

If One Day I Woke and You Were All Gone,

...Francine, Astrid, Min Jung, Marie, Janet...

I would miss how your hair smells, so much better than any man's.

I would miss the annoying clacking of high-heeled shoes outside my classroom door, and I would miss the sight of a size 7 women's running shoe squeaking on the floor.

What would I do without you reminding me of that promise I made last week? I'm sorry I was so grouchy about your reminders; I'm sorry I used the word nagging the way I did.

...Grace, Carrie, Hsi Lien, Carrie, Woo Jin, Annie, Nicole...

I would miss knowing every woman I've known in the past was still out there, walking around, living her life: ex-girlfriends, classmates, cousins, the rude and popular girls from my middle school, ex-students, the plain girl who sat across from me in English class and the fat girl who had a crush on me in grade nine; that older lady who did the accounts at the office I worked at in Montreal... all of you. I would miss wondering what they are doing now, and I would miss talking about women, because I know that we men would stop doing it, eventually, when we got used to living without you. We would walk around in this big silence, fighting over food and territory. We would never get over you.

I would miss soft hands, and soft lips, and small feet that don't smell so bad. And the effort to make things nice, or tidy, or clean, that most men would never bother to make in a world without you.

I would miss the books that some of you haven't written yet, and would have. I would miss hearing your side of the story.

I would miss the possibility of hearing childrens' voices ever again. I would miss your monthly crankiness, the days when plans get canceled because cramps and bleeding have struck again. I would miss doing what little I could to make you feel better.

...Lime, I would miss you the most...

Honey, I would miss our arguments, as stupid and pointless as they are. I would miss apologizing first. I would never apologize first to a man, ever. I would miss having something to fight for, and someone to tell myself I could protect, if I ever had to, even though I'm not sure how well I'd do in a fistfight.

My favorite part of a woman's body is the curve of her hips, how she cannot help but wobble when she walks. I would miss it if I never could see it again. I would miss delicate faces, and I would miss the way women my mother's age walk, carefully but proudly, strong powerful beings who've made life and cleaned up vomit and fear nothing in the world anymore.

...Stephanie, all you Tinas, Hyun Hwa, Sun Hwa, Jessie, Chiraz, Maureen...

Mum, I would miss your short hair that made me cry when I was little, because it was supposed to be long, but you cut it. I would miss the way you cough when you have a cold, insistently, and I would miss your reading the obituaries first when you read the newspaper.

I would miss kind of women who is insistent, who disagrees with everything I have to say but makes me smile just the same, because she's brilliant and maybe even right. I would miss grannies who swear when they talk, and spit on the ground. I would miss little girls shouting at little boys when the boys act like idiots.

...Claire, Yeong Ae, Ritu, Josée, Karen, Nalo, Mrs. Sawatsky...

I'm not sure life would be worth it, anymore, in a world with only men; but I'd probably live on, just the same, haunted by millions of of gentle, soft-handed, silent ghosts.