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The Edible Body, a Poetry Chapbook: Food and Sex as Pleasure, Disorder, and Commodity

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THE EDIBLE BODY, a poetry chapbook: Food and Sex as Pleasure, Disorder, and Commodity
by Lena Judith Drake

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“phone sex operator” has appeared previously in *Alien Sloth Sex*

“Yeast” has appeared previously in *Short, Fast, and Deadly*

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food and sex: gender
by Lena Judith Drake

Note: This poem, as well as the others following, are based on a series of interviews.

you're right in the middle of scrubbing the sink and he'll bring his erection to your tailbone and
want it
meat
hunk of meat
raw sex
grab them and hold them down
steak off the grill
burgers
bacon
real steak
in control
aggressor
on top
meat and potatoes
penetration
beef most of all
straight sex
lesbian sex
ribs
takers
red meat
playing with boobs
steak and potatoes
overdrive
nachos
sub sandwiches
fast sex
doggy style
missionary position
bananas
dripping grease

you just want to finish scrubbing the sink
cucumber sandwiches
fruits
make love
fairy cakes
petits fours
watching the clock
quiche
givers

scones and tea
salmon steak
submissive
on the bottom
fruits
gay sex
salads
yogurt and granola
abstinence
sorbet
soft things
gentle stroking
ice cream
fruits and vegetables
skinny chicken
slow sex
girl on top
grapefruits
edible flowers

How to Hold Your Breath
by Lena Judith Drake

Don't hyperventilate, because you might black out,
lay still, belly down, palms up,
as the other kids scratch your back with their toes
through your white swim t-shirt.

This won't stop you from trying to hold your breath.

It will stop you from following other rules,
like a 30 minute wait after eating.
In fact, you eat in the water, under the water,
or pretend to anyway,
cross-legged to stay at the bottom,
your tea party with orange peanut butter crackers.
They dissolve and float to the surface.
Blue fruit punch in a tiny plastic teacup,
stolen from an unattended *Beauty and the Beast* garage sale set,
mixes with the chlorine,
and disappears.

You watch the other boys change
in the swimming pool locker room.

They are all insecure,
wrapping towels around their waists, shimmying
out of the dripping wet trunks, tricky
like peeling off egg shells.
You do the same thing.
You would use the single bathroom stall,
except that means you couldn't watch anyone else.

It's actually a skill
to catch glimpses of genitals,
like in your Bible coloring book, to the side
of Adam's prune leaf.

Behind the waxy privacy of shower curtains,
you turn off the water, and, shivering,
hold your breath.
You hope someone won't notice your toes,
draw back the curtain,
and step in.

Age Lines
by Lena Judith Drake

i.

i am not old.

a slice of american cheese, drooping edges,
in the palm of my hand. zigzags
from the new squirt-bottle mayonnaise--
so different from my mother's
runny uncooked eggs and vinegar--
forging perfect white patterns on bright yellow,
sometimes shapes, faces,
but mostly roads.
i bring my hand to my mouth, nibbling on the still-cold edges.

ii.

i am old enough, barely.

i have a zit on my chin; i hate that.
i hate her, too. grace's skin is poreless,
freckled, blushed
in all the right places, not on the ears,
not on a dented forehead.
her face never gushes like overfull toothpaste,
never oils like glue removal rub.

but when he is there, he never forgets to touch her,
her instead of me. because, he says,
she is prettier.
over and over, i am on the sofa, tilting
as her weight, and his weight over that,
pulls me closer to them.
i rub the crying into my face and my zit pops open.
her bone pops open inside
her smooth skin,
and when she gets a cast,
i lie to the teachers for both of us.

grace's skin is poreless, powerless
like a statue's, breath trapped inside.
i rub hamburger grease on my face every day,
hoping the red splotches will worsen,
hoping my whole head will burst

with toxic mire.

iii.

i am old enough to marry.

we play croquet with the neighbor boy. the breaking wet crunch
of dirt, roots ripped, displaced for the hoop stakes,
pushed into the earth.

i rest,

a piece of bread and peanut butter

in the palm of my hand.

then he slaps my hand up against my face.

the crunch of sticky peanuts,

the crunch of my nose bones.

his laughing. the blood making boulevards
along the bread.

