

She is fairly sure that her heart is angry.

Not the metaphorical heart that people draw on construction paper and give away for Valentine's Day, but the real one, the muscle with tubes and ventricles and who-knows-what threading through it, pumping blood, keeping her alive for all she doesn't care either way.

The other day, she was walking on the sidewalk and it was keeping the beat, thump-thump, thump-thump and then it got mad and went off beat. Thump-thump-THUMP. Thump-thump. She missed a step and the whole day was ruined, like stepping on a crack and breaking her mother's back. She doesn't have a mother, though, just an angry heart.

If she had a mother and a heart that was not angry, she would probably not have been walking on the sidewalk. Walking on the sidewalk is something that she does every time it rains and she is fairly sure that people with mothers and content hearts do not walk on the sidewalk in the rain. At any rate, she has never seen anyone else doing it. That is okay with her. She doesn't need to be like anyone else and no one else needs to be like her. She wouldn't wish her angry heart on anyone.

Once, in kindergarten, they were making hearts. These were the construction paper kind, the kind that started as clumsy teardrops on red and pink paper, the kind that you had to have the teacher cut out because you didn't have safety scissor privileges. She couldn't draw the teardrop right and the boy next to her was making fun of her. She wanted to cry but her pigtails were lopsided and she had a stain on her skirt and she hadn't cried yet, so she decided to punch him instead.

The teacher called her dad in and said that she was an angry little girl and her dad nodded slowly because he did everything slowly. She just sat there in a big wooden chair and listened to everything that was wrong with her and stared at the stain on her skirt and listened to her heart. Thump-thump. Thump-thump. It was a nicer sound than anything else. Thump-thump, thump-thump, and her dad was tugging her hand to the car, but he wasn't going to say anything to her. He never said anything to her.

Now that she is older, she sometimes wonders if she is the only person with an angry heart.

Sometimes when she is wondering this she is sitting in the middle of the road because it is her favorite place to sit and no cars drive through here, anyway. Her heart counts off the seconds - thump-thump, thump-thump - while she closes her eyes to think. She thinks about her angry heart and being alone. She hasn't decided yet if either is a good thing.

Maybe somewhere around the world there is another someone who is thinking about their angry heart and wondering if they are alone. Maybe their heart is saying bum-bum, bum-bum, and they worry when it says bum-bum-BUM, or they don't care at all. It is all conjecture anyway, and she is probably just alone in her heart's anger.

After all, if her heart wasn't angry, it would probably not be happy either.

She doesn't know if hearts can feel happiness because they're just muscles and really strong ones at that, but if they can, hers probably wouldn't. A heart can't be happy if the body that it's in isn't.

At least that's what she thinks at nighttime curled up under her blankets with the sheets pulled tight up to her chin. Thump-thump goes her heart, her only lullaby. She doesn't know anyone who will sing to her but her heart.

Her father used to sing, but her mother stole his voice. Now she doesn't have a mother and her father is silent.

It's okay, though, because she is fine with silence. Silence is what she is used to. It is familiar. Silence is never really silent, anyway, not when her heart is there to fill it. Thump-thump, thump-thump. Sometimes thump-thump-THUMP, and she wishes she knew what her heart was angry about.

She wants to be angry too.