

Tracey Rolfe

## PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES

It's taboo,  
womanspeak,  
they never induct you into the club  
until you are pregnant.  
Their secret password

### *INCONTINENCE*

plastered onto toilet walls  
in maternity hospitals  
confirms your fears

God must be a man  
no woman could be so cruel.

With other novices you sit in waiting rooms  
where they bombard you with the regime  
in leaflets, on video screens  
until it's distilled in your nightmares.

You're on a first name basis  
when you go to classes  
and hear the instructor say

as she clenches her fist

*lift two three four five*

her hand opens

*let go and relax*

*two three four five*

and clenches again

*and lift*

sweat beads on pink faces  
but no-one is moving a muscle  
at least not any that you can see.

Friends share their little tricks

*stick a red spot on your fridge*

*and do five every time you see it*

*fifteen for red traffic lights*

and the class where they talk  
of stopping a lift at five different floors  
almost gives you a hernia.

After the birth  
they say  
    *pretend you are holding*  
    *a diamond*  
    *squeeze tight*  
    *don't let it drop*  
and it's hard not to laugh  
knowing a basket ball  
could slip the hoop  
without even scraping the sides.  
You learn to clench  
for a sneeze or a cough  
and swell the ranks  
of women who exercise daily  
and wonder why  
they didn't start you earlier  
along with those films  
they showed you  
at school.

## PEEL

Avocadoes  
are like eggs  
to peel, sometimes  
the skin lifts off in sheets  
like snake-skin, sometimes it  
flakes off, like dandruff, requires  
picking off in minute pieces or gouging  
out like a wood-carving and whether it's  
worth the effort depends on how it's  
baked, too little sun leaves it waxy,  
too much leaves a mush, it needs  
to be cooked to perfection  
just like eggs.

