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# Misunderstanding

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# MISUNDERSTANDING

EMILY STEIN

They laugh.

They love it, the adolescent comedians; giggling and guffawing,  
Their heads thrown back till their necks have snapped backward  
Like playfully flexible straws.

Though I've dyed my hair every color when they mocked its dullness,  
Nearly shaved it all off when they cackled at its length,  
Then dyed it every other color to distract their amusement with its shortness,  
They laugh and laugh and laugh.

But not once have I laughed with them.

Though I've caked my lashes with stinging black when I felt too young,  
Punched my lips with red and gloss when I felt too hideous,  
Plastered my cheeks with blush when I had absolutely nothing to blush about,  
They chuckle and gurgle, spit flying like confetti.

But not once have I see a parade.

I've gathered the courage, referred to as audacity, to make my presence known,  
To let them know I'd offer an arm and a leg to make them understand  
That everything I do is to earn their affection, not solely for my humiliation and their entertainment.

But not once have I received a standing ovation.

I've poked and prodded, pulled and plucked,  
And restructured my entire appearance until I could barely recognize myself,  
And still the hyenas double over, crying with amusement.

But not once were those tears of sympathy.

Eyes watering, makeup smearing, they've always resembled, with biting irony, sad clowns.  
Hundreds of sad, crying and laughing clowns, refusing to treat one girl like a human being.  
Overwhelmed by layers and layers of face paint, the smell of burnt hair, and swells of tears I have never  
Felt less like I belong.

And it was all for them.

If only they knew it had always been for them.