

NO ROOM FOR DOUBT

Crystal

Heart palpitations so severe I am stopped in my tracks.

I know myself. Each day it's more difficult to breathe. The doctor at the walk-in clinic shrugs his shoulders, he barely comes near me.

[traffic sounds]

Four days later, I make my way to an emergency room. I can't walk 10 feet without feeling as though I'll asphyxiate.

What if I'm not taken seriously? What if I'm told I just need to lose weight?

Fear kept me from going to an ER in the first place, but the nurse is kind. In fact, everyone is kind.

[traffic sounds with walk signal tones]

I tell my story over and over, and I wait. I'm taken for a lung X-ray, and I wait. I'm taken for an ultrasound on my legs, and I wait.

My heart rate spikes every time a doctor walks into my curtained area, so I'm fed Ativan and I sleep.

The ultrasound reveals a massive blood clot in my left leg. Part of it had traveled to my lung. Three years earlier, I'm prescribed birth control by my family doctor, who assures me it's OK I've never had a pap smear, he'll do it in a year.

He never does it. Doctor Google educates me about the link between blood clots and hormonal birth control. This terrifies me so I begin moving more. I move often, I move intensely, I move obsessively.

But what is the point of moving if I am not also watching what I eat? Very closely watching what I eat. Recording what I eat. Restricting what I eat. 1200 calories a day, never more, often less. 60 minutes of intense, sometimes debilitating cardio.

Every day, often more, never less. 100 pounds vanish in five months. Everyone celebrates me, but I hate me.

Recovering from pulmonary embolism is exhausting. It's also lucky. People die from this. I don't know how or why I didn't.

Why did this happen to you, you're so young? Eventually I am diagnosed with a genetic blood disorder. The day I was discharged was the first and only day my weight was discussed. I tell this doctor about my history of significant weight loss and significant weight gain. After all I know myself.

He dismissed this information as easily as my family doctor had dismissed my gynecological health, as violently as I dismissed body cues like hunger pains and the exercise induced sting of plantar fasciitis, as intentionally as I now dismiss discussions of deliberate weight loss and body politics that aren't unapologetically radical.

I know myself.