

“When the Fat Girl Gets Skinny” – Blythe Baird

The year of Skinny Pop and sugar-free Jell-o cups,
we guzzled vitamin water and vodka,
toasting to high school and survival
complimenting each other's thigh gaps.
Trying diets we found on the Internet:
menthol cigarettes, eating in front of a mirror, donating blood
replacing meals with other practical hobbies like making flower crowns or fainting.
Wondering why I haven't had my period in months
or why breakfast tastes like giving up
or how many more productive ways I could have spent my time today
besides Googling the calories in the glue of a US envelope.
Watching *America's Next Top Model* like the gospel
hunching naked over a bathroom scale shrine
crying into an empty bowl of Coco Puffs
because I only feel pretty when I'm hungry.
If you are not recovering, you are dying.
By the time I was sixteen, I had already experienced being clinically overweight, underweight, and obese.
As a child, "fat" was the first word people used to describe me
which didn't offend me until I found out it was supposed to.
When I lost weight, my dad was so proud.
He started carrying my before-and-after photo in his wallet.
So relieved he could stop worrying about me getting diabetes.
He saw a program on the news about the epidemic with obesity.
Said he is just so glad to finally see me taking care of myself.
If you develop an eating disorder when you are already thin to begin with, you go to the hospital.
If you develop an eating disorder when you are not thin to begin with, you are a success story.
So when I evaporated, of course everyone congratulated me on getting healthy.
Girls at school who never spoke to me before stopped me in the hallway to ask how I did it.
I say, "I am sick."
They say, "No, you're an inspiration."
How could I not fall in love with my illness?
With becoming the kind of silhouette people are supposed to fall in love with?
Why would I ever want to stop being hungry when anorexia was the most interesting thing about me?
So how lucky it is, now, to be boring.
The way not going to the hospital is boring.
The way looking at an apple and seeing only an apple, not sixty or half an hour of sit-ups is boring.
My story may not be as exciting as it used to, but at least there is nothing left to count.
The calculator in my head finally stopped.
I used to love the feeling of drinking water on an empty stomach
waiting for the coolness to slip all the way down and land in the well,
not obsessed with being empty but afraid of being full.
I used to be proud when I was cold in a warm room.
Now, I am proud I have stopped seeking revenge on this body.
This was the year of eating when I was hungry without punishing myself
and I know it sounds ridiculous, but that shit is hard.
When I was little, someone asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up and I said
"small."