

## **8:00 to 8:05**

By Cecilia Cipullo

She wakes up around 8:00 am. Everyday she puts on sweatpants and a sweatshirt before she eats breakfast. This way, she doesn't have to think about which outfit looks good on her; she doesn't really want to do that yet.

Although, right after the sweatpants are on, she pulls them down. Only a little, but enough so the bottom of her stomach is exposed. She also lifts up her sweatshirt, so the rest of her torso is visible. Standing sideways in front of the full length mirror on her door, her profile looks back at her. She registers how big the lump of her belly is this morning, compared to the top of her chest.

Heading out of her room, she walks across the hall to the bathroom. Downstairs, she can hear her mom puttering around in the kitchen, but she doesn't give a thought to what she might be making for breakfast. In the morning, all thoughts stay on herself. And not breakfast.

She groans. She's feeling the bloating in her face already. It's bothering her. She plays with the fat on her cheeks and under her chin as she goes into the restroom and locks the door. Looking in the mirror above the sink, she prods her cheek, pulls her skin. She sees how far back she has to push her neck to create a double chin. It seems to happen immediately.

Sitting on the toilet, she lifts her legs up and down to see how her thigh fat flairs out from the pressure of the seat beneath her. She looks sideways at her reflection in the clear shower door, examining the rolls her body has when she's sitting. She sees how she can make them disappear when she sucks in all the way, straightens her back. It's painful. It hurts to make her ribs visible. She has to hold in so much air. Often she wishes they would be visible without her

trying. Reluctantly, she exhales, watches her stomach expand in front of her eyes as her body relaxes and posture crumples slightly. Comfortable now in her body, but not in her brain.

She tears her eyes away from the glass reflection - her makeshift mirror for this moment - and takes out her phone to distract herself. She will just keep pinpicking her body if she doesn't do something, anything, else.

She'll be on the toilet for a while, until she passes a bowel movement - preferably a big one. That would affect the number she sees later. It would make it lower. So she waits for her intestines to start working. This can take up to thirty minutes sometimes. Her GI systems are totally fucked up. That's what happens when your mind tells you not to eat what you're supposed to; to eat too much of one thing or too little of another. She finds it, honestly, annoying. It makes her self-conscious going to the bathroom in public places. She knows she will be there a while.

She looks away from her phone to the scale on the ground next to her. If she weighed herself yesterday, does she need to today? If she didn't, she should weigh herself. Right? That makes sense. Well, no it doesn't. But also it does. It's confusing, twisted. By the time she stands up and flushes, she's decided if she will step on or not. She takes off her sweatpants and sweatshirt, stands on the scale. She does it three times, to make sure she sees the same number.

Washing her hands, her mood is already adjusting based on the value she saw. Leaving the bathroom, she makes back for her bedroom.

"Ana?" her mom calls up from the kitchen. "You coming down?"

"Yeah, give me a minute."

Ana closes her bedroom door and looks at herself in the mirror, downcast. She checks the small clock on her bedside table. It's 8:05.

Breakfast.