

Internal Dialogue |

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2016 was a year of crying quietly in doctors' offices at the slightest things, the strangest things. The otoscope¹ suddenly reminiscent of another body pressed close to mine, the gynecologist's wedding ring as he slipped it off of his finger, the sound of leaves turning over in the parking lot after finding out about the abnormal cells². The betrayal of my body after all of these months apologizing for my sins.

"Why are you always so stressed out?" my father asked, and all I could do was stare at him. But not saying anything was my own decision.

This time they left the lights on in the sound booth and the woman used the word *exceptional*³, leaning into me, and when she said *textbook case* I was unsure, but then the doctor who has never called it a disability⁴ said to me *you've made it this far*⁵ and I wanted to answer *yes yes yes twenty-five years is something—it is*⁶.

I remember being strong. I remember running trails just after dawn and not feeling tender. "I've been losing my balance a lot," I tell him. "My regular doctor says I just have anxiety." He leaves the statement be and asks if he can clean some wax out of my left ear. For the first time in months I feel normal.

If you want, I can send you to Yale to try out the BAHA device, he tells me. *My other patients have only had trouble with localization*⁷. Localization of sound isn't important if you're a poet and know that all words come from the soul. I have no problem turning toward others when they speak. It gives me an excuse to tell the truth⁸.

I leave this appointment in spring. If you pay attention you'll notice that just before your eyes start to tear up, there's pressure in the glands under your jaw.

In October they will take more of me away⁹. I remember the doctor's face open like a landscape painting, his hands on my breasts, his trimmed nails. *It is nothing to worry about*. In the car I close my eyes and tell myself that I still know my body. That I

1 partial deafness diagnosed 1996

2 CIN 2, abnormal cervical cells, 2015

3 I still hear the phone ring before anyone else

4 I'd like him to have a chat with my mother

5 most likely my cochlea is misshapen or a virus took the nerves

6 sometimes I am exhausted and ashamed of it

7 the process of determining where something—in this case, sound—is originating from

8 If I'm looking directly at a person, I'm incapable of lying

9 biopsies need 2-4 days to heal. Mustard colored coffee ground textured feathers of skin are normal

don't have anxiety, that I didn't wake up not knowing who I am anymore. There are still parts of me that I recognize. Quiet parts that have always worked for me. And if some other part of me wants to shed away in whispers of skin¹⁰ then I should trust it.

“Why are you always so stressed out?” my father asks, and I think about telling him, “Because I never meant for it to turn out like this.”

I'm not Catholic anymore but I like to think that sometimes God or the universe or the Greeks speak through the mouths of ordinary men, and maybe I've been waiting so long to hear from them that I can't help it, the crying that happens on the drive home, the ache in my cheek bones, the laughter that comes suddenly after¹¹.

10 I have a theory that the abnormal cells are my body trying to forget or repair itself, and not my body working against me.

11 Maybe it will all be fine.