

# The Nightly Dance

by Brianne Fidgety

My genetics are the very things from which monsters are bred: distorted features, Medusa hair, misaligned spines, and banshee voices. It's the fairy stories. It's the howling violins. Encoded into my DNA, twisting the double helix so tight that it threatens to snap each time it replicates. Night after night, thunderstorms rip through my brain. The electricity animates my body into myclonic dance. I do not rest. I dance with the demons; I dance with Nijinsky rage. I dance with the fury of Saint Vitus and his wooden cross. My shoes are fashioned with my own fear, tanned and stretched over my feet. The music is the low rumble of static, white noise generated from a typewriter key jammed in-between stations in one of the valves of my heart.

The mornings are the worst. Hungover and drained, the residue from the dance clings to my bones so tightly that I cannot wake up unless I throw myself to the floor from bed. I punch and kick at the wooden boards in frustration because my head is too heavy for my neck to support by itself; I have seven cervical vertebrae, and seven is not enough. Every morning I picture the same thing: Once, I saw a picture of a giraffe's spine. They have seven, too, but their vertebral bodies look like they could withstand several thousand tons of pressure. They are stalwart and sound, not delicate and susceptible to crushing like ours. As I turn my body into a fulcrum, I wish for a giraffe's spine. Iron and solid, I would be unstoppable. I would still feel like I was moving through sand, but I could move.

Fine motor skills are non-existent. It does not matter how large of an obstacle is in my path — if it is there, it will cause me injury, despite stepping to avoid it. The dance is in perpetual motion. My hands will strike the wall. My legs will want to be parallel with the shower floor. I brush my teeth, and my mouth is full of blood; my toothbrush becomes a weapon when my body is so unstable. Even

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when my full attention is devoted to the smallest of actions, they remain impossible.

A self-destruction sequence has been initiated. I started taking pills to slow this process down. They're roughly the size of a needle's eye and stamped with words and numbers I haven't bothered to read. But there is no reset function. My central nervous system is rebelling harder, severing its own connections with steel teeth. I have not slept. There is no sleep. Until my brain rots like wood, until my corpus collosum fills with pus and collapses, bubbling with the fear and electricity conducting through it. Until a piece of me will spark and catch flame, and I will burn away into a pile of ash.

I hate this waiting game; the telegraphs should disintegrate under the force of my frenzied tapping.

