

BRADFORD WRITES!  
Fall 2023

## **Fat**

**By Austin Reese**

Kelsie is my friend. My fat friend. She was born fat and she will die fat. There is no surgery, no medication, no exercise, no juice cleanse, no ‘miracle’ to change this. Fat is her adjective, it is her. I only recently believed this.

As newly crowned adults, Kelsie and I took a summer course for college credit. The venue was an airless, cramped auditorium. The seats were all on one floor, with shared armrests and flip desks. The professor, a frail older man, insisted that we all sit in assigned seats with no gaps between us. He felt that, in doing this, he nourished classroom discussion. With the odds against us, Kelsie and I were separated. I sat in the second row, with Kelsie in the first.

After school, I would drive Kelsie to her house and teach her to purge. I knew from television; it only took two fingers to erase the mistakes of the day. Weeks went by, and I started to notice Kelsie gaining weight again. I was furious. How could she abuse her body? I had finally set her free, and she scampered back to her tragic life-- like a stray dog to its abusive owners. I bitterly demanded her “justification”? Kelsie burst into tears. Her eyes were dark and strategically pulled away from my glance. She asked me to leave, and so I did.

Our altercation caused a rift between us. I gave her the space she wished for, and she took it. I did not see Kelsie for two weeks. She did not show up to our class meetings, which I thought was an extreme overreaction. Would she actively miss classes because of our tiff? Kelsie eventually returned to class, albeit decrepit. For the full hour and fifteen minutes, she would stand holding her notebook and pencil. Her shoulders slumped from the weight of her books. Her legs wobbling by the end of class.

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I decided to confront her one last time.

“Is there any way we could talk. I notice you standing a lot and it has me concerned.”

After what felt like eons, Kelsie confided:

“I am uncomfortable sitting in the auditorium setting because the arm rests dig into my side, and I cannot even use the flip desks because they do not fit me.”

Shocked, I immediately offered to go to the professor with her to ask to use a more accessible room. But alas, she had already talked to the professor, whose hands were tied over the lack of open facilities to teach the class.

I was dismayed. I never thought that something considered a societal norm, sitting, was anything anyone worried about. Concurrently, I never thought about my chair because I never had to. Knowing the university’s facilities were not accessible to a student paying a dementedly high amount, pushed me into revelation. The world should cater to bodies, not the other way around. Some people are fat, and that is okay. I realized my attitude towards fat people was toxic—as was the general public’s. I started prioritizing my mental health after deteriorating it with constant bulimic pressures. Kelsie and I later rekindled our friendship. We ended up dropping out of college later that year; I attribute it to lack of accessibility. We are now best friends and roommates, advocating for each other in our return to higher education at Pitt Bradford.