

*Sinx*

Two teenagers were standing on a street corner.

They were both wearing the hot new pants and both had great new butts, discovered on their bodies, a gift from the god of time, boom, a butt. Shiny and nice.

They did not like their butts.

One was complaining to the other that she thought her butt was more heart than bubble and that she wanted bubble and her friend said she thought heart was the best and they stood there on the street corner pressing the little silver nub

that changed the mean red hand to the friendly walking man and the light did not change.

One friend had breasts, the other was waiting.

When the light changed, they both walked to the poster store where the cute boy worked. He was growing so fast that he slept fourteen hours a day and when he came to work he had a stooped look like he'd been lifting large objects for hours and in fact there was some truth in that, he'd been unfurling his body up through his spine, up through itself. Each day people looked shorter and today these two girls—the one he liked with the ponytail bobbing, the other one that touched his elbow which he liked too—they were there again looking in the glass case at the skull rings and joking.

The boy showed them a new poster of a rock-and-roll star in a ripped shirt on a stage with a big wide open mouth that you could fall into. The girls, at the same time, said they thought it was gross. Jinx! They laughed endlessly. Too much tonsil, said one, and she grunted in such a way that made them laugh for another ten minutes. It was that fifteen-year-old laugh that is like a stream of bubbles but makes everyone else feel stupid and left out. Which is part of its point. The boy got a break halfway through the time they were there and one girl said she wanted to look at the posters one by one, flipping those big plastic-lined poster holders, because she liked to stare at her own pace, and the other girl, ponytail, went out back with the growing boy, rapidly notching out another

vertebra right as they spoke, straightening higher like a snake head rising from an egg. They went out back so he could smoke a cigarette and she smoked it with him and when touchy girl finished flipping through the leather-pants women and the leather-pants men and looked for her friend, she couldn't find her and wandered out of the store by herself.

Ponytail girl leaned over and she and the tall boy kissed and it was carcinogen gums and magical.

She liked to kiss in public, so that if someone had a movie camera she could show people. See.

The other girl, now called Cathy, was on the street alone, looking for her friend who was out back with ash on her lips pushing lips against ash, using her tongue in all the different interesting ways she could think of, her breasts rising.

Cathy, teenager, out on the street alone.

This is so rare. This moment is rare. This teenage girl out on the shopping street alone: rare. She walked by herself, eyes swooping side to side, looking for the bobbing blur of her friend, Tina's, ponytail, but Tina was not to be seen, not even in the dressing room of the cute clothes store next door where they'd recently tried on skirts made of almost plastic that were so short they reminded you of wristbands.

Tina now had his hands on her waist, thinking of that exact skirt right as Cathy walked by it, thinking how it had held in her butt and if she was wearing that plastic skirt now, and he held her butt, it would remind him of a bubble, not a heart.

I do not want guys to feel my butt and think of hearts, she said to herself, that is too weird.

Cathy walked to the corner. She thought, Did Tina leave? She thought she'd head back to the poster store but she sat down on a bench instead and when the bus came she got on. She looked at the people on the bus and no one was looking at her except some creepy old man at the front with those weird deep cuffs on his pants and the seat was cold and Tina was somewhere left out in the stores and would they miss each other? Did she miss Tina? Oh, she thought, probably not. And this was her stop and she got off and walked home, and it was hours too early, they were supposed to be at a movie, and when she went inside her mother was sitting there on the couch looking at the backyard. It was like the whole afternoon had got a haircut that was too short. She sat with her mom, making sure the backyard stayed put, which it did, and when her mom fell asleep it all seemed disgusting and this was what happened in the afternoon and she went and looked at herself in the mirror for an hour and felt terrible even though she liked the pose of her left profile best.

And Tina, done with kissing, done with skull rings—the boy settled back behind the counter after waiting two minutes, counting, to tame his erection—Tina was walking the streets and asking people if they'd seen a girl with a great yellow shirt on. No one had, they thought she meant some older woman but Tina said, No no, and she started to cry on the

street because she thought the worst thing, but when she called on the phone just to see, just in case, the most familiar numbers in the world, Cathy answered. Hello? Tina forgot how to talk for a second, she was so surprised, and then she just said, Oh. Oh? Hi. Cathy? Tina? Hi? The two girls bumped around the conversation for a few minutes, but for the first time in life, they didn't know what to say to each other. After a while they just said goodbye and hung up. From then on at school they tended to be friendly but distant and found other people to sit with at lunch. By graduation day, three years later, they had forgotten each other's phone numbers completely, even though they hugged in their caps and gowns and tassels for old times' sake and said, Good luck, Keep in touch, Have a hot summer, Later.