

Red Lipstick

Money is the anthem of success. So before we go out, what's your address?

My ears tingle as the sensation of the music gently penetrates my ear drums and glides into my brain. It's just the alarm of my phone going off, but I actually do like this song....

I'm your national anthem, god you're so handsome, take me to the Hamptons, Bugatti Veyron...

Sluggishly I drag myself out of bed, wiping the sleep from my eyes. The sun hits my face and the oily surface of it boils. I'm pretty sure if my face were a country, the military would send troops over ASAP in the name of fighting terrorism. And where the fuck is my underwear? Did I lose it again? I hope some hobo in the streets of Hollywood is putting it to good use, wherever it may be. I snatch my towel from the wall and head for bathroom. It's obvious I was out last night, and the night, the loving lady she is, left numerous marks, scratches, and even a phone number written above my crotch. Clearly, it is time to shower.

As I walk in the bathroom, I notice how empty and deserted it is. I suppose everyone is in class? This actually works out because I can masturbate in the shower for once. So convenient!

And then, a cute high pitched voice calls out to me, telling me I'm not alone.

"Why hello there! It looks like someone had a rough night." I look at the girl in the mirror and I wonder why she's so perfect looking. Her long, perfectly straight hair looks like it was transplanted from the elegant head of Rapunzel. Striking facial structure that would make even the prudest of the prude stop and stare. Candy pink bubblegum lips any sexually aware male would die to taste. Breasts as perky and energetic as a child who had just consumed a spoon of sugar too many. Everything I want to and have tried to be but can't. I did everything I could to be her and failed. And now she's here to tear me apart for my sins.

“Scratch marks on your back....hair strewn all over the place....what are you doing with your life? What happened to making me a reality? What happened to that?” She looks at me with a look of disappointment and disgust. The bitterness of her tone far exceeds the sugary sweetness of her candy shell exterior.

Really though, I tried! I did everything I could...I thought it would make things better, but really everything's only gotten worse. I just wanted to be happy.

“Please take off your shirt.”

I can't say no to her. Her beauty...it's entrancing. No one would say no to her. My towel drops.

“Oh my....these are still so underdeveloped! So tiny and quaint...it's no wonder you don't have a boyfriend.”

She's right. No matter how I try to dress up the underdeveloped failure that is my chest, it never looks good. These days I barely can get anyone to notice me in a bar. Before all of this, even though all I could get was guys to sleep with me, at least I was noticed. Now it's a lot more difficult...

“Don't you have anything to say to me? I mean I am here, talking to you...I believe it's a rare chance you get to confront someone in the mirror.” How nice of her to show such concern. Thinking more on it, I realize that yes, I do in fact have something to say.

“You're right. I've turned into a complete failure. I did want to be you. I tried to be you. But it all failed. I admit it. I thought doing this would make me so much happier, but I just feel like it was all for nothing. Happy?”

“Haha. I suppose...” She lightly giggles and smiles at me. She's so perfect. I can't take it anymore. This needs to end now. I hate her. I hate me.

“I fucking hate you. I'm really sorry but...I...I need you to die for me...”

The girl now just stares at me, paralyzed. I realize that this is it. I am going to fucking kill this crazy bitch.

A switch goes off in my head and I mount the bathroom counter naked, like a crazed animal shot in the ass. I pound my fist on the clear surface of the mirror. The weakness in my arms prevents me from shattering anything, and the girl starts laughing again, her hand covering her mouth. From inside the mirror, I see her take my red lipstick and start writing the very words that have haunted me since high school: "MANEATER", "HOMEWRECKER", "SLUT", "WHORE." I start to scream and bang my head in the mirror, and shards of glass embed themselves into my forehead, forming my own personal pageant crown. As her laughing face shatters into a million little pieces, and I find myself falling to my knees on the floor, I come to realize my own beauty. Surrounded by an ocean of shattered glass, I have become the siren of this crystal sea of failure, and through the falling drops of blood and tears, I begin to laugh. A degenerate radioactive beauty queen. Never again will anyone touch me. Never again will I be penetrated as an object. No one judging me. I can finally accept myself and move on with this new life I've chosen and-

"Catherine? Catherine Yamamoto? Are you paying attention?" Just like the bathroom mirror, my fantasy world falls apart and my professor drags me by the hair down to Earth. Fuck.

