

Punk Rock Princess

Madeline Anthes

1.

I want to be the kind of girl with big teeth and smaller lips. The kind who can smile with my mouth closed or open, not afraid her gums might show too much.

I am careful to curl my lip over my gums now; I don't want to smile too big.

I want to have long nails, painted and hard. The kind that can tap on a counter, or rest delicately in a man's palm. I watched movies with princesses reaching their hands out to a prince, fingers extended, delicate and precise. They had dancer fingers – long, graceful – and they landed with a gentle caress in his outstretched hand.

I practiced with my own hands, placing my fingertips into the palm of my other hand, as though I was asking myself to dance.

2.

In high school I listened to boys who sang in high voices, their lyrics crying about heartbreak and loneliness. They pined for their emo girls. These girls strung them along and crushed them, and the songs made my heart pound with an ache.

I was jealous of these girls. I pictured them in my mind, envisioning girls I'd never be. They wore skinny jeans and tank tops, eyes lined in thick black kohl, their hair glossy and straight. They pouted in the crowd, the singer pointing every lyric at her like a dart. They rolled their eyes, and bit their lip, beautiful in their dismissal.

In the hallways I walked past the boys with their arms draped around willowy girls and heard myself willing them to look. *Look at me, notice me. Pick me this time.*

I wanted to be a girl from the songs. She was a girl who could break down a boy and change him. She was a girl who inspired and devastated. But I was a ghost with a beating heart and a voice that echoed empty down the hall.

3.

I spent half my life begging to be seen, and the other half trying to disappear.

They see me when I'm trying to blend in, be alone in a crowd. At the gym with my headphones on, checking out at a grocery store, loading bags into my car. I can hear the tune in my head, a rhythm I know too well: *Walk past me. Look past me. Don't look at me. Please. Please.*

But they don't listen.

They force me look, to put my hands over my face, to smile. I want to turn it off, to tune them out, but once you're seen you can never be invisible again.



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"Punk Rock Princess"

*Leaving Through the
Window*

05/2002

Drive-Thru / MCA

4.

I sing when I'm alone. I let my voice crack and fall. I let it echo off my ceiling, off my steering wheel.

I want the burns. I want to be seen and not seen and feel invisible and beautiful.

I think of the emo girls. I think of studded belts, their swaying bodies, their tear-streaked cheeks. I used to think they enjoyed the lyrics written for them. But maybe they were looking for a way out. Maybe all they wanted was to blend in the crowd, to listen to a song about heartache, to be unburdened and invisible. Maybe all they wanted was to dance by themselves.