On Being a Girl Scout

The scar on my left cheek shines through my face some days more than others. I know this mainly from my friend, who throughout middle, junior high, and high school, would tell me when she could see my scar well, maybe even poking at my cheek when she told me so. I wonder if I charted the days if I could make some meaningful connection… like it shows up when I need to be reminded I am not invincible, or that accidents happen even if you step with care, even to those who know they can be defeated, and try to take it like a champ.

When I can see it, the scar looks a bit like a faint badminton racket of pink and white. Like the kind of badminton racket you would find in the girls’ sports section of one of those sporting goods stores with the too-high shelves and the country music where I bought my first pair of pink and white roller blades. Maybe it looks more like an aggressive scratch, which I suppose it is, from when my face decided to take on a rock. The pink patch rests just within a little trio constellation of sun marks that have since appeared.

I’ve still got the scar because I was offended by the smell of the Vitamin C oil I was to dab onto my cheek each day via soaked cotton ball. At first, it felt so important— at 11 years old I had a job to do. My mother had told me that the scar wouldn't last if I did it daily. But if the pungent, dead fish smell wasn't enough, the oil-soaked cotton ball also scratched my raw skin unpleasantly, left my cheek gleaming with the putrid substance.

I hated the mark that began looking like pizza sauce permanently smeared on my face. I hated even more what it reminded me of: eating backpacking level-quality “pizzas” with a giant bandaid devouring my cheek and trying to ignore the stabbing pain burying deep in my right palm. It reminded me of jumping up from my plummet as quickly as I could, not letting out any audible tears, not shitting for three days, stuck in the woods with a pack of girls who wanted to pretend we were family.

It’s strange how being injured draws both pity and pride. Daisy to Cadet, I hated both, though pity much more. Pity was what I felt I’d always had from the girls who thought one or two
years of age made them my mother.

Pity pulls me back to being six and stringing pony beads upon Stretch Magic elastic, red blue green blue pink pink yellow green blue. Cheeky blonde Rose, a year older, wanted to help me make a necklace and in frustration and shame and pure child anger I cried like the baby she thought I was as my mother swept me away from the cabin hall. All I wanted to do for that two-day camping trip was dig filth under my fingernails and let rocks sink into my knees, unprotected by my plaid green bermuda shorts while searching for BB balls with my best friend. We adored each discovery of a new color of litter. I especially loved the clear lime green ones that gleamed in the July sun even with their dusty coating.

I wanted the other girls to hear the least of my pain so I would hear the least of their pity and blood was already flowing at my cheek and my elbow and then my mother would have less to be proud of. I didn’t tell them about the thorns. Only my mother, she sat with me, tweezers out, my skin tenting with each tug. I knew my mother loved me as much face planting into that rock as she did when I was six, face planted into her shoulder, snot running upon her t-shirt, ruining myself over necklace making. Those girls couldn’t love me like her. So I didn’t let them know about the thorns. The thorns, at least 30 must’ve sunk into my palm when I clutched a rose bush to break my fall.