

## A GIRL'S TALE

She stared at the double XL pad in her hand as she sat on the murky, musty school toilet. The drip-drip of the leaky tap echoed in the tiny space. Even the sweet scent of strawberry bubble gum vape drifting from the stall next door could not erase the putrid smell wafting up from her pad. Concentrating on not gagging, she quickly wrapped the soiled red pad in toilet paper and tossed it into the sanitary bin. God, she hated the rustle it made when she wrapped it up. She hated the stench. She hated the rusty brown colour. Holding back a groan, she turned to the stain on her underwear. *Man, who the hell designed these pads? They barely do anything.* She sighed and looked around. The smear of blood on the sanitary bin. The dark, mouldy bathroom, the tap that didn't work. She hated it. She hated it all. But most of all, she hated herself. Hated the fact that this bathroom reflected her so perfectly. She felt stained; she felt so dark and so trapped. She felt broken. *Oh well, I don't care.* She left the stall hoping she had left the foul stench behind.

She sat on the hard plastic chair in the sick bay wondering when the nurse would finish typing her email. "I'm so sorry dear, I just need to send a quick email and then I'll get straight back to you. Why don't you sit on that chair and I'll be done in a minute." It had been 10 minutes. She clutched her stomach as nausea washed over her. Oh, how she hated cramps. She glanced at the clock on the wall. The generic white ones every school room had which was always 5 minutes late. She should have been in class 20 minutes ago. She sighed and closed her eyes.

Her thoughts swirled and sloshed around her, reminding her of the cereal she had that morning for breakfast. It was disgusting, but it was the cheapest one and that was all her mother could afford. She reminded herself that she needed to get new pads as she used the last one. *Why? Why do they have to be so damn expensive?*

The nurse glanced at her and smiled, her front two teeth were missing. "All done! Now what's the matter with you sweetie?"

She explained she needed something for her cramps and nausea.

"Oh dear! Are you on your period? Don't worry honey, take two of these paracetamols and you will feel much better."

She doubted it. The nurse smiled again, making her want to shove the two paracetamols through the gap in her teeth. She thanked the nurse and left, feeling worse than before.

The door creaked open as she stepped into the old, worn-down house. No one was home. Of course, her mother would still be working. She had left class early as the cramps and headache refused to go away even after taking the paracetamol. *They should really consider firing Ms toothless.* She hated her, she hated school and she hated her fucking body and how painful it was. Suddenly she couldn't hold it in anymore. She bolted to the bathroom and vomited in the toilet. Tears streamed down her face as she leaned over the bowl. The cereal she ate that morning, mixed with bodily fluids spiralled around in the toilet. Her stomach hurt, her back hurt, she had a headache and she had no pads for tonight. She whimpered as the overwhelming feeling of wanting to join the vomit in the toilet washed over her. She hated this and she hated herself.

She hated being a girl.