we will marry within the year.

iv.

i am too old.

i get powdered sugar, white like my veil, on me,

and he fits his whole mouth around my chin,

suctioning the sweetness,

pulling my jaw. i push

on his shoulders, but his weight is heavy.

my chin turns purple and black, swells

and protrudes like royalty,

and every night he calls me princess.

v.

i am too old for acne,

but i rub grease on my chin. clogged pores
will do something.

he would never put his mouth, his hands
on anything unclean.

phone sex operator
by Lena Judith Drake

he wants me to hear his cucumber cock.
it taps against the phone, thunk, thunk, thunk;
i wonder if it's dark green, and if so, think
he should probably get it checked.
i don't say this.

he doesn't believe that i'm coming (i'm not), he wants to hear
the squelching sounds. i spit on my fingers
and rub them against my thigh. can you hear it?

what are you going to do to me?, he asks.
is it okay if i tie you up?, i say. or would you rather not?
for all my on-tops, i flunk domination.

my favorite is james (name changed, but only a little),
who asks if i'd been seen with him
if he were wearing some nice stockings, heels, my tangerine dress.
i look down at my jeans, and say, yeah, honey. of course.
i ROY-G-BIV for stocking colors, add some sheen,
add some glitter, pin-stripes, and he thanks me after he comes.
most guys just hang up. he even waits for me
to come-- twice-- before telling me it's his bedtime.
tomorrow, we'll paint his toenails.

things you might not know:
you can't use a cordless phone,
for signal quality purposes.
it's a constant struggle with water-- too little,
and your mouth gets sticky dry, too much,
and you have to pee in the middle of a call.

things my job taught me:
how to comfortably say "pussy". pussy.
how to lie to family
about corporate telemarketing.

things i already knew:
how to fake an orgasm
(thanks, ex-boyfriend and *the vagina monologues*);
how all men want to fuck from behind
while they grab your tits.

don't fool yourself, all jobs are boring.

Apricot, overripe, oversweet
by Lena Judith Drake

My thumbs spread the crease
of fuzzed skin, and juice trickles;
I lick between the folds.

Persephone
by Lena Judith Drake

the pomegranate spilled open,
the brains of the fox her mother killed in the woods,
showing her life
in its matted fur,
showing her death
in its half-bitten tongue and split brow,
like the beehive of crumbling, dried rhododendron,
like the infant fingers of spreading new growth.
cycles. blood between her labia,
matted in the blonde.
she asks and he offers
three seeds
that slip through the gap in her front teeth. three.

one. (sunburn pulling her skin stiff,
expressionless, ends of hair dried and fanning like a dancer's skirt,
trapped in her mother's hot embrace, mother's underarm sweat
wetting her gritty, peeled shoulders,
blisters oozing orange like the dawn.)

two. (mother, god-making,
anointing the mortal boy in the hearth every night,
the puffing ribs and small skin of an infant breathing smoke.)

three. (mother reaching out and touching
the prickling hairs between persephone's legs,
grasping and tugging, telling her she will soon be woman,
not girl. like crops grow.

silent.
thighs clamped.)
three seeds.

she slips back to him, cold against her neck
like fingernails dipped in ice water.
the cool night, as his seeds split under her molars,
as his seed spills along her stomach, chills.

but three months is not twelve months.
is not a year, or twenty. or one hundred.
and only her mother would destroy all the world to bring her
back
into hot sun, pressure and compresses of swelter,

mother's hands on her cheeks.

she begs him, feed her more.

cold sliding down the back of her throat.

toes in lethe. let her stay.

if she pushes him deep in her throat, he will spill, he will save her--

but zeus will never allow it.

never allow the people's hunger.

so above ground she feasts on wine. it warms her stomach.

she lays in the wet, heavy earth,

the earth of her mother,

waiting for snow cover to slice then numb each of her limbs.

until she can return to the blue-dark.

cycles.

those under the earth are her children;

persephone, iron goddess,

will not let them leave.

Love Sonnet from Armin Meiwes, cannibal
by Lena Judith Drake

"My nipples look forward to your stomach."
-- Bernd Juergen Brandes, willing victim

Since entering prison, I have become a vegetarian, and vomit every day.
But vomit is not remorse-- just saliva for tooth enamel, digestive content swept, expelled,
splashing gold paint on dark walls of the room where I cannot sleep. When we made love there,
parts of you swelled,
the insides waiting to be outsides, your left eyebrow permanently arched, some of you spilled
already, white on sheets, then aging gray.

