



THE
UNDERPANTS
SERIES

by Mike Finley

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1. Old Man Underpants



2. My Dog Lucy Eating Out
the Seat Of My Underpants



3. Whiteys

Old Man Underpants

It gets harder every year, putting
the damn things on.

The knees get stiffer, the joints get
squeakier, the legs no longer
make the number four,
the one foot hopping on the floor
points the body toward the bureau,
then the doorknob, then the floor.

And the seat of the underpants
is not new cloth.

This fabric is sad from so many washings,
and sittings, and scratchings.

The elastic band has been through
the dryer too often,
it can still stretch a little, but it is loath
to snap back,

it is more like a veil than any kind of shield,
and the stabbing foot so easily
misses its target
and plunges through the rear panel entirely.
And this will only get worse.
I see this old man in a home,
and having an attendant pull them up
his legs, how he must wish he had gone
to vo-tech and put together
a better set of skills than pulling
old dudes' underwear up,
and the old fellow imagining he's
George Washington in his tent,
and an aide-de-camp is pulling him
into his boots.
There is still a glimmer of glory
in the old man's mind,

But it is just a rag in a trembling hand.

All the great victories are behind him.

My Dog Lucy Eating Out the Seat Of My Underpants

I return home around nine o'clock

And there is Lucy, sitting beside three pairs
of my underpants,

With the seat bitten out of two of them.

It's happened again – upset at
being left alone,

She attacks the seat of any underpants

She located in the bedroom,

Brings them downstairs, and leaves them
at the door.

In the past three years I have had
to replace about 40 pair.

I know what you're thinking, but no,

She does this to just-washed underpants
as well as just-worn.

This is a serious problem.

She stares at me without a hint of humor.
You just go to your poetry readings,
she says with her eyes.
Just leave me, the dog, to figure out
what to do by myself,
Locked up in this lonely human house.
Don't you imagine for one second
there will not be a price to pay.

Whiteys

I work the Stairmaster for half an hour, then run three miles on the indoor track. I slip on my trunks and swim eight laps.

I shower high. The endorphins are going off like Roman candles. I return to my locker, open the door, grab my briefs, and pull them up. My, they feel so snug, so sexy, so new! You know, exercise does wonderful things to your head!

Now I notice none of the clothes in the locker look familiar. Come to think, aren't my underpants just regular whiteys? But these are blue, and kind of beautiful.

Oh no, I think, I've just put on another person's underpants.

I rubberneck to right and left. There are naked men standing about, toweling off. I would describe them as blasé.

So, no one notices. I strip off the briefs with one sweep and hurl them back into the locker, slamming the door. I open my rightful locker, one click to the left, and grab my own underwear.

Poor and thin in the seat, they are paradise to me now.

I dress hurriedly and make for the exit. I have made good my escape, undetected.

But late nights I lie awake, still dealing with the terror of that moment. What if I had been found? What could I say?

Even alone, by myself, in bed, the shame steals over me afresh.

And I vow, as God is my witness, I will never judge another man.

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in St. Paul, Minnesota.



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