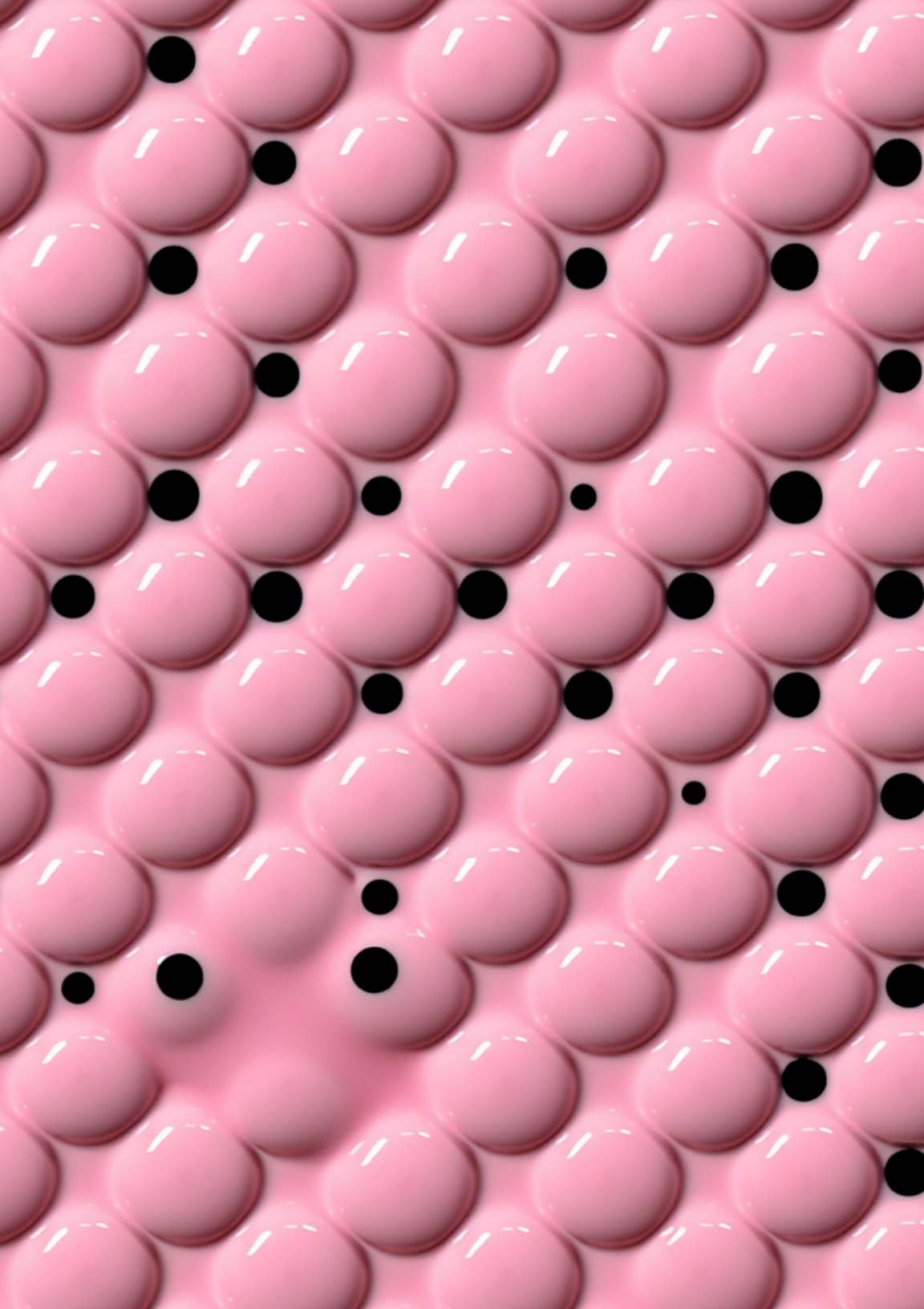


The background of the cover is a digital illustration. It features a woman's face and upper torso in profile, looking upwards and to the left. She has a purple headband and a purple top. Above her head is a large, billowing cloud of orange and red smoke or fire, with several red streaks radiating outwards from behind it. The sky is a mix of teal and light blue, with white clouds. The overall mood is one of intense emotion or mental anguish.

