

F\*T*Ellie Cheng***TW: Fatphobia**

That which-shall-not-be-named spills out from under the knife, plump and ripe for the picking. Try and guess what it is. It's bouncy. It's delicious. It's all too confident for what it is. It is good and evil in the same breath, it bestows the most sumptuous of curves to the luckiest bodies and an eyeful of batwing and fupa to the less fortunate. It's the bane of your existence and an essential aspect of which we live. This little piggy went off to market. This little piggy stayed home. This little piggy had roast beef and got on the Atkins diet. It's a bad word. The worst word.

Your mother insists that you were born f\*t. Like a pregnant woman. A mountain. Garbage incinerator. Melissa McCarthy. She would know. Two hundred pounds with curves all in the wrong places, once upon a time she was the beauty queen of Hong Kong before she came to America and discovered Burger King. Her favorite hobby was "grabbing your meat," a phrase you never had the heart to explain. It was like a game to her, and it was the funnest when you never saw it coming. A handful of your stomach, tumescent and water-like when you passed her in the kitchen. Your ass meat, slumping sadly into the hold of her hand. She'd scream "I've got you!" and your father would yell "Stop!" but she looked at you like a cat that ate the thousandth canary, nails still glinting with the skin she'd scraped off. "No," she'd say, "I love her."

Everytime you call your mother it goes something like that. "Fire that barber. Your bangs make you look bald." "Is it two hundred pounds now? Tell me if I'm right." All these little things she has to overlook to convince herself that she loves you. All these little things you have to overlook to convince yourself that you love her. To be or not to be, to love your mother or hate her so fiercely you would fuck your father for the sake of traumatizing her. You have no way of deciding. Emotions have always been a finicky thing, either what's left of yourself you can scrape up off the floor or the truly, deeply ingrained belief that you are God. Your therapist calls you an empath. Your psychiatrist says you have bipolar disorder. Ironically, maybe your mother is the kindest about it. She just calls you "sensitive."

The last time she put diet pills in your food you told her you were running away. Good, she said, if it meant you'd run.

Wash the cut in water from the Mississippi River, make sure the f\*t only

accounts for two fingers width or it'll make for an oily meal. And God, just looking at you, oil is the last thing you need right now. The scallions must be sliced on a bias, just as with the chives and the garlic. You hate the taste of ginger but you'll put it in anyways because you are cooking the Chinese way, the way your mother likes because everything has to be for her. Like it always has been. Even back when she was Maa and not Mom, back when she patted your cheeks instead of pinching them and she shoveled chao fan into your mouth like your life depended on it. You were a cute baby. A chubby one, but no one hates chubby babies. Not like they hate chubby adults.

She loves you, she swears; more than anyone else ever will. But she hates when you ruin her game, she hates when you give her needling real consequences. When you hurt yourself in the ways you thought she'd want, she screams at you "Why would you do this to me?" And you scream back, "Because I have to!" So you take your vengeance piecemeal. You laugh when she looks in horror at your body, stomach eating itself, you exult in the look she has on her face when she wants to say something but thinks you're too "unstable" to hear it. But it never lasts long. You always become f\*t again and she always will comment, and that will be the way of things.

Once a doctor said you had malnutrition, from all the anorexia you had been practicing. Your mother took you home and slapped you. It only took two weeks for her to start calling you Kim-Jong Un again.

You'll make a permanent fix, this time. Better than a daughter she can only love with "buts."

### **TW: Self-harm**

Quick, before the blood loss makes you dizzy. Trace the curves before you sever them, appreciate in full the thoroughness of the good Lord's work. Do not falter at the oddity of gooseflesh, the flinch before the bite. Let yourself wonder at the seaming of flesh and skin, how easily it falls apart. Hope that the Father, Son, and Dr. Oz would be proud of the mess you have made.

Cheaper than liposuction.