

miu miu flannel¹¹

it was on a night three years ago that miu wai-sze was in a car accident. she was celebrating her sixteenth birthday. her boyfriend kut was taking her home in a taxi. and it collided head-on with a truck. both the taxi driver and kut died. miu wai-sze spent two months in the hospital. and when she left she was paralyzed from the waist down. the doctor said she would spend her life in a wheelchair. after that, miu wai-sze always kept on the pair of black leather, clear rubber-soled dr. martens boots. because they were her birthday gift from kut, and also because they had survived the car crash with her.

after miu wai-sze got out of the hospital she did not go back to school and did not work either. she just stayed home all the time. either she'd watch tv and vids, or read comic books, trying to find something to laugh at, or she'd stare at mementos of kut, shedding one tear for each thing. there was nothing her family could do for her. it was a good thing that they were well off enough that she had a stay-at-home mom who could take care of her day and night.

one day miu wai-sze had a sudden urge to go outside, and mom pushed her in the wheelchair to the park. mom told her to sit alone for a while, while she herself ran to the store for some groceries and came right back. miu wai-sze didn't like sitting in the sun with all the dragonflies flying around her, so she wheeled herself over to the shade of the trees. under one tree she saw a young man feeding a scraggly brown-and-white-striped cat. as soon as the cat saw miu wai-sze come over, it scurried off. the man looked up at miu wai-sze, squinting his eyes. the tree's shadow moving across his face. the next day miu wai-sze came back, quietly sitting off to the side without speaking as she watched him feed the same cat. she sat like that four days in a row before he introduced himself, saying, "i'm brother cat." miu wai-sze hadn't spoken to a stranger for a long time, and her voice didn't sound like her own. "i'm miu wai-sze."

brother cat always fed mao mao at the same time every morning. despite wind or rain. miu wai-sze would also come, and gradually started to feel that there was something in life to look forward to. it wasn't that she especially liked cats, and it wasn't because she had a crush on brother cat. she didn't know

why, but every morning she had hope, and a place to go. once brother cat pointed at miu wai-sze's boots and said: "you've been wearing those for a long time!" miu wai-sze was surprised. she had thought that because the boots never touched the ground, they would last forever, but it turned out that through the passage of time alone they had come to look old. miu wai-sze and brother cat rarely spoke to each other. she didn't know what he did, and he didn't ask about her life either. if they were to have a conversation, it would be about mao mao: oh, she looks fatter, she's so mischievous, she jumps so high, she's a girl, she's got tiny pupils, she's got sharp claws, she's got a limp now. things like that.

summer went by. one day brother cat suddenly said: "i'm going to be moving, i'm getting married." after a pause he said, "want to come to my wedding?" then turning to look at the insatiable cat, he sighed deeply. after mao mao finished eating, brother cat suddenly picked up a tree branch and struck mao mao hard with it, frightening her so much she leapt away. she turned back, looking at him perplexed, but he just kept driving her away, until mao mao ran so far she was out of view. the harder miu wai-sze looked, the blurrier her eyes got, and her palms were all wet.

the next day, miu wai-sze asked her mother to take her out to buy shoes. in the shop, she immediately fell in love with a pair of strappy, brown flannel miu miu high heels. the salesgirl let her try them on. miu wai-sze used all her arm strength to lift her body, and then actually stood up, and, teetering, walked over to mom. miu wai-sze never went to brother cat's wedding, and never saw him again. she even started to wonder if brother cat had ever really existed. but she could walk again, and when she wore the miu mius with a new dress, she realized again that she was only nineteen years old.

one cool autumn day, miu wai-sze put on the miu mius to go to a job interview. on the way home, she passed by the place in the park where brother cat used to feed mao mao. in the thicket of the trees, she spotted a yellow mound. as she got closer, she saw that it was the cat's corpse, so starved it had no shape. miu wai-sze's legs weakened then and there, and she tumbled to the grassy ground.