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Let the Walls Have Their Say

by Kathryn McGinness

She's a beautiful girl. Near-strangers tell her this on a regular basis. I'd tell her, too, but I don't like giving things to people who don't appreciate them.

She collects insults. She says that anyone can make up nice lies, but people aren't mean to you unless they mean it. That's why they call it mean. She tacks them up, making wallpaper out of her enemies' best work. Sometimes, she just writes straight on the plaster in permanent marker. I'd call her a freak, but someone beat me to the punch, judging by the stretch of wall above her headboard.

"I'm sick of this place," she says, letting her arm dangle over the window sill. The smoke floats up and out of sight. This is what she always says. So I don't say anything. I'm not in the mood to indulge her.

"God, Lacey," she snaps, dissatisfied with my lack of concern. "Don't go all silent on me. I'm not in the mood."

"Whatever," I mumble back. "Just send me a post card or something when you get wherever you're going."

She frowns, takes a drag. Tomorrow, she'll forget about this and go back to complaining about her boyfriend or something equally inane.

The thing about Heather is that she treats life the way most people treat Halloween: obnoxiously and irreverently, showing up at your door, taking what she can get, and then leaving. You'll get a 'thanks' if you're lucky.

I guess I always figured that I was the exception to that. I was home base. I was where she touched down, traded secrets like candy. Ever since we were kids. Like when she told me that her middle name was Magdalene. Isn't that really freaking stupid, you're the only person I've ever told. Normally that would be the sort of weird thing she would love, but maybe being named after a really famous whore isn't that exciting.

But I guess somewhere along the way she decided to pick another confidante, because in eleventh grade her boyfriend called her Maggie.

Plus, she didn't tell me where she was going. She just packed up and drove away into the night, leaving her room empty and her walls bare. I'm not even as good as her stupid wallpaper.

So I guess I'm not that special after all.

Heather has been gone for six weeks when I start to miss her.