



# The Parts of My Body

The parts of my body speak to me. Sometimes they whisper quietly, but in harmony. Other times, certain appendages yell out at me louder than others in a hailstorm of insults. It's hard to shush the voices in my spine, it's hard to smother the sounds, the screaming, that winds its way from my thighs to my ears. My knees pop, enraged, when I lift myself from the couch that has become like a coffin. I'm still young, the doctors tell me I have time to heal, to recover from whatever it is that is essentially killing me.

But I feel old. I feel as though I've endured a thousand years of anguish. I've been struck down, defeated. My eyelids are heavy. My stomach spins like a macabre pinwheel. My joints, when held in one position too long, act as though I've spilt superglue, sticking, tearing away at my bones. Every month the doctors give me a new packet of things to try, a list of medical names that could, perhaps, explain my pain.

“Don't think those medications will help you!” My body screams. One pill. Three times a day. Another pill, once a day in the morning the bottle asks of me, another, in the evening this time. Plus a steady intake of painkillers, just to simply ease the tension of it all. I consume these pills as meals and they proceed to consume me. The lightest touch to my skin sends an electrical ripple over every inch. Like the plunk of a pebble in a pond it expands, it spreads. Like being stabbed with ice, a frozen touch moving around my body. I shiver and spasm without control.

Two hours of sleep. I can barely function as I move through the world's day. Try again. Ten hours of sleep, my bed becomes tight around me, my body ignoring the screeching alarm clock, needing to stay safe from the world. Try again. Eight hours of sleep requires two cups of coffee, and I still fall away from conversations halfway through. Try. Try again. I can never seem to get the numbers right to counteract the torture from the day before.

—Nicole Letson