

**Try and try again**

Isn't it funny  
how easily we forget . . .

Remember when I didn't have to ask you to rock the baby,  
or do the dishes,  
or wear clean clothes  
or work.

Remember when we could talk and have fun  
and when we were happy and called each other "pal."

I do.  
It was the week after your last drunk.  
You know, Good Behavior Week.

Isn't it funny  
how easily we forget.

**Reverie From a Toilet Bowl**

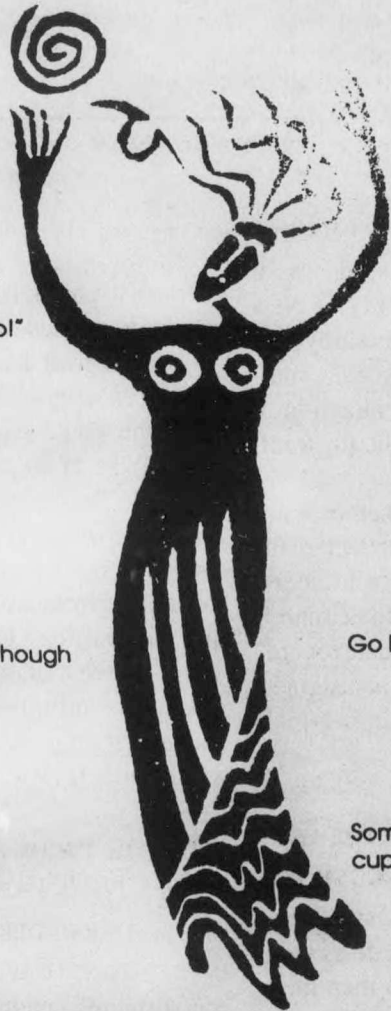
I've been very, very selfish  
For I slept the whole night through.  
And I didn't even hear him  
When he cried, "Oh, no. Peel Pool"

And today I'm thinking narrowly  
For I'd like a cup of tea,  
Instead of invigilating potty  
With another on my knee.

Oh, stop this foolish whining.  
I've had a youth of fun.  
I must not be self-centered now,  
I'm all of twenty-one.

I would be nice to have an hour though  
To spend alone with you,  
But I know that is impossible  
For you're a mother too.

Rosalie Lawrence



**My Sister**

It's back again  
In the silence of my heart it stirs  
They eye, the pain  
The shattered dream  
And stifled soul  
Of the beautiful sister  
I will never behold.  
She's lost to me, my sister, my half soul  
Raped before she was ever told  
Of all the horrors being a woman can hold.  
Raped at the age of 10  
And made old while she was still young  
With curly hair  
And dark red lips  
And pain-fill eyes  
that cut me to the quick.  
I miss my sister, my half soul  
All all that I will never behold.  
Rosalie Lawrence

**Rebirth note**

I have come to a point in my life, said the maid  
To put words to the truths I once knew.  
I'm weary of playing the fool to his knife  
And using bits over and making them do.

I've been jaded by sanctioning acts of deceit,  
Distorted by his point of view,  
Reassembled my courage and rendered me weak,  
By using me over and making me do.

I'm scorned for desires of making new friends.  
He's commended for dragons I slew.  
I've had enough of malevolent men;  
So Charlie, my darling, fuck you!

Rosalie Lawrence

**Tampons**

My periods have changed. It is years  
since I have swallowed pink and gray darvons, round  
chalky midols from the bottle with the smiling girl.  
Now I plan a quiet space,  
protect myself those first few days when my uterus lets  
go and I am an open anemone. I know  
when my flow will come. I watch my mucous pace  
changes like a dancer, follow the fall  
and rise of my body heat. All this  
and yet I never questioned them, those slim white handies.

It took me years to learn to use them  
starting with pursettes and a jar of vaseline.  
I didn't know where the hole was.  
I didn't even know enough  
to try to find one. I pushed until  
only a little stuck out and hoped  
that was far enough.  
I tried every month through high school.

And now that I can change it in a moving car-  
like Audrey Hepburn changing dresses in the taxi  
in the last scene of Breakfast at Tiffany's-  
I've got to give them up.

Tampons, I read, are  
bleached, are  
chemically treated to  
compress better,  
contain asbestos.  
Good old asbestos. Once we learned not to shake it-  
Johnson & Johnson's - on our babies or diaphragms,  
we thought we had it licked

So what do we do? They're universal.  
Even macrobiotics and lesbian separatists are hooked on them.

**Go back to sanitary napkins?**

Junior high, double napkins  
on the heavy days, walking home damp underpants  
chafing thighs. It's been a full twelve years  
since I have worn one, since Spain when Marjorie pierced my ears  
and I unloaded half a suitcase of the big gauze pads in the hotel trash.

Someone in my workshop suggested tassaways, little  
cups that catch the flow.

They've stopped making them,  
we're told. Women found they could reuse them  
and the company couldn't make enough  
money that way. Besides,  
the suction pulled the cervix out of shape.

**The diaphragms.**

It presses on me, one woman says.  
So swollen these days. Too tender.

Menstrual extraction., a young woman says.  
I heard about that. Ten minutes  
and it's done.

But I do not trust putting tubes into my uterus each month.  
We're told everything is safe  
in the beginning.

Mosses  
The Indians used mosses.

I live in Aptos. We grow  
succulents and pine  
I will buy mosses  
when they sell them at the co-op.

Okay. It's like the whole birth control schmeer.  
There just isn't a good way. Women bleed.  
We bleed.  
The blood flows out of us. So we will bleed.  
Blood paintings on our thighs, patterns  
like river beds, blood on the chairs in  
insurance offices, blood on Greyhound buses  
and 747's, blood blots, flower forms  
on the blue skirts of the stewardesses.  
Blood on restaurant floors, supermarkets aisles, the steps of government  
buildings. Sidewalks

will have Gretel's bread

like  
blood trails,

crumbs. We can always find our way.

We will ease into rhythm together, it happens  
when women live closely - African tribes, college sororities -  
our blood flowing on the same day. The first day  
of our heaviest flow we will gather in Palmer, Massachusetts  
on the steps of Tampax, Inc. We'll have a bleed-in.  
We'll smear the blood on our faces. Max Factor  
will join OB in Bankruptcy. The perfume industry  
will collapse, who needs  
whale sperm, turtle oil, when we have free blood?  
For a little while cleaning products will boom,  
409, Lysol, Windex. But  
the executives will give up. The cleaning woman is leaving a  
red wet rivulet, as she scrubs down the previous stains.  
It's no use. The men would have to  
do it themselves, and that will never come up  
for a vote at the Board. Women's clothing manufacturers, fancy  
furniture, plush carpet, all will phase out. It's just not  
practical. We will live the old ways.

Simple floors, dirt or concrete, can be hosed down  
or straw, can be cycled through the compost.  
Simple clothes, none in summer. No more swimming pools.  
Swim in the river. Yes, swim in the river.  
Dogs will fall in love with us.  
We'll feed the fish with our blood. Our blood  
will neutralize the chemicals and dissolve the old car parts.  
Our blood will detoxify the phosphates and the  
PCB's. Our blood will feed the depleted soils.  
Our blood will water the dry, tired surface of the earth.  
We will bleed. We will bleed. We will  
bleed until we bathe her in our blood and she turns  
slippery new like a baby birthing.

Ellen Bass