# I Need To Bleed

Living with PMDD

By Michelle Lange



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Fiction / Thriller / Mental Health

By Michelle Lange



Whack Publications

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# ABOUT THIS BOOK

People with premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD) face anxiety, depression and — at the very least — desperation every single month. Use “I Need to Bleed” to survive the highs and lows of intense period cycles.

"My greatest fear is that  
PMS is just real and  
this is who I really am."  
-Carol, Empty Nest



*Blood on Everything*



# EXCERPT

There's blood on everything I own. Dried brown stains on my soft pink sheets. When I strip the covers there's more evidence on the mattress. There's blood in my underwear, blood on my pants, under my nails and blood on the lamp. But I'm not bleeding today. These are old blood stains, from every month that came before.

Blood rules my life.

My period affects my mood, my mind and my body. I get headaches for days and swell up to twice my size. My mental state is worse. Wild changes from indifferent to furious. Ice cold to red hot. I want to shoot people, stab things, burn it all down. Normal people don't think about things like this.

I quit jobs. I leave people. I see the world in black and white.

Some days I'm soft and open, other times I'm hard and closed. The two versions of me are so different it's disturbing. Who am I really?

I don't tell my friends how I'm feeling because it's not fair to take them along — and also they suck half the time. Keeping everything inside can be lonely but it's better than having to explain how unhinged I feel at least half the month. It's destabilizing. Sometimes it's hard to live at all.

Right before I bleed it's the worst. Tomorrow I will wake up covered in sweat with another stain on my mattress and a fading memory of who I've been for the last two weeks.

My true feelings are going in this diary because I can't put them anywhere else. I need to figure out what's going on with me or there's a good chance I'll kill someone.





*Sweet city bunny,  
please don't run away from me.  
We can share the yard.*

I didn't plan on quitting today, but it's 45 minutes into my shift and I'm back on the bus.

After the avocado incident and getting caught sleeping in the booth I knew I'd get fired at some point, but today took everyone by surprise.

There's also a layer of stupid about the whole thing. Did I really need to burn it all down because AJ spelled my name wrong on a nametag?

I mean, technically it wasn't that he spelled my name wrong it's that he said, "Are you sure?"

My adrenaline hit the roof, I screamed until my lungs hurt, projecting all the mean things I've thought about AJ directly to his face, pushing myself into his personal space.

I slammed through the kitchen and pushed over anything in my way. Breadsticks were flying, then wine after I knocked back into Kay who had like six on her tray. I could see myself burning bridges in real time, but it was like I blacked out and didn't come back to my body until I was on the bus.

I want a button to make my embarrassing memories go away. Why am I always exploding like this?

---

Even if yesterday had never happened, I still would have called in today. The last time I went in like this I sat down to fold napkins in the half-moon booth and fell asleep.

The next thing I knew this yellow-mustached dad is yelling in German that his wife is tired and must sit down while I'm wiping drool off my face.

I pretended to be down there looking for a lost phone. Neither my manager nor the tourist believed my story, and I had to apologize. Sorry your stupid family can't sit down, my brain has permanent jet lag.

Instead of sleepwalking through another day at the restaurant I'm at home and bloated, and my thoughts are spiraling.

I can't even keep a hostess job.

I'm 35 and doing nothing.

Why did I try to take that low key photo and have the flash go off instead?

I missed the boat at 21 when I turned down the Skaneateles project.

I am such a loser I didn't know who sang 99 Red Balloons when someone asked in 7th grade.



I couldn't even leave the stupid job looking good. On the way out I tripped on a kitchen mat and banged into the exit. Probably what this bruise on my forearm is from.

On one hand, I'm a hundred percent ashamed of the kind of psycho who comes out of me when I have had enough. On the other hand, it was 90 days at this stupid job and nothing else. I don't care what anyone thinks of me there.

—

To do:

Muffle rapid-fire self-criticism

New job search?

