

Cindy Rain

I

Only she wanted to be a singer. I heard her through the walls. Her voice was deep, dark, sweet, like red devil cake from a box. She accompanied herself on keyboard, auto-tune tracks that swam in 1980s joy. In the bath she shows me her breasts: floating alabaster gloves. "They didn't warn me," she says of purple stitches and spoons bubbles like a salve. Cindy Rain works nights, hair strictly parted, schoolgirlish, business card. *Barely/plenty legal*. Lives on rich yogurts, lies a lot.

II

Cindy Rain tells me about all the guys she's with. "Dentists are pervs. They do stuff to your ass." She swings into six houses, in-calls, latex, driver named Sam. Every night she feigns love. Tonight he was on London. "That's in the Annex." "One street south of ours." She changes the subject. "It's ridiculous to go there in a car." He played Gainsbourg, strawberry tobacco in his pipe. Cindy Rain, giddy, spreads her body on Busby Berkeley's sky.

III

Cindy Rain doesn't answer. I can hear my cat inside. On day three I break and call her. She answers like pillows are on her head. "Leave me alone, I'm sleeping." "In my apartment, of course!"

IV

Cindy Rain asks me to bleach her hair: she has the stuff—40-volume peroxide, toner, sticky gloves, bowl, comb, and timer. Used towels cuddle the floor. I know I'm not doing a good job. The bleach fails to stick, her hair grows thicker. She phones me later. "You fucked up my hair." I apologize. She gets it fixed at the Greek hairdresser, comes back with Jean-Harlow-whipped-blonde. "You owe me \$60." She takes me out for dinner.

V

I tell Cindy Rain that she would not seem like a real person, solely on paper. She glows. Gives me dark chocolate. We eat by candlelight.

VI

In grey and black office wear, Cindy Rain materializes at my door. It's two p.m. She's been crying. Her lipstick has turned on her mouth, betrayed the fake smile. She tells me the cops came to a spot she was at last night. She spent two hours in jail. "Oh do I ever have a lawyer," she says before evanescing down the hall. She makes me feel old, Cindy Rain, with her midnight candle burning backwards. She's nineteen but born early in the year. Always the oldest in her class.

VII

The water drains. The bubbles on her skin are lace that doesn't last. I tell Cindy Rain that tomorrow I move. "We'll have to stay in touch," she says, like the law school bound camp counsellor. Smiles soft as a gummy bear, asks me to close the door.