"Can you translate this portion for me? It's your turn." He knows I've been daydreaming, and he looks frustrated with me. I really want to go up to him and tell him that no matter how frustrated he is with me, it is nothing compared to how frustrated I am with myself. No matter how much he dislikes me, I can guarantee I hate myself ten times more. I wonder if that would be any consolation to him.

"Yes sir, I can...."

Just another day in this bipolar roller coaster of sex, academia, and melodramatics. I can't keep doing this.

It's not that I hate going to my classes. I've actually always enjoyed learning, and I find knowledge to be a wonderful fruit to fill the void inside myself with. But while my classmates have become brilliant and polished works of intellectual art, I still find myself straddling the line between "above-average" and "smart". The classroom becomes a war of academic jargon I don't understand and theoretical concepts my mind cannot grasp no matter how hard it tries.

People tell me I'm so unhappy because I have too much sex. "You know if you just settled down and got a boyfriend you'd probably be a lot more stable, and you could focus on your studies more. And you're so attractive! It should be easy for you."

These people...I know they mean well and stuff, but honestly does anyone think I want to live like this? Jumping from one hook-up to another? I've tried finding a guy to settle down with....and you know what line always gets shoved down my throat after they're done shoving their cock down it?

"You're really cute...and very charming. But you know you're not quite my type. We can be friends though!" Oh. Can we really? No. We can't. Let's cut the bullshit, we're never going to talk after this

and the next time we see each other at this very bar you won't even acknowledge me. But whatever.

Wait, you know what I love even MORE? When a guy takes me to dinner, tells me how awesome I am and how much he enjoys being with me, fucks me so hard the endorphins come fucking fly out of my brain, and then as we're cuddling and getting high afterwards, he confirms the classic cliché, "If it's too good to be true, it isn't." That's right, he's already in a relationship. These always used to bother me, but after becoming so commonplace, I learned to just let it go and conveniently leave things of mine for their lovers to find. The results on Facebook are quite entertaining to read.

So what's left of me? Smart, but not smart enough for an elite private liberal arts school. Attractive, but not attractive enough for the city of Los Angeles. It's like the lowest level of social purgatory.

"Catherine what did you think of the reading?" My professor demands an answer. My malformed in-eloquent opinion approaches and departs from mouth, too late to take back after one of my brilliant classmates dissects it with the scalpel of theoretical analysis and throws it back at me, dismembered and decapitated. Oh well. At least I participated.

And just like that, class is over. The school week may be over, but I do have to go to work tonight...I'm needed in other places. And I need to be needed in these other places so I can make money and support myself. I think about how ironic it is that a large portion of my classmates come from upper class families. Amazing private high schools. And what do I come from? What did admissions see in me?

Sometimes, I get really jealous of the people I know who do not have to worry about financial issues. The students who don't have to work. The ones who can afford to take spring break trips to San Diego or Mexico, and rent a cabin on the beach with their friends. The ones who drive those cool shiny cars. Then there are students like me, the ones who have to post an advertisement on craigslist, looking for "generous" guys to take care of them. The ones for whom the beginning of the semester is terrifying purely because buying textbooks could involve jamming a dick in your mouth for money. We keep our secrets in the shadows, hidden away. If no one knows, does it really even happen in the first place? Would any of my friends or classmates even understand?

It is from this perspective I find myself living a dysfunctional albeit fun double life...married to academia but cheating on it with the dangerous liaison known as the real world. Of course, with all the recent changes I haven't been able to make as much, but I sure as hell am still trying. Sometimes I manage to bring in a couple of customers, but they never stay too long. They move on to better girls. I was so good before...and now I'm near the bottom.

Maybe tonight will be better...

The time is 11:37. We're on stage at midnight and I'm still not quite ready yet. My coworker, who goes by the stage name of "Dark Paradise" ("DP" for short) comes up behind me. I shoot her a smile and in an instant her bejeweled hands go straight to my chest.

"Ah I think they've gotten bigger! You're so sexy, Cat...the boys out there are going to love you!" I laugh. She knows how I feel about my chest and I know she's just being nice. It's the thought that counts right? I finish my make-up and hair, and slip on my trademark red lipstick to complete my

transformation. The border has now been crossed. I've arrived into the land of carnal pleasure, the valley of the dolls. The angel of pleasure is ready to go.

