

Womanhood Sucks

Korbyan Chavez

I thought I started my period at the age of 11.
Turns out I was wrong.

I lived in a house of men: my dad and two older brothers.
I tried really hard to be like them.

Then I learned about the menstrual cycle, how every woman goes through it.
But it's disgusting and gross; it made me not want to be a woman.

Then one day, a red dot in my undies, flush red in my face.
Was this it? Have I started?

Mom wasn't around. She was lost in a bottle, far away from us.
I had to turn to the patriarch of the house.

"Dad, I think I started my period."
"Oh."

He wanted to celebrate my "womanhood," so we got Subway,
Because a five-dollar sandwich was what I was worth now.

We watched the glistening sun hide herself behind the Rockies
While my dad and I ate in silence.

"So . . . you're a woman now," he said.

"I guess so," I responded.

"Well, there are some things you should know . . .

Just because you're on your period

Doesn't mean you can be a bitch

You're not allowed to be treated differently

Just because you're on your period

You're not allowed to get out of chores or work

Just because you're on your period

Also, don't talk about it with your brothers

They'll find it gross"

The rules of what it meant to be a woman
Went on and on that evening.

After that talk, I was disgusted with myself.

Why did I have to be a woman?

Every time I expressed anger, I was mockingly asked,

"Damn, are you on your period?"

Every time I cried, I was always told,

"God, you're so sensitive."

Expressing emotion made the men in my home uncomfortable,
So I stopped feeling altogether.

Then my actual period came. I was too embarrassed

To admit I was wrong the first time.

I started at my mom's apartment while she was drowning in wine.

I couldn't tell her this was my first time. She would laugh at me.

"Mom, my period started, and I didn't bring anything . . ."

"Pads are in the bathroom, under the sink."

Mom was in her room, glued to her own TV, sitting in a pile of empty bottles.

I had so many questions. But I drowned in blood alone instead.

The pain was unbearable. I tried to watch cartoons with my brothers,
But they told me to shut up while I groaned in pain.

"You're fine, it can't be that bad," they told me.

As if they knew . . .

As if they knew

my insides felt like they were being scraped out of me
by a dull ice cream scoop.

As if they knew

the sharp, cutting pain my vagina felt
as clots of blood oozed out slowly.

As if they knew

the overwhelming sickness that stirred in my stomach and throat,
vomit and blood threatening to surface in every moment.

As if they knew

the strange tenderness and newfound sensitivity of my breasts,
where every brush of my shirt ached, every movement a small
pierce in my nipples.

I was in and out of that bathroom all night.

The bleeding wouldn't stop.

The pain wouldn't stop.

My brothers wouldn't stop.

My mom, the alcoholism, wouldn't stop.

My dad's words wouldn't stop.

The bleeding

wouldn't stop.

The pain.

It wouldn't stop.

Please stop.

To think two years prior,
My father took me out to “celebrate”
My womanhood.
As if monthly suffering
Was something to be proud of.

God, my body
Is disgusting.
It’s stupid.
I hate being a woman.
I hate how different I am
Because of my period.

My dad and brothers used to love me.
Then I became a woman.
Now they see me as something lesser.
Too emotional.

My male friends used to respect me, think no different of me.
Then I became a woman.
They got quiet, silently judged when they saw me try to sneak a pad
Into my pockets before scurrying off to the bathroom during school.

My future boyfriends knew me as a woman.
They used it against me,
Despised me for it.
They wrinkled their nose
When I tried to confide in them
About the pains of womanhood.
“I don’t need to hear this”
They shook their head,
Covered their ears,
“Women are gross. I don’t care about it.”

A monster I was. A freak. An abomination.
Disgusting.

Womanhood fucking sucks.

Korbyan Chavez graduated from UND with her bachelor's in accountancy in May of 2024. However, her little heart decided that she wanted her creative writing certificate, as numbers are not enough to bring joy into life. Words and phrases? Pretty epic. She hopes to one day own a corgi named Ein and perhaps even publish a little book of her works.