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I refuse to have my scars hidden or trivialized behind lambswool or silicone gel. I refuse to be reduced in my own eyes or in the eyes of others from warrior to mere victim, simply because it might render me a fraction more acceptable or less dangerous to the still complacent, those who believe if you cover up a problem it ceases to exist. I refuse to hide my body, simply because it might make a woman-phobic world more comfortable.

— Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals*

On the tough skin of my belly, padded by fat and comfort and warmth, lie thousands of tiny white scars. Little pockmarks on my skin from years of inserting, removing, replacing, inserting, removing, replacing infusion sets and sensors and needle tips. Some are deeper than others, infusion set sites that were infected because they were left a little too long, too much insulin dosed at a time, not enough fat underneath to cushion the impact of the medicine being pushed into my body. These little scars, as invisible as they may be to the naked eye, are my gaper delay when I insert, remove, replace. I stop, take count of them for a second or too, before moving on. Insert, remove, replace.

I can see them most clearly when I change my sets in the morning when the sunlight hits my window head on. It's the same time I do my makeup by sunlight,

carefully applying concealer that may or may not match the yellow undertones in my skin. It's the same time I curl my eyebrows so when I apply mascara, they don't touch my glasses. It's the same time I brush my hair, gliding through my thick black hair and tugging at the tangled, bleached ends. I can see the scars as I rub the skin with an alcohol swab while choosing which scar is tiny enough that I can put insert another infusion set on top of it. They glow a little when the light hits them, illuminated as a non-natural part of my skin. I did this to my self from the seven years of repeated insertion, removal, replacement. Where will I be in another seven years, when my whole skin is scarred and the sets no longer go in? Then what will I do?

I remember trying on bathing suits in the Target dressing rooms in 2011, trying on a red, white, and blue bikini. I called it my "Captain America" bathing suit because the patriotic colors made me feel like my favorite superhero. I was strong in this bathing suit. I was fierce. I let my fat hang over the top of the bikini bottom. I clipped my insulin pump to the ties on the side. I could see the infusion set attached to my belly. I could see the scars. I didn't care.

On the beach later that summer, I cared. Everyone could see the pump attached to my hip, the infusion set causing a tan line on my tummy. I could see the stretch marks on my upper thighs from the three consecutive years of muscle growth during the crew seasons. I could see my fat. I wanted to hide under a sheer

wrap or lay flat on my stomach, tanning my back with no sunscreen. I wanted it all to be hidden. I sat in my beach chair next to my friend Kelsey while she read *The Help*. My tiny Collins Classic copy of *Pride & Prejudice* did nothing to hide the stretch marks on my thighs, nor the scars and the infusion set on my stomach. It was too small to cover any significant part of my body. It would cause a tan line.

When we left the beach later that day, I wore a pair of cut off denim shirts with the pump clipped in my back left pocket and a blue and white striped tee shirt over my Captain America bathing suit. I could feel my thighs rub together as I walked, the chafing between my legs becoming more uncomfortable with each step. I hid myself.

In April of 2014, I bought my first crop top from the Topshop on Princes Street in Edinburgh, Scotland. That year, Edinburgh's winter was mild, but the spring weather never appeared. I was buying a crop top because it looked cool. I stood in the dressing room, sweating under the lights and the heat of the unairconditioned basement. I stood in a pair of patterned silk joggers and a black crop top. I took pictures of myself in the mirror. I felt good. I couldn't see my infusion set or my CGM sensor; they were tucked away under the high-waisted joggers. A small sliver of pale skin above my belly button and below my ribcage showed. This was all I cared to show, the one sliver of skin without scars. I bought

the simple black crop top for £8. I posted the selfies of me in the crop top on tumblr with the caption:

selfies of the day: really into the whole sweatpants/joggers as real fancy pants and crop tops at the moment so i think after exams i'm gonna buy these outfits as a treat yo'self and i don't care if anyone else hates it or thinks it looks gross on me because i love it and i love my body and fuck you all go dine on my clit if you don't think i'm cute as heck

It took me another month to wear it outside my flat.

About two weeks before I was scheduled to leave Edinburgh, I gathered my group of gay and queer (mostly women) friends to go out for a night at the trashiest club in town, the Hive. I bought a new crop top for that occasion, one with a tropical print. I wore it with a high-waisted, tight black skirt. The scars were still covered, the CGM sensor covered. My infusion set peaked out of the top of my skirt. I was okay with that. I went out, I drank, I danced, I stayed until the club closed. I forgot about my infusion set. I was okay.

That same week, I wore a giant sweater, the simple black crop top, and jeans to a friend's flat for a vindaloo curry and chat. I bought a bottle of Leffe, a beer I'd grown to love during my short trip to Brussels, at the Co-Op down the street because it was on offer. When I got to my friend's flat, the room was too warm for

my sweater so I peeled it off in the safety of Cat's living room. Her bay windows were completely open, and as I sat on a folding chair with my legs propped up on the window, drinking straight from the bottle of Leffe beer, and my fat hanging over my tight belt, Cat's girlfriend, Heather, snapped a couple of pictures of me. My scars were present. Two infusion sets (the one I'd left on from that morning so the insulin I'd taken before inserting, removing, replacing would stay in my body was not attached to anything at all) were present. The sensor was present. My fat was present. My flattened chest from wearing only the crop top and no bra was present. I loved it.

When Heather posted these pictures of me on Facebook about two weeks after I'd left the UK, I was stricken with a fear that all of my home friends who wouldn't understand my queerness, my liberated body, my acceptance, my womanhood, my color, any of it, would hate these pictures. Instead, my friend Ellie that I'd met while abroad commented, "hoooooooooly shit ♥_♥", my friend Betty commented, "I ADORE YOU". Taylor liked my pictures. My best friend's college roommate liked them too. What I found was that I'd surrounded myself with women who loved me, women who appreciated me, women who didn't care that I was showing everything that some people didn't want to see. I was surrounded and loved by women that I loved back and wanted to be surrounded by. They weren't afraid of my scars, my fat, my imperfections. Neither was I.
