



I Don't Know This Body's Name - Interactive Installation

I write this, standing in front of my mirror, staring at a body that isn't mine.

I don't think I'll ever find the words to make you understand the dread I feel, but I'll keep pouring words onto this page until something is spoken into existence that does it a morsel of justice. I know how it sounds - I can assure you that this is not a suicide note for my body - but it felt undignified to have my spirit disintegrate and not allow it a few words.

I am convinced we only have the illusion of control. How do we know our body is our own? Our spirit surely is... and our consciousness... but our body? The brain transmits signals to the organs to function, but it doesn't feel like I am making these demands. Yet, they don't feel autonomous either. Perhaps our bodies are something, or someone else entirely. A creature with no malice, simply an intent to SELF DESTRUCT. My body makes a mockery of my youth. I should be able and strong, but instead I am withering; my flesh is jesting with my mortality. The thing is, despite the struggle, I don't want to fade away. Yet, the physicality of existence keeps suppressing me. No one understands how desperately I crave freedom. I am a PRISONER to the things that withhold my autonomy from me. I am an alien to this system, given a pathetic illusion of control.

There is power in a name.

I know my name - my consciousness' name - but my body ... its name has never been told to me. Likely never will. In the folklore of cryptids, haunts and witches, once you hold the name of an entity, you hold power over it within identification. Often, the witch unveiling the name of the creature she fought was the key to unlocking its weakness and to conquering it. My flesh, however... concealing its identity and its intent without a name to call upon and banish the anarchy, holds complete power over me. I can feel things inside me - twisting, scraping, gorging... the fragility of my soma is the reaper's delight. I feel so small in comparison to the entity of my flesh. My conscious self feels SUFFOCATED by the tissues confining it; the claustrophobia is unbearable at times. My body is tight and uncomfortable, sending signals to a processor that only knows how to set fires ... and my fire alarms are NEVER off. Chronic migraines lead to blinding auras and tingling limbs. The accompanying bouts of narcolepsy and severe weakness leave me without faculty. Without proper blood flow in the brain, depressive episodes follow. The doctors don't know for certain what, why or how, but my nerves are... damaged in some capacity. They're numb until they're suddenly screaming that I'm being torn limb from limb, despite no harm being done. This causes my muscles to tense, ~~which~~ which agitates the nerves further, and a seemingly never-ending cycle is formed. My body is in a constant state of fight or flight, sounding sirens against self-made threats. Yet my stream of consciousness remains whole - completely intact while my body ERODES.

Please, god, please!
Will someone listen and believe me!?

I know I'm not crazy - I can't be!
Every scan, every probe... Snide little expressions
glancing back at me. I wish more than
anything that the culprit would make itself known
to someone beyond me. It's not even that it's
completely invisible. It's that even when revealed
to someone, my soma's perfect deception convinces
them that all flaws are not of body but of
mind. Either that, or my identity as a woman
acts as their scapegoat. "Your pain isn't real.
Maybe it's psychological? Hormonal? Have you
considered you may be pregnant, or it's just your
period?" All fear of diagnosis has faded. I
would rather a test reveal what the hell is creating
chaos within me because the moment it makes
itself known to someone outside this system - the
moment someone has the evidence they need to
believe me - is the moment I can begin to
RECLAIM MY AUTONOMY.

As scary as everything is, I have found a sort of
peace in taking a step back from my day-to-day chaos and
realizing that there is probably no point. Worrying about
pushing through the pain to accomplish goals doesn't feel like
it matters when the future is so bleak. If I just get sicker
as time goes on, what's the point? It's easier to just focus
on surviving today: Is that sound advice, or just
taunt to give up? In actuality, I've become a chronic
workaholic for fear of giving into decision. Every day I push
a little harder and work a little more, and I am punished for not
giving up... and every day it becomes harder and the
punishments become worse. But I honestly fear that if I
stop, I may not start again. If I stop, I am accepting
that I am not normally abled.

IF I stop, I am admitting weakness.

Honestly, I feel vulnerable even speaking about this in such a raw manner. I fear that if I share these deeper thoughts, people will look at me differently, be concerned, pity me, or see me as fragile or a burden. Countless times while writing this, I considered abandoning the project in apprehension that it would be taken as a cry for help, rather than a plea for understanding... but I can't ask you to understand the vastness of the ocean without showing you both the gentle shallows and dark depths. While I have no intention of allowing my adversity to overcome me, it doesn't stop the constant flow of thoughts from trying to drown me in rivers of doubt and anxiety. The practise of mind over matter is incredibly powerful, but when you live inside a prison, sometimes it's hard to see past the bars.

So here I am. 3:00 AM. Still working. Still trying to write you the perfect scary story. Trying to come up with something that sends chills down your spine while knives are stabbed through mine. I've tried ... many times in fact... to make you some beautiful piece of literature, but I can't distill everything I feel into the brief experience of a fictional character. So I decided to tell it as it is, unveil the very real horror of the chronic afflictions that plague my every day, illuminate the visceral realities of a body that betrays me.