Call Reb

—

I was hoping I would wake up to blood but it's a dry wipe every time. It's been 3 days since I walked out and I haven't done anything to make more money and I'm mostly terrified AJ or anyone else I've assaulted while raging will file a personal injury lawsuit.

—

Another day of scrolling, rage cleaning and bad sleep. My skin is crawling.

—



I am trying to motivate myself to apply for jobs, but holding a job feels impossible right now. Holding myself upright feels impossible right now.

Things most people need to do to keep a job:

Get out of bed.

Minimal hygiene like a shower and a toothbrushing.

Clear mind.

Flexibility.

What I need:

A job that lets me stay in bed all day.

Low bar on basic hygiene.

Prefers clouded thinking, brain fog from staffers.

Must enjoy irritability.

—

I made up a joke resume and sent it to Reb. She laughed and sent it back with this recommendation:

Reliable

Kind

Problem solver

I don't identify with the list, of course, because I am obviously a steaming pile of garbage, but it's very nice of her to lie.



I'm going to be better about journaling, starting today, Day 1 of my blood month.

I woke up boiling in my blankets and could tell my temperature had spiked. I rubbed my fingers in my armpit and pulled out a whiff of sour sweat. Lying in bed I could feel either blood or sweat sliding down my crack and when I got up my pants were covered.

I threw my clothes in the sink and showered for the first time in days.

## *Day 2*

The toilet is shitty and bloody and messy and going to stay that way because I don't feel like cleaning it or doing anything today.

## *Day 3*

I'm still bloated and the bleeding is annoying but at least I'm free from suspicion, irritation and rage.

## Day 4

The headache I've been fighting for days finally released me. Losing all this blood keeps me drained, dehydrated. I had to drag myself through everything today, one heavy step at a time.

## Day 5

Today I can live in my body again.

## Day 6

For the first time in a while I didn't avoid the mirror and looked at my whole body. Skinny! At least the bloat is going away. This feels like my normal body; that's the neutral phrase I settled on. Today's goal: Wedge myself into some underwear and go out.

## Day 7

Mostly fine today except the nagging guilt about my inability to function half the month. I'm scrambling to put food in my fridge, put food in myself, get back to people and make a thousand lists — everything that didn't get done last week.

Day 8

Day 9

I'm a book reader now, apparently. At home I can do nothing and be gross, but it feels like I need something to do at the coffee shop other than stare at my table or look for a job.

I've been here since the shop opened, and set up in the far back so I could see the door and also tuck back in to hide. Mostly I watched the barista, who would wake up from the dead zone to flirt and then go back to a zombie when the customer was old or gross. Should I try pouring espresso shots to meet people?

Day 10

Day 11



*If we're not counting  
all the embarrassing parts,  
life is light and free.*

Day 12

Day 13

Day 14

Day 15

When I wiped it was clear, slimy, thick. I think this is ovulation. I've never really connected to the idea of egg whites like the period trackers say. It's more like slime, like gak, but clear.

Who would I ask if I wanted to know? Everyone I know is dead. I built a life without anyone else's help. Some days I can handle everything and even more. Other times it feels really hard. Thankfully today is one of the better days.

Things I'm thankful for:

Love my friends

I'm grateful for my actual friends, who are magic, patient, intelligent humans. When my itch to be social turns into a gnawing desire, these amazing people come through.

Reb is officially my best friend, the only one who checks in on me when I go silent but is not impatient when I don't respond.

Freedom

I'm unattached – tethered by amazing friends – so I know I've got a wingman who will stay out all night whether I find someone to distract me or not.

Morals

I'm a good person, even without a steady guide.

Driven

I'm working on my second graduate degree (even though I'm currently between semesters and taking the longest road there possible).

Update: Tried my bar math and scored — why is it so easy to hook up with strangers but impossible to make longer connections?



## Day 16

Pissy today. Bored. I keep thinking about last night and getting hot all over again, I've come more times today than I have all month.

## Day 17

Yesterday's drop in mood was a tease, a little hiccup of negativity. Today I'm feeling better, back to myself. Just a casual little whiplash in my emotional state.

## Day 18

Doing my best to keep it together.

