

# Close those lips

*by* Lisa Lim

1. Ma tells me not to put a tampon between my legs. For fear of cotton fornication. It isn't natural. Instead she makes me wear bulky pads the size of diapers and blood cooks in the hot sun and smell for all the dogs to come and lick. Like lap dogs in the Restoration Period. But women smell best between ovulation and menstruation she read. And yet, only the dogs lay their nose between her these days.

2. Ma says, the man of your dreams doesn't like it when you open your legs too quickly. Ma says, the man of your dreams doesn't like it when you open your lips. Close those lips. He doesn't have to know everything. He doesn't even want to know. I remembered this as a boy said goodbye to me, too scared of hemoglobin misfits.

3. My body is careless these days. It makes a mistake. One maybe two. Who's counting. I crawl under my mother's table to weep and groan in between her tired pants and thighs.

4. Everything will be okay she tells me. Her breath sweet and coffee dirty. Everything will be fine she promises. Do you promise? Yes. I promise. I promise she repeats with her dirty coffee tongue. I didn't believe her, but I like when she lies. It makes me feel falsely strong. A pussycat licks my falling menstruation. And her breath smells of cans of tuna. My mother thinks her cat has killed a mouse. But its lips are full of my pussy innards.

My body makes a mistake and my mother threatens to squeeze my little neck with her man hands while her thighs rock me back to forgetfulness.

