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## Big, Ugly

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## Isabelle Bendorf

Isabelle Bendorf is a sophomore psychology major from Pennsylvania. She has a particular proclivity for procrastination and loves creative writing, listening to music, and spending time with friends.

## Big, Ugly

Tired eyes squint into the dark wardrobe as my fingers lazily divide each hanger. I pass over each familiar fabric as I decide, *No, this is not who I will be today.* Soon I find the one. The thick collar slides off the curved plastic. The hangers swing back and forth, nervously tapping together. Worn threads graze my face and settle heavily on my shoulders.

I turn to the mirror to give myself a once-over. *Good enough.* This sweater dragged itself out of the dark side of the 90s: my grandmother's dresser. It looks like the embodiment of the morning after a hard night of drinking. The indigo threads emphasize the fatigue that lies beneath my eyes. The wrists billow and hang well past my fingers. Sure enough, I reacquaint myself with this person. It's been a few weeks since we've seen each other so we share a tentative embrace, still unsure of whether we will be friends today.

Most onlookers might assume that I am careless or apathetic or lazy; at least, that's what I think they might assume. However, I'd hope they would see me as relaxed or comfortable with who I am, even if just for the moment. *Even if I don't know exactly who I am.* There's a type of security in a good sweater. I could be wearing a shirt underneath that says, in big bold letters, "NEUROTIC," and no one would have any idea. I can still hide who I am in plain sight. My comfort lies in my concealment.

*Maybe I should change.* I can wear this later when I'm alone. This disguise is easier to overlook when I'm alone. My own judgements don't seem quite as harsh when they are not accompanied by the eyes of strangers. Besides, it pools at the waist and wrists, making it difficult to use my hands; almost like a cozy cilice. It doesn't offer me much in terms of warmth; holes have started to form over the years. They have become the perfect windows into my failing façade for anyone who looks too close.

My fear jitters underneath my skin and lingers in my chest. I am terrified of the time that those dreaded words will finally achieve their vice-like grip on my eardrums. "What's wrong?" My heart throbs just thinking about it. I can see myself crumbling beneath the weight of the question. I can see the dust falling through those worn holes.

I'll deal with the biting wind and the way it passes through the stitches. I'll deal with the oversized nature of it because it's my favorite aspect. I'll deal with the judgmental second-glances that aren't really there.

I know I shouldn't pay mind to my fears. *No one looks as closely at the frays and flaws than I do.* It's not all that terrible when I see others in the same predicament as myself. Maybe they're relaxed. Maybe they're on the brink of a mental breakdown. But you'd never know because a sweater is the perfect mask.

Looking in the mirror, I still can't fool myself. I still see the person that is terrified to make too much noise in a crowded room, whose face burns bright red when speaking in front of a class, who fears that others will see the same anxious person that I see when looking in a mirror. Regardless, I'll be this person today and hide who I really am. *But then again, maybe not.*