

## Skinny-Fat

By Jennifer Wang

Looking at myself is a funhouse experience, except there is no joy in being blown up, then shrunk, and stretched every which way between skinny and fat. Multiple pairs of pants reject me before I can even zip them up while the song playing overhead insists, “Real women have curves”. I start to wonder if I’m a sham.

“Have you gained weight?” A simple question makes the comfort I just ate decay inside of me, releasing toxins that threaten to burst free when my mother pokes my stomach or my father advises me to exercise more. I want to regurgitate my desire to be the perfect daughter, but instead, I silently chew in spite of the increasingly bitter after-taste.

“Ugh, I hate my thighs.” Similar sentiments towards butts, bellies, arm fat, and other parts echo in the locker room. I want to offer my solidarity, but the words “skinny wench” resonate in my mind. I swallow my contributions until I grow bloated with self-loathing on the inside while outside, I try to fade into the plaster.

“Sorry, I’m on a diet.” I know we’re all different, but when the fifth person has declined the cookies of which I’ve eaten four already, I begin to consider change. Maybe we can form a support group. At the end of the day, however, the cookies were better companions.

“Damn, she is stacked!” I shouldn’t care about what other think, but it’s *him* and he’s doling out compliments I never receive. I begin counting down to the day we only make love in the dark and more than eyes wander towards a fuller, more hourglass representation of femininity, rather than a lumpy specter of one. The thought make me want to purge what’s left of my insides, including my heart.

“Your cholesterol levels are high.” After a length of emotional hardening, words may no longer harm me, but numbers don’t lie. Everything else looks okay; *I* look okay—to (almost) everyone else. But I’m not, and it’s not just the cholesterol. Still I walk out of the doctor’s office like I walk out of the dressing room: with a smile plastered across my face because nobody can know that I’m dying inside this not-fat, not-skinny, not-hourglass, not-quite-average body. I’m a sham, remember?