

The Anatomy of Evergreen

written by Jazmine Ellington | February 1, 2018



Her body is clumsy, cumbersome, graceless.

She has a birthmark on her thigh. A smaller, darker replica of her mother's birthmark.

Some of her scars are a testament to her clumsiness. Like the scar on her knee from tripping on the sidewalk.

She has her mother's hands. Her mother has her mother's hands.

She's asthmatic. Her lungs swell, burn, drown.

Her aunt says, *You are loved but I'd never want my body to look like yours.*

She studies her body in the mirror. She turns left then right then backwards. She cranes to see it from every angle.

Her family—and random people who see them together—marvel at how much she looks like her mother.

Hives or a rash warn her of an asthma flare up.

Some scars are from bug bites. She thinks they like 0 positive blood.

She has sinus issues. Her ears clog, leak, ring. She is often dizzy. The pain travels from her middle ear to her Eustachian tubes.

In high school, she is cornered by her stalker. She tries to be nice. She talks to him.

She has scars from cutting.

She is fourteen when her father says, *I told your mother she had options.*

She doesn't trust her mirror. She goes to her mother's mirror. She studies her body again. It looks worse but she thinks, "That's more accurate."

Her ribs are bruised in a car accident. She thinks it's ironic the seatbelt kept her from a head injury by crushing her ribs. Sometimes, the connective tissue still hurts.

She accidentally stabs herself in the hand while cutting an apple. Next time, she uses a butter knife.

Like her father, she loves cinnamon.

Her doctor notices the scars on her wrist. She explains her sadness, anxiety, irritation. Her doctor says, *Your brain probably lacks serotonin.* She says, *I can give you something, if you're willing to try medicine.*

The stalker gropes her.

She takes a pink pill. It eases the sadness and anxiety.

She knows what disordered eating does to bodies. Puking affects electrolytes which affect the heart. Not eating enough makes the body think it's starving. It starts eating itself.

She doesn't know how to react. She doesn't want to draw attention. She laughs her laugh that says, "I'm uncomfortable, please stop."

In second grade, a boy her age says, *Your lips are too small. No one will ever want to kiss you.*

Every breath is agony when her bronchi swell.

She was her step father's whipping girl. That is to say: his weapon of choice was metal-studded leather.

She constantly thinks of ways to make herself look smaller. Like wearing black. Or hiding beneath a baggy sweatshirt.

She is still irritated with herself.

Her knowledge didn't stop her from shoving her fingers down her throat twice.

Baggy sweatshirts are her armor. They make her feel safe.

Sometimes, she has a flare up and needs to rest. She uses the nebulizer every four hours. Albuterol lessens the swelling, but speeds up her heart.

She was asked what superpower she wanted.

She tries to fold in on herself.

She wants to be normal.

She thinks she shouldn't add to her mass.

Albuterol makes her jitter.

She wants to be invisible.

She is fifteen the first time she cut.

She gags but nothing happens. She is very good at not throwing up.

If her voice is small and her presence is small, is she small?

She doesn't know what normal is. She knows normal is not perceptual sadness or irrational fear or soothing unease with a razor.

Nine of her fingerprints are loops.

She has scars from her over-excited dogs.

She has astigmatism.

Her wrist is permanently discolored from a bruise.

When her razor slices through an ankle, a thigh, a wrist: She feels relief.

Belts don't leave permanent marks. Until, they do.

She has freckles on her arms and legs.

Her finger was sliced open while cleaning her room. She didn't realize the metal on her belt had bent. A pale scar remains.

She has been given welts of various shapes, colors, and sizes.

There is a tattoo on her back. It means strength forever.

She was seven and he was ten. He took possession of her body in the school library. That is all she is willing to say.

She has seen the same welts on her sister's body.

She fights to not pick up her razor. She wins.

One of her fingerprints is a whorl.

Sometimes, she eats the smallest number of calories needed to function.

She doesn't fight the razor.

Knowledge scares her into eating normally.

Her wrist was scar tissue.

Her aunt asks, *Don't you want to be attractive?*

Knowledge is not enough.

Her wrist is no longer completely scar tissue.

If she can't handle being around herself, how can others?

She has sprained both wrists and ankles many times.

She can hide from others. She can't hide from herself.