My boss then stops by to say that me, DP, and a third girl named Carmen are going to be performing together on stage as a threesome, and that we need to start prepping each other.

For those who don't know, "prepping" refers to the practice of getting each other aroused for a performance. Usually we just feel up on each other's chests, maybe make out a little. It's never anything serious though, and we aren't actually into each other. For us, this is life. It's a job. We feel the same about grabbing each other's genitals as workers at McDonald's feel about flipping burgers.

When Tom calls us to the stage, we're all very "perky" and "excited." He introduces us one by one and the crowd goes wild. I look at DP and Carmen. I can tell we're all a little nervous, but as soon as the music comes on, all inhibition and self-control is shredded and stripped. A driving electronic techno beat grinds through my body, and as Carmen gyrates her body manically into the sensitive softness of my thighs, the electricity of the moment entrenches me and I catch her mouth with my own. The cries of the lustful, sexually deprived, and morally impure fill the room. A dirty tension fills the air, and I feel as if I'm walking over a pool of gasoline. And all it takes is one spark to set everything on fire.

Fortunately for the crowd, DP supplied that spark in the form of a bottle of vodka, pouring it all over Carmen's chest, the liquor collecting in the valley of temptation between her breasts. It's obvious what I'm supposed to do now, and I let the desire of the patrons control my body. Normally I have no interest in women, but my desire to be wanted overrides everything else. I need and crave the attention. If a guy is aroused by me, I feel alive, and just for a little bit, the void inside me disappears. In those moments, I find happiness. And that is why I run my tongue from Carmen's

neck to her navel, ending its voyage at the lower part of her left thigh. Wanting in on the action, DP then pulls my head back, and I know what's coming next. My submissive mouth opens wide, ready to be filled. The vodka pours over me like spring rain, soaking my body and filling my gaping mouth. Like a dog in heat, I get on all fours and crawl around the stage, whipping my hair back and forth in a circle before latching onto Carmen's leg. I pick myself up and pop my ass into DP, to which she lovingly responds with a playful spanking. The crowd screams again, drunk off the cocktail of lust, sado-masochism, debauchery, and faux-lesbianism we're serving on stage. And as the music fades, the crowd approaches us with applause, money, and requests for pictures. We nailed it.

A bar patron comes up to me, wanting to give me a tip. He approaches me with a smile.

"You know I've been waiting a long time to meet a woman like you...you were so hot up there. " I laugh inside my head. He doesn't get it. Not wanting to make things awkward, I play along.

"I try hard...haha" I nervously reply. He pulls out a twenty dollar bill and waves it in front of me. He signals me to get closer. As his hand nears my torso, I know this can't end well. Didn't he see the sign out front? Is the name of the bar not obvious enough? Things are going to pop out in 5, 4, 3, 2,1...

"EH? Wait, you're not a woman?" he yells, obviously taken aback as my penis dangles out in front of his face, a look of confusion coloring him in phrases and expressions of disbelief.

"Well, I'm in transition....you know this is a tranny bar, right? That's why it's called In-Between."

"Oh...sorry. I really had no idea...You were awesome though! I totally thought this was a lesbian bar." He stutters nervously, obviously shaken by the fact that he has just admitted to being sexually attracted to a transsexual. Like a defeated soldier, he retreats, his precious masculinity obviously gravely wounded from being attracted to another being with a penis.

I was born Jacob Landry. Catherine Yamamoto is the name I picked for my new self, both a name I use on a daily basis and during performances. As a gay male, I grew distraught, wanting nothing more than the traditional heterosexual lifestyle idealized in American society. I decided to become a woman because I knew there was no getting rid of my attraction to men, and I thought being a woman would allow me to live a normal life, but things have only gotten worse. My lack of ability to love myself has caused me to become stuck in a space between genders, never being able to capture the best of either. People at school have stopped talking to me, and my family as well has discontinued their financial support. In my efforts to be the American dream, I turned myself into an abomination.

It's lonely. Except for a voice and image in the mirror.

"Silly, don't forget about me! You'll always have me. Come see!"

I turn and around and look at the mirror above the bar. Seeing her there, I clench my fists and walk over.

Let round two begin.