two of us overdosed, one of us survived jumping off the brooklyn bridge and did a ted-talk on the sanctity of life, we didn't really keep in touch but we all remembered graduation, our cheeks giddy with lipstick kisses, and how we'd cried afterwards, hugging each other til we imagined our ribs folding inward, our nicorette whispers rejoicing.