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## The Hysterical Woman

I sat in my gynecologist's office. The large paper covering draped across my lap. My pants were carefully folded with my underwear hidden beneath. Even though this man would be examining, and had examined, my genitals, I was still embarrassed by my plain cotton panties. The door opened and he stepped in, looking at his chart.

"Hello Miss..." he paused, then misread my name. He was chewing gum again. His jaw moving back and forth in a way that made it look like he was grinding his teeth. "Put your feet in the stirrups and lie down."

I followed his instructions, dreading the cold of the speculum. He picked up the duck-like tool and said, "Have you experienced any pain or strange discharges?"

Before I could describe the cramps that I'd been suffering from all month, the speculum clattered to the floor. He stepped back, his mouth open, the piece of gum hanging from his lower lip.

"What's wro..." I heard a splat followed by the sound of a small animal wetly scurrying across the linoleum floor. The doctor screamed. I sat up. A bloody trail lead from the bottom of the examination table to the corner of the room where my uterus was pulling itself, with its fallopian tubes, behind a chair. It prodded the walls with its cervix in a manner that reminded me of a blind, naked, newborn puppy.

The doctor was edging along the wall behind the examination table. He kept his eyes on my uterus.

"Doctor," I said, "shouldn't you be less frightened of the female body?"

Once he made it to the door, he gripped the handle and shrieked, "I refuse to work with a hysterical woman!" He slammed the door behind him.

The loud sound scared my uterus, and it scuttled behind a wastebasket. I got off the table and put on my underwear and pants. Then I kneeled down and held out my hands, palms up. "It's all right," I whispered, "I'm not going to hurt you." After some coaxing, the uterus crawled into my arms. I hummed a lullaby while gently rocking it.

A nurse peeked in. "What's going on?"

"Shhh. It's frightened."

She looked at my uterus and said, “Poor thing. Let me get a blanket.” She returned and wrapped it in green flannel.

When we arrived home, I gave my uterus a bath and allowed it to explore the apartment. My boyfriend showed up and flopped on to my couch. He kicked off his shoes and placed his feet on the coffee table. He was telling me about his stressful day when he saw my uterus crawling on the floor. He jumped up and stood on the couch. “What’s that?” he screamed.

“My womb.” For some reason, I felt embarrassed saying “uterus” in front of him.

“What does it want?”

“It’s just wandering. Come down from there before you hurt yourself.”

“No, no, no!”

“It’s not going to hurt you.”

“I can overlook a lot of things, but not crazy.”

I crossed my arms and sighed. “You need to calm down. You’re not making sense.”

“No!” he wailed. “You’re hysterical!” He jumped over the arm of the couch, knocked over my lamp, and fled the apartment in his socked feet.

I righted the lamp. I put his shoes next to the door. Then I sat down on the couch and cried. Eventually, I fell asleep. When I woke, I discovered my uterus curled, warm, in my lap, humming my lullaby.