





From the moment I was ejected into the world it was pre decided.. Small underdeveloped organs. Little pink insides. It sat dormant until the age of thirteen. I had imagined this moment as something different.

Something I could celebrate but the shame of childhood would taint this moment. Starting as a small swatch of red. My dad drove me to Walgreens in his 1993 Toyota pickup truck he'd had as his pet project for years. We wandered the feminine product aisle. Cotton and plastic packaged in Pink, Green, purple dotted with droplets in swirly blue lettering. I was just as clueless as to what to purchase.

The pain didn't start until day two. I had a slow twist that made me lose my breath. I lay in bed, unable to move and wondering what was going on. Two months of my cycle went by with a tense, pulse, stab. I felt like I was being hollowed out with a spoon, the metal clinking against soft tissue. I was in denial that this pain was even related to menstruation. To the store again for pads. Eyeing every woman closely. Women

pushing shopping carts, placing cereal in their baskets, feeling for ripe avocados, as if nothing ever had afflicted them.

My abdomen contracts, I grab the sheets in my fists and the contents of my stomach spill into the toilet. What can I do? At work laying unable to move on the floor of the small bathroom stall. Walking back to the car on a family trip to an animal sanctuary as a teenager, forcing my legs to work with shooting pain warming my knees and down to my ankle bones. Hot pulsing pain. Puking all over the front entrance and blacking out in the car. I can feel the ibuprofen in the bottom of my throat, advil, aleve, midol, hopelessly swallowed pills. Unable to properly predict. I do my best to schedule my life in order to have my days in bed. Sweating, crying, bleeding. Once it passes I forget and move on. I don't tell my friends. My doctor says it's just bad cramps and to lower my stress levels. Writing me endless prescriptions for birth control that would end up doing nothing but causing me deep blue depression and bumpy red acne I would have for years afterwards.

At the age of twenty-One I see my first photograph of a uterus. Pink, slippery, smaller than expected, I look at it with fascination. Two gloved hands hold this mass of cells. Floppy. Goopy blob of tissue and nerves. Endometriosis wasn't a word I knew until the same year. A condition where the endometrium (lining of the uterus) spreads to other organs. Attaching delicate, soft tissue to parts of the pelvic cavity like spider webs.

Pain is instilled in the feminine body. Menstruation, Miscarriage, Childbirth, Menopause is pre-decided. Wired into our bodies. We don't have a choice but to find a way of living and breathing through it. After 11 years of bearing this pain I still sit here waiting for an answer to become clear. Doctor visits feeling unheard. A scheduled surgery, canceled. Pondering now why I feel my femininity is so bound to this small part of me that I will never see but feel every month for days. Small and innocent like it doesn't mean to hurt me but it does. There is a fondness there. We've been through so much together. Minimizing the severity of suffering until the next



time I'm doubled over. I work through thoughts and forget them. Pain can isolate you. Make you feel like no one could ever understand and in the moments that it's not afflicting you, you want to make the thought that maybe it didn't exist at all. Am I doing this to myself now? Tears come at the thought of cutting parts of me out. Would it even work? There's a good chance it wouldn't but there is a chance of temporary relief. Relief I've never felt. The pain is so familiar.

