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Gory

Ariel Gordon
Winnipeg International Poetry Factory

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Gory

“Forget diamonds. Forget bronze
and cryogenics. Plastics
are built to last, as bodies are
to fall apart.”

—from “Seas” by Erin Robinsong, in *The Goose*, Vol. 13, Issue 2

I got my period twice this month. I told all the men
I work with. They have a leaky collection of wives & daughters
but each of them grimaced. I left work in darkness
& the horizon was all reds
& oranges. The internet said the atmosphere was soaked
with dust & moisture. The internet made off-colour jokes about PMS
but spammed me with coupons for tampons. Once, during a long staff meeting,
I bled through my pants. A female co-worker covered for me
but it was like I had a rare steak between my legs.
Forget diamonds. Forget bronze

anniversaries: find a spouse who knows
his way around the feminine hygiene & ethnic foods aisles,
full of dubious packages. Make him have acrobatic sex—with you—
while you’re bleeding, his groin daubed with an entire tube
of Venetian Red. Don’t laugh,
but I still have two chubs of breast milk
in the freezer, next to tidily-wrapped beef bones
& pre-made pie crusts. My daughter thinks it’s weird, but I can’t think
of a good reason to throw them out, given death
& cryogenics. (Plastics

injected into my veins, my tired head in a jar.)
Except breast milk is both site-specific antibodies & downloaded
flame retardants. And evidence of my one year of breeding
versus thirty years of bleeding. Tonight, in the bath,
I realized I was making woman-broth,
seasoned with scent-free
deodorant & spiral arteries. It was warm
& comforting. I'm okay with menopause. I thought I'd be okay
with going grey, but white pubic hairs are like tiny garrottes that
are built to last, as bodies are

built to fail. My mother has tumbled down the stairs
in each of my houses. Both times, she smiled grimly at me
from the bottom-most stair, the same face she made when she said,
"Sweetheart, you have to wrap your maxi-pads better,
bury them deeper
in the bathroom garbage." At fifteen, my dad would point to me
in grocery store checkouts. "They're for her," he'd stammer
from behind the cart. I badly wanted
to shout "Women bleed! No need
to fall apart."

ARIEL GORDON is a Winnipeg writer. Her second collection of poetry, *Stowaways*, won the 2015 Lansdowne Prize for Poetry. When not being bookish, Ariel likes tromping through the woods and taking macro photographs of mushrooms.