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## splitting

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# splitting

she sits in her spot in the classroom, same as always. instead of her notebook, she takes out her laptop. in this particular class, she could get away with dicking around and not doing anything of actual substance, both in the sense of her professor not actually caring and it not hurting her grade. there hadn't been anything major that happened that particular morning or the night before, but the hole above her hip felt bigger than usual. nothing she could do about it for now. had to go to class. maybe if she hadn't skipped that one time before she could have skipped today. but she did skip that one time before. everyone says that health comes first, but that's hard to put into practice when thousands upon thousands of dollars are being put into your education.

sometimes she feels like it isn't as bad. like it's scabbing over and starting to heal like it is supposed to. she'd answer questions, smile at her classmates, check in with those who weren't there to make sure everything was okay. send them the notes and tell them that she's there if they need anything. no one really seemed to notice anything unusual, except for one of her professors who commented that she was mumbling more than usual. she went to her club and held her shit together; she smiled some more, tried to make jokes, and suggestions. then, there were moments where it felt like even her slightest movements were making her side split further open, and the wound was consuming her. like there was blood running from her breast down to her side. when it hurt, she'd kind of hold her breath to avoid crying out in pain. no one noticed that either. she kind of hoped someone would notice. maybe see her discomfort, see her eyes squeeze shut, and face twitch. maybe they'd pull her to the side and help stop the bleeding. tell her to take a break and that it was okay to be vulnerable. nobody did that.

she pulls herself onto the bed and lays on her back. pulling the hoodie up, she decides it's time to finally see if it was all in her head or not. her skin

was tinted red, her jeans stained from the blood. had no one seen that? the fact that no one actually said anything made her think that it wasn't real. her finger traces the inside of the wound, following it from its start on her hip bone, up to just beneath her breast, just slightly out onto her back, and then back again to where she began. she had forgotten how her bones felt. how hot her flesh was. the pulsating of her intestines was a new sensation. had it been this big before or had she just repressed the thought of bloody fingertips reaching out from bruising, beating, oozing flesh?

for a while she just lies there, thinking. curious as to what started the splitting again. was it because of him? despite how hard she's tried to remember him when she last saw him happy at the movies with his hair dyed a pale blue color, misery crept into the memory. suddenly she could see him lying there, wrists split down the center. and then he was hanging from the shower or the rafters, the chair tipped over beneath him. and then he was foaming from the mouth, eyes glossed with a pill bottle or a needle in hand. how miserable the unknown was. if she knew how he'd done it, her mind could only wander so far. but, she didn't know. they never release the details of a suicide. maybe that's why the memory came back. because she would never know.

after some time, she gets up, closes her door, shuts her blinds, and turns on her music really loud. she puts on a playlist called "happy hits!" that way if her roommates come by they won't be able to tell what she is actually doing. she pulls the flat sheet from her bed and goes to sit at her desk. she'd already stained its soft, off-white pattern from the bleeding, and never really slept under it anyway. her phone dings. it is one of her friends asking if she's okay. she responds that she is, but she was "just going through it atm." not entirely false. she was going through it at the moment. she strips down to her panties so that there wouldn't be more blood dripped onto her clothes.

taking one of her dry erase markers (she didn't have any regular markers), she holds the linen to her side, traces her wound, and cuts out a piece to size. she tears another strip to gag herself with; ready for the agony. first, she takes a bottle of rubbing alcohol from her drawer and pours it down the side. her teeth feel like they're going to shatter from how tightly she's biting down. she doubles over in pain, gasping for breath. she's forgotten how much that hurts. then she grabs a miniature sewing kit, meant for little tears in sweaters or leggings or whatever. not for stitches through flesh, that was for sure. she takes a lighter to the needle. heat cleans tools to an extent, right? or maybe she was confusing that with cauterizing a wound. doesn't matter. it's probably going to get infected regardless. she picks a spool of thread with a soft pink color; it will blend with her bruised and bloodied flesh and with the roses from the bed sheet.

quietly, carefully, she stitches the fabric into her flesh. most of the playlist she had put on had been absolute shit, but she likes this song. it reminds her

of when she would do talent shows and things of the sort. she sings along breathy and tense to take her mind off the pain. that way, she could vocalize her pain without raising concern. “and i never wanted anything from you.” the fabric was sticking to her insides. she’d probably have to add a second layer of fabric if she wanted it to last. “except everything you had, and what was left after that too.” her hands are shaking wildly. the needle struggles through her rotting flesh and eases through the sheet. “happiness hit her, like a bullet in the back.” the second layer of fabric hurts more than the first. she had hoped it would be the opposite. she puts the remnants of the sheet into a lump in the back of her closet in case she needs it again, shoves the bloodied clothes into her laundry bag.

down in the laundry room, she scrubs the blood out of her hoodie and jeans in the sink. hopefully a good wash and some of that prewash stain removal shit will get most of it out so she won’t have to toss the clothes. another girl comes in with a basket of laundry. she looks at the girl, then the jeans, then back again. she gives an empathetic smile.

“that time of the month, huh?”

“yeah,” she lets out a forced laugh. “always comes when you least expect it. but what are you going to do?”

“cute jeans. hope you get the stains out.”

“thanks.”