A SEXUAL HISTORY: DO YOU FIND IT DIFFICULT TO DISCUSS SEX?

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We speak of it with specificity: “Slower, let me lean back—
I like when you bite my nipple—look at me—oh love, oh yes—”

But this practiced bluntness begins and ends
with him. I know I must one day tell my children

so they can bypass
whispers/movies/sex ed, the fictions:

hot rollers and heels are the whole of foreplay (except a blow-job for the man)
and, the first time a woman has sex, it must be bloody and tortuous,

though (after that) she should come from thrusting alone for approximately two minutes (but only if love’s in the mix),

though don’t expect seconds-long, body-quaking peaks (a feminist myth),
and masturbation is for the lonely and desperate,

lubricant for the frigid, marriage
and aging the end of frequent, ecstatic sex.

I don’t want to talk about it, be the weird, long-haired, patchouli-smelling mom/neighbor/book-clubber/aunt.

I don’t want to be the tramp loose-lipped with bourbon.
Aren’t those my choices?

The Good Woman is sexually and verbally continent.
I’m forty, yet expected

to speak no more than I was spoken to, to maintain mob imposition of rapture’s delay (deletion?).
If I say, “Sex, orgasm, penis, vagina, clitoris, 
fuck, come, cock, pussy, ass,”

which of those words makes you flip
to the next poem, the next poet, a nice
girl who swats hands off her knee,
shields her lips with a tilt of her cheek?

I’m not looking to finger your buttons.  
I’m fifteen years a wife (eighteen monogamous),
nine a mother, obsessively photograph my children, 
take them Saturdays to the park or farmers’ market,
bake cookies, quiche, grow tomatoes and peonies in our garden, 
reread Kate Chopin, Sylvia Plath, Maggie Nelson, 
favor Van Gogh, O’Keeffe, Hitchcock and Malick, 
U2, The Beatles, Tulum, relish Tuesday runs to Target, 
take-out naan and vindaloo, evening walks, steamy baths—
all this joy, and sex is only a portion.

But it’s the most acute, 
most recurrent.

Is it origin or expression of this love (limerence?)
binding my years, bounding ambition?

Who else feels it, how rare’s this gift, 
what’s innate, what taught, of lust and its consequent bliss?

And with what words can I ask, except 
those tainted by the throng scrubbing off sex, its scent,

waxing and lasering till they’re hairless as prepubescents, slut-shaming 
women pussy-grabbed by a president? God,
they’ll soap my mouth, I can still taste the bitter bar of curses said in childish test—but it’s no curse,

his cock in me, fingers on my clit, and yet we’re desperate to lick and grip deeper in,

the world open, flesh benevolent, source of forgiveness, exquisite children. There is no revolution—

only transgressions, admissions: I tend well to my kids, roses, rising bread,

but none touch the intense pleasures of sex.