

Cherished

by Emily Maguire

This girl I hang out with sometimes wears shiny red polish which draws attention to her ragged nails and sunless skin. Silver bkie rings squat on her stumpy fingers. Her eye-makeup is always uneven. This is not a fashion statement; she does not flaunt a retro-blue-frosted left eye and a goth-inspired-charcoaled right. It is only that she is easily distracted and so will forget to apply a second coat of mascara on one eye or blend the liner on the other. From a distance it looks fine, but up close the imbalance is off-putting.

Her hair is the colour of dried blood. It smells of chemicals and is stiff to the touch. In a photo taken on her sixteenth birthday it is waist length, shiny and brown. I asked her why she changed it but she only laughed.

When she dances or argues she grows a perspiration moustache. During sex, sweat coats her forehead even if the rest of her remains dry and cool.

A tan would disguise the steel-blue veins radiating from her areolae, but she is not the type to sunbathe topless nor is she a woman familiar with salon treatments. She leaves her disposable razors in my soap dish and her tweezers on the basin.

I think her gums are unhealthy, because one time she borrowed my toothbrush and left behind a smear of pinkish toothpaste at the base of the bristles.

I suggested she buy some new jeans after I overheard a mutual friend make an unflattering comment about the size of her arse, but her new jeans were even tighter. The angry lines they leave on her belly make me think of childbirth.

And yet when she checks her reflection in my bathroom mirror, she smiles like she has caught sight of a beloved friend.



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