

## the body horror of endometriosis when you're not a woman

*Acantholichen × variifolius*

The system's view of him as an incubator restricts his access to medicine and procedures to remove his bleeding convulsing womb. Its sluicing lining grows outside of its unneeded child-bearing confines, parasites straying and latching onto his nerves and organs that stick to each under unyielding scar tissue. His ovaries glue to the foreign tissue that defaced the walls of his pelvis.

Like seeds after Eve bit into forbidden fruit, gaining the knowledge that he was not born with the right to have, the right to attain- and had to fight and advocate through doctor after doctor, gathering terms into his pocket with each visit like stones to throw at the glass ceiling of his confinement until someone saw enough cracks to take him seriously and free him from this prison of his body.

He goes to a women's hospital- when he knows that he is not a woman, barely had enough time as a girl until the burdens of womanhood grew an unwanted weight on his chest that hunched his back to hide and carry.

The part of him that has to be suppressed cries, but the tears are outweighed by the liters of blood he loses each month, the unignorable heat of each blood clot sliding out of him plunking onto the white lining of his underwear like a gruesome injury, the larger it was the more weight his fear gave that something was deeply *wrong*.

Water ritually cleanses but cervical mucus is thick and lumpy, caught between white tiles like how this unholy curse clings to him. Armed with salt, he scrubs the individual lines of grout clean after every shower, his hands abraded raw, salt stinging his open skin, but his fervor to purify is fed by the humiliation over someone being disgusted by his contamination.

Its spread is tallied by the stains on his bedsheets. His mind and body is at the mercy of the ceaseless tumultuous tides of the moon's cycle, spitting his weakened beaten self onto the shore for a perhaps a blessed week or two before dragging him back down to weather the storm.

He tries not to look down when he goes to the toilet, because he would see the blood drying against the junction of his thighs that flaked off onto the white toilet seat when he took off his pants – disgust. Shame.

The uncleanliness needs to be scratched away, giving his hands this task so he felt like he could do something about this state he was inflicted with.

Too used to the brown black under his nails and heavy iron tang that never fully washed off, he's caught in the miasma of paranoia and shame that someone else could smell it too and know this foulness gathering between his legs.

The cries and futile hands pressed to aching body parts of his childhood and adolescence were met with empty tired stares when poverty had worn down their empathy and capacity. Clicking tongues, turning away to leave him applying bandages and momentarily salving packs of heat and ice himself – because that was what they had to do for themselves too. How dare he complain about a stomach ache, when what they had to deal with was worse: hiding their own bleeding they barely understood from their parents lest they were married off to old men.

When what you are worth will only be appraised when you can cut enough of yourself off to weigh down the scale against a measure you cannot see, you tend to cut off more than you can afford to give.

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Creative Writing: Adult