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Her Body, the Pharmacy

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Her Body, the Pharmacy

Jessie Fales

She takes the pills by mouth. These are the pills she takes so she doesn't die. This yellow one is an antibiotic. These small white ones are anti-inflammatories. This big pink one is an immunosuppressant. When taken together, the pills taste like bleach and cat piss. These two are for nausea, because she sometimes accidentally takes the others on an empty stomach. All the pills make her gag. She feels them in her throat, long after she's swallowed.

This pill gives her energy, because one of the other pills makes her tired. She can't remember which one. The simple act of swallowing makes her tired. This pill is a vitamin, but it doesn't have iron. This pill is iron. This pill is vitamin B12, because on top of everything, she's a vegan. This is the pill she takes when she can't shit, because that pill makes her constipated. This pill is calcium, because that pill causes brittle bones. This is the pill she takes when she feels anxious. This is the pill she takes when she's depressed. She's anxious and depressed because she takes so many pills.

This is the pill she takes when her parents catch her not taking it, even after she hasn't taken it for a month. Even though she is twenty-three, they scold her like a child. "You're an impossible patient," they say. "You're disobedient. They'll write it down in your chart!" This is the pill she takes every night so she doesn't get pregnant, because one (or more) of the pills will mutate a fetus in the womb. It doesn't matter that she hasn't had sex since she was sixteen. "It isn't worth the risk," her mother says, "You don't want a deformed baby. You'd have to abort it." This is the pill she takes when she smokes too much marijuana. This is the pill she takes when she wants to sleep all day, and then she takes this one to sleep through the night. "I'm tired all of the time," she says, "But I can never sleep."