

Delicate

We breathe in the night, stand close. I can only see the silver dollars of your eyes when you turn your head just so; otherwise they're just empty sockets, dark and hollow. My hand twitches, wanting to brush your hair back from your face because every time the wind blows, it lifts the one lock and drops it again, and I just want to exert control over anything that makes you beautiful.

Your lips shine, and even though I've often dreamed of that mouth on mine, in this moment I only want to grab hold of your bottom lip and squeeze it between my fingers, crush it like some ripe fruit, rivulets dripping down your chin.

In the almost dark I can only feel your grin. The corners of your mouth twitch, and at the other end of those thinnest, most delicate threads that connect us, my lips curve. I think of smashing your strong, straight nose into your face and watching the blood spray, think of how it will feel as it spatters on my face, think of how I would lick it off my lips in much the same way you just licked yours. Then it's gone.

Your breath steams, quick and ragged. It could be the proximity or the world's brisk hands moving on your skin that causes it to prickle and pucker. I ball my hands into fists to keep from touching your arms, from laying my hands on your exposed, tempting flesh, from raking furrows through it.

The fingernail moon shies behind a cloud and the dark drapes itself over us. You might reach out, only inches really, and take my hand, but you're loathe to touch any part of me, even though you sometimes look at me hungrily. Better that you don't. I might take your hand in mine; I might be tempted to intertwine your long, slender fingers with my own and bend them back, breaking them one at a time, shivering through the snaps and the cracks and the sincerity of your screams.

Hard Candy

15 – Lust masquerades as love, and I fall for it. His uniform is crisp and clean, and I'm sticky from the cotton candy promises he spins around me. When he's on his knees, Max has to look up into my eyes, and I swell with the power I hold over him. He waits, trembling. I give him what he wants.

16 – The air is thick as lemon meringue. Sweat drips from my upper lip into the tangle of hair on this much older man's chest. His name escapes me—Gary, Barry, Larry, something like that—it's unimportant. He runs his hands over my skin, squeezing and kneading until he's convinced himself that this is OK, that my consent somehow makes fucking a sixteen-year-old girl not wrong. I forget him almost as soon as it's over.

19 – Blaine barely touches my body, and I flinch. I've forgotten what it's like to be touched by someone who wants more than just a hole to put his dick in. I want to go back, to be unsullied by all that I've done, by all that's been done to me. His eyes swallow me whole, drink me in gulps. I've never felt as naked, as exposed, as I do right now, and I almost wish he didn't care about me. It makes me feel like a whore. I've lured him with bitter sweets and promises of more and better, but I can't let him in. I bargain with the universe to let me not be as fucked up as I am.

22 – He tells me, in slightly less offensive terms, to put out or get out. I have nothing better to do. His name and face become a blur of cheap motel rooms and neon lights. More than anything I'm upset about the earring I lost in his couch.

23 – In the light, he sparks and flashes, but in the dark, he's all shadow and unfamiliar edges. The first time, when he says my name in a strangled half-growl, I am almost caught. It takes weeks to extricate myself from the tangle of arms and legs, but I escape with damage only to my dignity.

30 – When he finds out it’s been literally years since I’ve been kissed, he kisses me on the mouth and says, “There. Now it’s only been a moment.” Then my pants are off and I can smell the booze on his breath, feel his skinny hips dig into my thighs. I’m already disgusted, with him, myself, the situation. The sex is almost mediocre. I get dressed and leave before he wakes.

31 – The headlights of passing cars briefly illuminate us before plunging us back into darkness. The bricks of the building are cool against my face and arms, the body of this stranger hot against my back as he fucks me in a dark alley. I want to get caught up in the excitement, but all I can think about is how, if I had planned this, I would have worn a skirt. We’re interrupted by the approach of a car, and I quickly pull my pants up from around my ankles. When he tries to kiss me, I don’t let him.

31 – Though I manage, it’s hard to turn him down. I let him touch me too much before giving him the red light, thriving on the look in his eyes, all the while telling him to “stop, your wife is in the other room.”

14 – Standing on a desolate dirt road in the middle of a cold Wyoming night while the stars wink secrets at me, I’m tempted to turn my back and forget all about what’s been lost, or taken, or thrown away. But my conscience tugs at my pant leg, whispering through eddies of dust that if I leave now, I may never find what I’m looking for. This is the place. This is where I saw it last.

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