

Unfortunately Fortunate

I am lucky.

Some people believe in fate, but I don't. Coincidence and luck, they run life.

Luckily, I was born lucky. White skin, how lucky.

I was born with a trait that let me blur out skin associations. What did black mean? Red? Yellow?

Crayons were limited as a kid. The 24-pack only had the basics, but no cream, no "skin colored" crayon. I left the skin stark white on the paper. Settle for yellow? No. Yellow is not a skin color. Neither is red. Neither is black. Neither is white.

Nothing, nothing is better than bright yellow scribbles. I left the skin stark white on the paper.

A pop culture museum played footage of The Jackson Five. Michael Jackson used to be dark skinned? How did he turn light skinned? I asked my mom. She laughed. The adults around me laughed. The African American family in the back of the exhibit laughed. How cute.

Eminem isn't dark skinned? I spelled Marshall Mather's name as "M&M" like the candy boxes I used to get at the movies. Aren't all rappers black as all birds winged?

I learned at the zoo not all birds with wings can fly when I saw the Ostrich.

Children can be naïve. Children can be foolish. But boys must be strong and girls must be pretty. Boys can play sports, can play with dinosaurs, can play with cars. Power. Girls can play dress-up, play with Barbies, play with make-up. Beauty. When I was five I played basketball in my driveway and with dinosaurs in my basement. I hated cars. The Barbie dream mansion I got for Christmas became a reptilian cave. What a gift.

Unluckily, I am a woman. I have long curly hair, paint my nails, cry during the Notebook. I like pants more than dresses, blue more than pink. Colors again.

I leave the paper stark white.

Nothing is better than wrong.

I know too many rules to stay safe at night. Don't walk alone. Don't walk in under-lit areas. Don't take the elevator. Don't stay in the stairwell for too long. Don't accept that drink. Don't wear that. Don't do this.

Don't.

I go on walks by myself in the middle of the night, lit only by the shine from the flickering streetlight on the river trail. Boys call me a fool, girls call me crazy, and maybe I am. Alone after dark? What a crazy fool.

Luckily, I get the door opened for me. The man pays for dinner, for drinks, for the ring, but the man also asks. No thank you, I'll open my own door. Push or pull? A girl is always pushy who refuses.

When he asked me to dance, I said no. My friend called me rude, he called me a bitch, and maybe I am. No to a dance? What a rude bitch.

A Buzzfeed quiz told me I was bossy.

Luckily, I have freedom of press. I have never had to suffer under an oppressive government, never had to fear men with big guns patrolling the streets, never had to fear the words that tumbled from my mouth freely, without consequence. Bitch? Why not? Luckily, I was an American bitch.

I am American, but my roots are jumbled. My grandmother is German, no Austrian. She cannot decide. The borders were messed up, the lines were skewed. No one wants to be German:

harsh, aggressive, oppressive. But she is loving and kind and gentle. She cannot be German; she loves everything.

She hates throwing food away, hates wasting. Growing up in poverty has taught her rules. When she makes city chicken, she puts the wooden sticks in the dishwasher.

The summer between my fourth and fifth grade my mom made my sister and I clean out our closets. We put them in black trash bags and dropped them off at the Salvation Army. I watched girls my age walk into the building with their mothers from the comfort of my mom's mini van. It had automatic push-close doors.

My other grandma is Polish. She loves bread and meat. Diabetes plagues her life and haunts my father. I am healthy, lucky.

I went to Disney at a young age and watched wheelchairs cut the lines. I wanted one. Jealous. The wait for Test Track took too long.

I hate waiting.

I once bruised my tailbone and had to leave class early. I shuffled slowly through the halls while people pointed and stared and jeered and giggled and gawked and pitied. My tailbone healed within a week, but that kid in the wheelchair can never heal. How lucky I was.

I still hate waiting.

As a child, I hated a lot of things: spiders, rollercoasters, tomatoes. I hated dressing up, I hated getting up early, hated sitting for an hour, hated long lectures, hated church. Religion has never been a focus in my life. Agnostic, I write in the box on my religious line for my anonymous college survey.

Thank God it's anonymous. Thank the God I doubt is there. Who else?

My grandparents are religious, my sister and parents too. Catholics.

One day when I was nine my parents decided to tell me that my Uncle was gay. They sat me down and made it formal. They talked in soft voices. His friend Paul was more than a friend was how they phrased it. I said okay.

My Uncle thinks he's going to hell. He's very religious, never misses a Sunday. Catholic.

My Uncle thinks I'm going to Heaven. I'm confirmed and straight. Lucky.

I can't remember the last time I went to church.

Religion only appears in spurts in my life, at holidays or late at night. Darkness makes everything scarier. My thoughts are scary: I hope, I do not believe. I hope that Heaven exists, just for the beauty of it. A beautiful idea, beautiful like Christmas lights in July.

I got a Barbie's dream mansion for Christmas. What a gift. How lucky I was. Didn't I love the color pink?

My grandmother says her rosary every day because her mother used to. My mother doesn't. I won't.

White. Able. American. Heterosexual. Upper Middle Class. Lucky.

Female. Non-religious. Unlucky.

I believe in a world where luck doesn't matter, where luck has no weight.

But I do not believe, I hope.

I write to prove that even luckless traits, imperfections, can be desirable. I write to prove that unlucky people can sometimes be the luckiest.

I leave the paper full. My words. My opinions. My ideas.

Wrong is better than nothing.