I haven't been in touch with anyone in weeks, I'm a terrible friend.

I left my laundry in the dryer last week, so I'm also a terrible neighbor. I've met the woman upstairs from me like 10 times but every time I see her I totally blank and treat her like a stranger.

Everyone thinks I'm unhinged.

No one asked me about weekend plans = I'm not invited.

I spilled my iced coffee.

Loud music from upstairs has been going all morning.

Everything is setting me off.

*Day 19*

*Day 20*

I'm on my bed with the door closed because every surface outside this door is covered in piles. I don't have the energy to do the dishes. I don't feel like cleaning up. I am barely getting this note out. In and outside of my head, the clutter is too much.

*Day 21*

Today's wish: That my very long list of things to do doesn't overwhelm me and that this double espresso shot will hurtle me through dinner with Reb.



Update:

I was trying to cross the “I’m a bad friend” off the “Reasons I Suck” list, but I ended up doubling down instead.

Reb called and got to talking about her garden and how she wants to plant purple garlic bulbs this fall but you can only get my mail and she

doesn't know how to get fresh bulbs from all the way across the world in just a couple of months .... I was honestly falling asleep even though I know she's excited about it. Then! She started talking about an assistant job at her friend's business. I started to get snappy because I knew she was hinting it could be a job for me. She heard my tone and got defensive and somehow in three seconds I was yelling at her for being in my business.

Now I'm sitting here feeling bad and I don't know how to apologize, because when I start to think about the garlic and her friend's stupid company and I get wound up again. Add it to the list of things I have to apologize for.

## Day 22

I meant to get a hobby but I started following my old manager around instead. [insert intense shame spiral]

It was only once – yesterday – and it was an accident-ish.

I had pulled into the parking lot of the restaurant to see if maybe Kay was around, I thought she could look in the drawer where AJ kept the paper copies of our paychecks. It had been more than two weeks and they hadn't mailed it to me.

When I pulled in my head was pounding, so I stayed in the car to close my eyes for a minute.

I heard the door clunk open and the sun bounced over me. AJ's gangly shadow came out and he walked around the back to his red truck. I was tucked behind the wheel and he was looking at his phone and didn't see me.

When he pulled out I did, too. I had just seen him leave the restaurant and have always wondered where he went after work.

It wasn't late, but the sun set early, the sky was gray with blue. There aren't many roads in town so it's not that suspicious to go the same way as the car in front of you.

He started going toward Reb's neighborhood, so then I really got curious. I wondered if he was on the same street. Now I was two cars behind him, keeping a tail.

It was easy to follow, this road took me to Reb's all the time. I was following mostly out of habit at that point.

Then he turned left and I was in the wrong lane so I made a last-minute choice to get over in the lane behind him. Cars were honking, OMG. This is not what being incognito is supposed to be like.

He turned down her side street and kept going. The further he went, the faster my heart raced. She's way at the end. He can't really be going to my best friend's house.

At the very end of the street, he made a dead-end turn into a road I didn't even think anyone lived on, hidden behind a bunch of overgrown trees.



My flop sweat had turned cold by the time I rolled by. I knew the area well enough to loop back around to see where he parked without being too suspicious.

Number 412.

Not Reb's, but not far, either.

I kept driving, then took a left to rejoin the sane people of the world.

## *Day 23*

Full days have gone by since I've gotten anything done. The clothes are all over the bed, my sink is full of dishes, I'm not getting enough done. My head says the same thing over and over: I am worthless.

*No one will hug me.*

*Am growing like a cactus,*

*red and prickly.*

## *Day 24*

Today I've done nothing but let my thoughts leak onto each other.

Truly cannot believe I acted so wild last week. Should I walk back to see if there are any cameras? Did anybody from the inside know what was going on? Are they all talking about it now?

Distracting myself with fried cheese, breaded meatballs and celery, for health. And because I ate the wings they came with for breakfast this morning.

Not seeing anybody for, let's say, ever. Let this gross goddess exist alone.

## Day 25

Which is worse, being broke or having a job?

My working options seem limited. I could ...

