

Black Lace Bra Kind of Woman

for la Terry



¡Wáchale! She's a black lace bra
kind of woman, the kind who serves
up suicide with every kamikaze
poured in the neon blue of evening.
A tease and a twirl. I've seen that
two-step girl in action. I've gambled bad
odds and sat shotgun when she rambled
her '59 Pontiac between the blurred
lines dividing sense from senselessness.

Ruin your clothes, she will.
Get you home way after hours.
Drive her '59 seventy-five on 35
like there is no tomorrow.
Woman zydeco-ing into her own decade.
Thirty years pleated behind her like
the wail of a San Antonio accordion.
And now the good times are coming. Girl,
I tell you, the good times are here.

Down There

At that moment, Little Flower scratched herself
where one never scratches oneself.

from "The Smallest Woman in the World"

—Clarice Lispector

Your poem thinks it's *bad*.
Because it farts in the bath.
Cracks its knuckles in class.
Grabs its balls in public
and adjusts—one,
then the other—
back and forth like Slinky. No,
more like the motion
of a lava lamp.
You follow me?

Your poem thinks it
cool to pee in the pool.
Waits for the moment
someone's watching before
it sticks a finger up
its nose and licks
it. Your poem's weird.

The kind that swaggers in like Wayne
or struts its stuff like Rambo.
The kind that learned
to spit at 13 and still
is doing it.

It blames its bad habits
on the Catholic school.

Picked up words that
snapped like bra straps.
Learned words that ignite
of their own gas
like a butt hole flower.
Fell in love with words
that thudded like stones and sticks.
Or stung like fists.
Or stank like shit
gorillas throw at zoos.

Your poem never washes
its hands after using the can.
Stands around rolling
toilet paper into wet balls
it can toss up to the ceiling
just to watch them stick.
Yuk yuk.

Your poem is a used rubber
sticky on the floor
the next morning,

the black elephant
skin of the testicles,
hairy as kiwi fruit
and silly,

the shaving
stubble against the purity
of porcelain,

one black pubic
hair on the sexy
lip of toilet seat,

the swirl of spit
with a cream of celery
center,

a cigarette
stub sent hissing
to the piss pot,

half-finished
bottles of beer reeking
their yeast incense,

the miscellany of maleness:
nail clippers and keys,
tobacco and ashes,
pennies quarters nickels dimes and
dollars folded into complicated origami,
stub of ticket and pencil and cigarette, and
the crumb of the pockets

all scattered on the Irish
linen of the bedside table.

Oh my little booger,
it's true.

Because someone once
said Don't
do that!
you like to do it.

Baby, I'd like to mention
the Tampax you pulled with your teeth
once in a *Playboy* poem*
and found it, darling, not so bloody.
Not so bloody at all, in fact.
Hardly blood cousin
except for an unfortunate
association of color
that makes you want to swoon.

Yes,
I want to talk at length about Men-
struation. Or my period.

*John Updike's "Cunts" in *Playboy* (January 1984), 163.

Or the rag as you so lovingly put it.
All right then.

I'd like to mention my rag time.

Gelatinous. Steamy
and lovely to the light to look at
like a good glass of burgundy. Suddenly
I'm artist each month.
The star inside this like a ruby.
Fascinating bits of sticky
I-don't-know-what-stuff.
The afterbirth without the birth.
The gobs of a strawberry jam.
Membrane stretchy like
saliva in your hand.

It's important you feel its slickness,
understand the texture isn't bloody at all.
That you don't gush
between the legs. Rather,
it unravels itself like string
from some deep deep center—
like a Russian subatomic submarine,
or better, like a mad Karlov cackling

behind beakers and blooming spirals.
Still with me?

Oh I know, darling,
I'm indulging, but indulge
me if you please.
I find the subject charming.

In fact,
I'd like to dab my fingers
in my inkwell
and write a poem across the wall.
"A Poem of Womanhood"
Now wouldn't that be something?

Words writ in blood. But no,
not blood at all, I told you.
If blood is thicker than water, then
menstruation is thicker than brother-
hood. And the way

it metamorphosizes! Dazzles.
Changing daily
like starlight.
From the first

transparent drop of light
to the fifth day chocolate paste.

I haven't mentioned smell. Think
Persian rug.
But thicker. Think
cello.
But richer.
A sweet exotic snuff
from an ancient prehistoric center.
Dark, distinct,
and excellently
female.