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Emily Johnson

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ON THE SCALE

Emily Johnson

On the scale. Off the scale. 94. The scale must be lying. That's too much, the earth is going to collapse underneath me. What did I eat today? Dried Cranberries, Rice cakes, salad, high fiber cereal, fish oil supplement (10 calories), and steamed eggplant with balsamic. If my hip bones aren't protruding like a bird's beak then I have definitely eaten too much today. How many bowel movements have I had? Only two. Maybe I'll drink some Epsom salt. Shit stings. I can't keep my eyes open but I need to go on a hike I can squeeze two miles in today but I have to be in bed by 11. I need sleep, hoping that nightmare doesn't come back: "Emily, why don't you have some toast to settle the stomach?" Get that shit away from me, the carbohydrates are going to seep through my skin and into my thighs. In fact, I don't need food at all. Humans are gluttonous I need to be less dependent. "Um, does this have caffeine? I can't drink things that dehydrate me." I need more water, that's better than food. Scrape the avocado off the rice cake, too much fat. Is that regular or nonfat? I need nonfat. Carbohydrates slow me down and block my plumbing, can't, won't, not worth it. "What are you doing Emily?" My nightly crunches and leg lifts, can't sit still have to keep moving I haven't had enough exercise today. Am I lesbian? I can't stop looking at pictures of perfect skinny women. I'm fantasizing about having their legs, I need those legs. I'll trade you my arms for those legs. Give them. Please don't ask me to eat the pasta, please, please, please. Ninety, that's what I want to see, but maybe six more pounds would be better. "Why don't you fucking eat something Emily?"

No thank you, I'm fine.

The area around my weak and brittle nails resembles tornado stricken land. My never-ending cycle of self-torture begins with a clean slate. I begin to feel a certain dryness crisp over my young and tiny hands, that's when I know its time to prey. A dryness that most people solve with a simple dab of lotion, but I slowly descend upon the young newly formed skin without mercy. The innocent centimeter that stares back at me cries, "Not again!" No matter the amount of times I tell myself to be good, to resist my animalistic urges, it's always too late. The skin that once lay so delicately is torn apart, bit-

by-bit. All that resides in the concave area upon the most vital instrument on my body is an irritated, screaming red, sorry excuse for skin. It stares back, “Why? You idiot” and I stare at my fingers asking for forgiveness. I have no self-control. The self-mutilation happens without rhyme or reason. I seem to find myself gazing at other’s perfectly moisturized hands that look untouched. Their smooth unscarred skin is inviting. Shaking someone’s hand is the death of me, or rather them shaking mine will be the death of them. I never initiate handshakes. Dermatillomania, Trichotillomania, OCD, Anxiety, Kleptomania, it’s all the same in my book. I picked all my eyelashes out right before my fifth grade school picture and had no remorse at all, just a lot of questions from the photographer.

My grandmother picks the same skin I do. She used to tell me that “a woman must always keep their hands busy,” now she tells me to wear Band-Aids.