1. Get a job I hate all the time, then it won't matter if it's a good day or a bad day. I can jump to another job every time I feel frustrated and need to walk out. Of course, I'm stuck at minimum wage and at the mercy of whoever makes the scheduling calendar. My life is extra hard when I don't know where I'm going to be (mentally or physically) from week to week. The only benefit: Rage quitting is fine, and I can always find another gig.



2. Keep looking for that magical position that lets me take days off when I need rest and soar when I'm feeling my best. Being a cog in the wheel is sometimes helpful. You can roll under the radar, do the basic work and not be bothered. Of course, rumination is hard to avoid when you're stuck in a cubicle, and there will always be a manager who makes you want to blow the building up. It takes a degree and some experience to get into a corporate job, and at least I can focus my internal storyline on shitty co-workers instead of your family.

3. Work for myself and handle everything, even when I can barely get out of bed. There's a certain freedom in working for myself. I can take on projects and schedule work for my good times. The truth is I can check my email and do basic maintenance work on my worst symptom days (25 and beyond) and take calls from bed with my camera off when I have to. There's also the reality of chasing clients when I can barely stay awake and billing cycles cramped up against ovulation.

None of these seem like winners. As far as I can tell, every job is going to be too loud, too stressful, too much sometimes.

Before the restaurant I'd been trying harder to pick up anything possible, even the shady trailer house businesses like the one with the Hired Today! sign by my place.

One morning I was feeling dream and optimism, so I walked in and got into telemarketing. Being on the phone made me sweat, even in the morning's practice session. The mood was tense, I couldn't look anyone in the eye. My ears were throbbing and I wanted to barf waiting for the calls to connect.

The training guy was so weird, and touched me one too many times for knowing me a total of five minutes. I froze at first, but by the afternoon I was sick of it.

He was hovering in the door of my cubicle, his horrible cologne sweating off him. He kept inching closer and closer, so I stood up to try to shoo him away. When he didn't move, I grabbed the closest thing to me, a heavy handled water bottle. He seemed to get the message and stopped, but he didn't leave.

So we're standing there, and I'm looking at him like CAN I HELP YOU? and he finally told me to get back to work and left. I don't know why but for some reason I chucked the water bottle at his head while he walked away.

It hit the wall, extra dramatic, and the water went everywhere. The whole place got real quiet.

I quit on the spot, obviously, but I can't really connect myself to this lady from the cubicle. Who is this woman who crossed the line?

## Day 26

I blow up so fast over things that seem like nothing later. There's a spark of a fight, a little resistance and I'm flared up, a fire-breathing dragon who will burn everything down. I am desperate to extend the time between normal and exploding. Right now the time between the two is nonexistent.

Ice baths are supposed to slow down the moment between an action and my reaction. I will try one later and see what happens.

Update: I filled my tub with cold water and threw in two trays of ice cubes, but when it came to getting in I couldn't stand it. Now I'm just freezing and mad.

## Day 27

*Mean, snappy and rude.*

*My peaceful bubble just popped.*

*They're the other me.*



## *Day 28*

I've had a days-long headache so I'm writing in the dark in the only room where the sun isn't coming in from every possible crack. Similarly assaulted are my sinuses. Everything feels sharp, even air going up my nose. Nasty sock smells are shoved up into my brain, and my eyes are dry and scratchy.

I'm shitting hot liquid thanks to last night's butter chicken binge, but even full evacuation leaves me feeling bloated. I'm swelled to the max. hot, sticky and somehow not bleeding.

The longer this time goes, the more hopeless everything feels. Nothing's nice, nothing's in color. I'm unhappy and it feels like it will last forever.

## *Day 29*

Walk outfit: Five layers if you count them all: undershirt, t-shirt, flannel, sweatshirt, jacket. Only one layer on the bottom because I'm an idiot and giant sunglasses that I think make me look chic but probably just look insane.

I saw three different rabbits on my block, the one that's always in the yard next door, another one frozen in fear and a third whose butt I watched run in front of me for half a block before he ditched into the alley.

*Rabbits in the cut.*

*The city is full enough.*

*Get out of here, Bugs.*