

Runner Up

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The blaring alarm breaks through her sleepy haze. Her head pounds as she pushes herself into sitting position. The headache never seems to go away now. With lead in her feet, Blair walks over to the mirror. Dark brown eyes like rotting wood stare back at her; almost but not quite suffocated by big ballooning cheeks. Her long dirty blonde hair can't hide the rolls of flab that constitute her chin; chin goes into shoulder with no hint of collarbones. Her disgustingly broad frame starts at her shoulders and paves the way for overflowing love handles and a drooping beer belly that her baggy black t-shirt can't disguise. Blair grabs a thermal and sweater as well because she still can't hide her bulging cookie dough tubes for arms and despite never ending layers the cold pierces her to the core. She chucks on a pair of black leggings, grabs her school bag and heads downstairs.

"I'm heading out sweetie. There's poptarts in the pantry and dad can give you a ride." Blair's mum informs her as muffin crumbs fall out of her bulging mouth.

"Thanks but I prefer to walk." She responds, making a show of grabbing out a packet of pop tarts. Her mum stuffs the remainder of the muffin in her mouth and races to the door with keys, bag and stacks of paper threatening to tip over in her arms.

"Bye honey! Home late again tonight, money on fridge for pizza." Blair waits for the slamming of the front door before ripping open the poptarts. She chucks the packet in the rubbish and races outside to hide the sugar-riddled devil food in the outside bin. A piercing pain in her stomach slows her down. She hasn't eaten in 62 hours. Kellogg's Frosted Cherry Poptarts - 230 calories each, 33 grams of carbs, 17 of those from sugar alone. Blair stares at the chubby hands holding the poptart with sausage fingers and drops the food. At 75 hours she will allow herself five cherry tomatoes with lettuce, cucumber and spinach along with a medium sized apple, weighed and cut into eight slices, all eaten with a knife and fork. She pauses at the sink and downs two large glasses of water. The familiar feeling of the cold swirling around her hollow stomach comforts her.

In the bathroom Blair drags a brush through her lank hair, barely noticing the increasing amount falling out onto the tiles. It would take something far more drastic than makeup to help her plump red bulbous features, so she doesn't bother. The toothbrush without toothpaste feels routine because for the last three months she couldn't possibly risk the unknown calories in toothpaste.

"Bye dad!" Blair calls up the stairs as she slings her backpack over her shoulder and leaves for school.

The bell rings just as Blair jogs up the school driveway. People stare at her. She stops running, knowing they're staring at the way her enormous thighs jiggle. Mrs Jameson smiles at her when she enters Chemistry. A sad smile. A pitying smile as Blair takes her usual seat at the back to the left so no one behind her can see the way she spills over the edges of her seat. Her notes are all colour-coded with perfect print and she gets her internal back with excellence. Blair has always been an overachiever; she is a perfectionist. The group of girls sitting across from her giggle at something causing her to reflexingly flick her hair back. She is sure they're laughing at the way her back fat bulges over her the band of her bra. As she walks through the hall there is sign hanging around her neck reading: 'Fat ugly whale'.

Classes pass in a blur and its already fourth period. For biology Blair sits in her assigned seat right at the front by Mr Hayworth; he always seems to watch her out of the corner of his eye, like she's causing trouble. He ends the class by handing out their test results and Blair's breathe catches in her throat. She's received a merit. Tears sting her eyes as she tries to

draw air into her suddenly collapsing lungs. Her tree trunk legs can't move fast enough to dart from class. The bathroom is empty when she claims her customary cubicle to compose herself.

"How could I be such a failure?" She says aloud. The sound of her sobs fill the empty bathroom. Now she was ugly and stupid. Blair spends the entirety of lunch studying in the library. You're not allowed to eat in there, just the way she likes it; not having to see, smell or even think about food.

Blair's least favourite class arrives far too quickly. Gym. In the changing room she tries her best to shrivel beneath her baggy t-shirt as she changes and pretends not to notice the girl's unsubtle "sneaky" glances. None of them are even close to her size and can't help but stare at the monstrosity. Blair fights a wave of nausea as she steps into the gym and grabs on the wall to keep her steady and combat her legs turning jello. Maybe they're finally giving out underneath her sheer vastness she thinks to herself.

"Blair do you need to sit out?" Ms Jude comes over with an oddly distressed look. She stands close to Blair but doesn't quite touch her, like she is afraid she'll catch something. "I'm fine." I need the exercise she thinks to herself. Stumbling forward her knees crumble beneath her weight. Landing on her shoulder, she rolls onto her back and looks up at the blurry faces of her classmates, who have run over to see the beast topple. The lights burn into her retinas as she shuts her eyes. Blair can't fight the heaviness suffocating her. Everything goes black.

The floor is warm and soft despite being a solid white material. Blair pushes herself up into sitting position and looks around. She is in some empty white room. She blinks several times, trying to force her eyes to focus on the walls but the room seems to just go on in all directions; it just fades out at the edge of her eyesight. The room is brightly lit though Blair can't distinguish a source. In front of her is a large clear glass panel with a girl standing on the other side. This girl has long blonde hair cascading down to her waist like Blair. Her eyes are the same deep brown with an imperceptible darkness to them but hers have dark purple rings underneath etched into her face. Her cheekbones jut out like her features are carved from stone. The hollowness of the girl's sunken cheeks accentuate her chiseled jaw. Blair wonders how her fragile neck with straining tendons holds up her head. Every bone of her chest is exposed like xylophone, each key playing the same tune of emaciation. As Blair walks over to the glass the girl copies her; she extends her hand to touch it just as Blair does. Her frail arm shakes simply from the effort to raise it. The spidery likeness of her hands raises the hair on the back of Blair's neck and gives her goosebumps. The girl must be freezing judging from her purple pale splotchy skin and soft downy fluff standing on end all over her arms and legs. Even through the simple white dress she was wearing Blair could see her concave stomach and painfully pointed hip bones like knives threatening to cut through the fabric. Her thighs were seemingly miles apart and the indistinguishable light source shone brightly through. Blair tried to speak but stopped as the girl looked like she was about to talk. The girl looked at her shyly and stayed quiet. Blair looked down at herself and the girl did the same. She was also wearing the simple white dress. They both stepped closer to the glass and their fathomless brown eyes widened in horror. They stared into the mirror and as the girl ran her hands over her skeletal frame Blair knew it was her.