On the double swing set, you sat by my side, a dinner guest, careful with what you weighed
so the oak on splints wouldn't split. You were warm, next to my gallbladder, as if already inside
me, and you smelled
of sunflower oil. I wanted to devour you, lover. In both slippery hands, I held
your cold medicine, your one-hundred proof Schnäpse, your sleeping pills, your benzocaine
spray,

until you were ready to bleed in my bathtub. The pages of pulp
I read, waiting for you to slip, were shaking. I plunged my knife in your throat, my mouth in
your splendid debris.
I stripped your skin, I ground your bones for flour; in the microwave, your teeth popped, kernels
of corn, jumping beans. I peeled your lids away, like grapes, and all through the night, you ran
hot through me, toes to scalp.

Flesh of my flesh. When I scrape myself raw, it is you that gently covers me--
isn't this unity? love eternal?

Abortifacient
by Lena Judith Drake

sodden brewed parsley,
oranges, clench in my stomach;
i quit pregnancy

Lolita's lollipop
by Lena Judith Drake

Lo's lolly was grape-flavored,
though it looked white and tinged pink, like European skin,
mystery-flavored
from wrapper to sucrose syrup cast and mold.

Grape was never my favorite,
especially in Jolly Ranchers he gave me while playing
geographical trivia with buzzers from a boxed jeopardy set, duct-taped,
smelling of mildew,
like his garage or the places around his genitals,
though I didn't know that yet.
His ex-Army arms covered in black hairs as if painted on in fine-lined pen,
star stickers pinching the skin on either side of my eyes
when I got questions right--
rare because I didn't know my capitals,
but he talked to me after class
and offered stickers anyway.

He talked to me after class,
and his voice broke sometimes,
because he was nervous, he said; he laughed but didn't explain.
Not all of the class boys
had breaking voices-- almost but not yet.
He did
long past his breaking point, pressing candy
into my hands. He was nervous.
Into my hands.

And Lo, Lo, you should know,

you're not special, you're not his ultimate,
you're not his temptress just because your mouth
is sometimes open,
isn't sealed shut and stuck and sewn
like the rest of the good little girls',
and you need to suck on something sweet
because you took too much insulin.
You're not his dolly, you're not even his disease,
just because you understand better than the rest of your age,
because you're not old but your soul is,
as he likes to tell you,

(But when do you feel your soul? When

has anyone but an idea-- him, or Jesus--
actually talked about your soul?)

as he likes to tell you, putting a finger
that smells like whiteboard marker
flush against your lips.
You're a symptom, you're artificial,
sticky grape flavor that never tastes real.

Cherry tastes more real,
but he would never give you
a cherry-flavored lollipop;
he's aware of connotations,
even if you're not,
at 13.

Popping the Cherry
by Lena Judith Drake

After, I lied and said I had food poisoning,
so he wouldn't try
to hold me.

In third grade,
by Lena Judith Drake

the boys ask me
if I like hamburgers or hot dogs.
"Both," I say, and they erupt
in laughter.

"Do you got a hamburger
or hot dog?" they ask.
Another girl has just given
the wrong answer.
Their laughter
and her weeping
prompt me: "Hamburger?"

"She does?"

Rational Cannibal
by Lena Judith Drake

You are what you eat.
-- Anthelme Brillat-Savarin

I am human.
What are you?

Weights & Measures
by Lena Judith Drake

corned beef sandwich (342 grams): 593 calories
jalapeno kettle chips (28 grams): 140 calories
chocolate milk (250 grams): 158 calories
double hot fudge brownie sundae (406 grams): 1108 calories

new york style cheesecake (70 grams): 150 calories
pomegranate juice (240 grams): 160 calories
small tossed salad, without dressing (207 grams): 33 calories
lite crisp bread (5 grams): 20 calories

hard-boiled egg whites (44.8 grams): 25 calories
apricot (35 grams): 17 calories
saltine cracker (3 grams): 12.5 calories
celery (7.5 grams): 1 calorie

