

BEAUTIFUL GIRLS

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ALSO BY MELISSA LEE-HOUGHTON

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Beautiful Girls

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Penned in the Margins

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Beautiful Girls

*Dedicated to my beautiful girls:
Elizabeth, Rebecca, Jade, Alexandra, Elysia & Evangeline*

Heaven

Heaven is the place between the sky and the planets.
You have to soar through the clouds to reach it.
You go there if you have a personality disorder
or learning disability, or if you made all three appointments
in a row. The drugs give you extra lift
as you go. When you get there
you can be invisible. You spend most of your life
that way – it's a comfort. Only now you never cry
and you don't need anyone to watch you cling to life.
Heaven is the place where we spend eternity, amazed
that life has to happen at all;
the place where we are unnoticed and learn to sing songs
backwards and spell out names in languages
no-one uses. We don't have to worry about our insides
or being mistaken for someone else. Being forgotten
is beautiful. Being forgotten has not always been beautiful.

Beautiful Girls

In our graves we are all
beautiful girls. Our skin
is falling away like the tide.
Our bones are
long and slender,
all inhibitions gone. We're
lovely in the mud
that fit boys have dug
for a council wage,
not knowing how beautiful
we lay there
like honeymoon brides
anticipating sex,
not expecting death —
serene as pawns and queens
and home in ourselves
forever.

Sixteen

The red velvet coat meant I was not for sale, but bought. Its fur trim was part of the illusion, and one month in to my living away from home it garnered a stain which no washing machine would ever clean. Just say you were a doll and someone owned you and petted you and you wanted to wake up but your eyes never closed. Just say you were wearing red because you loved the sunset; not because it clung to your body like a bin bag on a wet corpse and your femininity was misinterpreted. Just say death was in and out of your mouth. I wore black boots that didn't need lacing, and I wasn't going anywhere. They were no good for winter, no good for snow, no good for running home. I remember I used to count up the loose change for cigarette papers. I would go out in my red velvet to the chip shop and barter for a bag of salted fat. I was good for roasting. I was good for roasting. My face was like a slot-machine. I make sure we never drive through that town now, in case I see her — a girl in a red velvet coat and boots that don't lace, thumbing a ride. I wouldn't take her anywhere. I wouldn't know *where* to take her.

Hunger Pangs

Skinny girls try to cut into their arms with blunt knives.
Sunita is eating out of the food disposal.
They take flight, run to the bathroom, scrambling
past each other to be the first.
I look at my plate and feel guilty for my hunger pangs.
Sunita has clods of food in her soft, dumpy hands.
They drag her on her behind, down the corridor,
her big mammal laugh booming. This madness in me,
it is of a timbre that leaves my emotions emaciated.

*I cannot cry; these girls are beautiful and dying.
I cannot cry; nobody is going to save me. Not here.*

The sunsets are like nothing else, they move me to tears,
though I watch from my reinforced window. No-one cares
about the fucking sun.
When it's dark, no-one's sorry.
Trees lash the windows like we're in *Wuthering Heights*
and the gale force winds don't mean nothing at all.
They're no match for thirteen girls
who can handle the sight of blood
and will fly out into the night.