

Save me a Slice  
Luana Stathopoulos

I feel it sit in my cheeks, then slowly climb down my esophagus. It rests in my stomach for a day or two, overstaying its welcome like an unwanted guest, until it decides to rid me of its torment.

It climbs out as if it didn't do a bother, leaving its secretion of calories and guilt piled upon me.

Even after its eviction, I am constantly reminded of its existence. I see it fold over when I sit, spilling out my denim at the breakfast table. I feel it when I run my fingertips down the backs of my thighs, my skin like a battered street ruined with potholes. I hear it as my lungs pinch, stomach tucked tight at the shutter of a camera. It's especially apparent when tonight's birthday dinner must first be earned by an hour hovered over the toilet. Saliva dribbling down my chin, guilt swirling in the water. I often grieve my inner child. The one that raced to grab the last slice of cheese pizza, licking salty fingers clean. The one that twisted clouds of whipped cream into her mouth then her brother's. She faded in place of insecurities and now my lips only meet green leaves and ice cubes. Aching to be skinny, aching to be accepted. I desire beauty in a form that is unnatural to me. One that wants to rip away my curves and soft spots. I envy the girls that don't have a second thought. The ones that would lift a brow if you tried to explain why you can't wear crop tops without the safety of your sweater. It's conflicting though, the way I love my friends, sisters, mothers, cousins and the space that they fill so elegantly, no matter how much or how little. In reality, more than anything I wish to wrap my arms around my beaten soul, wipe away her tears and to whisper words of kindness until she is reborn. I wish to heal her so that when she's met with her reflection she feels nothing but content. Someday I'll unlock the door that holds my younger self and with a smile, I'll ask her to serve me a slice of cake.