salt (1 g): 0 cal
sugar-free chewing gum (3 g): 2.5 cal
accidentally swallowed sugar-free chewing gum (3 g): 5 cal
semen (10 g): 7 cal

water (225 g) with lemon (5.9 g): 1 cal
water (225 g): 0 cal
water, tap and possibly contaminated? (225 g): 0 cal still
fingernails (1 g): 4 cal

skin from peeling lips (0.03 g): 0.12 cal
postage stamp glue (1 g): 0.1 cal
inhaled dust (1 g per day): 1.2 cal per day
over a pound of insects consumed in sleep during lifetime (453.59 g): 548.8439 cal
antibiotic medications (2 grams): 0.1 calories

10% of human non-water weight
is bacteria. vancomycin,
amoxicillin, azithromycin,
levofloxacin.

human soul (21 g):

when i am dead, i will weigh
0.046 lbs less
than i do today.

When Cherry hit 80 pounds,
by Lena Judith Drake

she had a tattoo, "EXIT ONLY",
even though she had done anal
and liked it.
Better going out than coming in, she said.

The exit served her well with laxatives, barbiturates,
and a handshake from the clinic pharmacist,
who slipped his phone number
in her cyproheptadine bottle,
and his wedding band in the glove compartment.
It was to make her stoned, she said. Hungry, upchuck-free.
The prescription, of course, not the man.
She couldn't file a formal complaint,
because she went ahead and slept with him.
She left his pillow clotted with hair.

Her hair was unwashed when she died.
This may seem obvious or irrelevant,
but from smallest to biggest she would line up
the bottles of shampoo, conditioner, thermal protectant,
mousse and foam,
on the bathroom counter. Smallest came first.
Always did.

visit: st. barnabas care facility, 1993
by Lena Judith Drake

"oh shit", he says, as his dick
slumps back into his pants,
barely missing the toothy zipper.
it smells like wet coins
in an unwashed palm in the rain,
smells like the link chains
of an abandoned playground swing
pinching fingers, creaking
in the dark.

"what?", i say, but don't move,
my dick stuck up and glued
to my bellybutton with his cum.
the baby wipes are at the head
of the bed, in my bag,
with his personal money order.

"i gotta run to work, but, see, my mom--"

this is how a trick's mother
gets kfc from me.
crusted, overcooked chicken bumping
in the single-serve take-out platter,
plastic, popping concave and convex
under the lube residue on my thumbs.
the cole slaw runs on the tractioned
plastic bottom, white mayo condensation
rivulets sliding underneath
the breaded meat and home fries.

she looks at me with her lazy eye,
so not at all,
after she buzzes me in under her son's name,
the best client background check
i could ever perform.

the counter is covered
with the salt and pepper
of black ants on emptied sugar packets,
probably raided from
weeks of continental breakfast buffets.
the fridge is warm and empty,
except for a half-melted pat of butter,

Dali-esque, saddled on a shelf wire.

i set the tray on the table.
i can smell her stink,
even through the mentholated
in my nostrils, a prophylactic
against rancid blowjobs.

i take the baby wipes out
of my saddlebag,
remove white socks ringed gray,
and begin
to wash her feet.

the most delicious sandwich i ever tasted
by Lena Judith Drake

was after we fucked despite my period
in the wood cabin motel.
you had diarrhea while i watched
the creation of the atom bomb
on the history channel, and in skivvies
but hungry, took two acetaminophen and slept,
threading sheets between my toes,

and hours later, after the pier town's
salt and chlorine air,
you brought me back a corned beef sandwich

because i had asked for one, specifically, and you found one
from a man named joe, and i ate my sandwich
with you-- at the table scattered with tourist guides
and fun facts about fish taste-testing week and nordic tugboat
rendezvous-- naked, a discarded bible on the carpet,
and i had impression marks on the curve of my breast
from sleeping too hard
and it was precisely the sandwich i wanted
and i ate it slowly,
meat edges dry and red,
toasted rye leaving grease smears,
sauerkraut dangling between my lips, and chips
chewed just right.

Yeast
by Lena Judith Drake

What do you mean?
I will will will will provide.
Eat bread loaves, drink beer
out of my infected cunt. What's Jesus got
on that?