

OHMHOLE
TYLER HAYDEN

FIRST EDITION
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Teeth

My mother sits on the corner of the bed, cut by the hallway's light-bulb, slits through the door. The quilt, a patchwork of denim and orange yarn. She, a vertical itch in the squares, rubs my ankle bone. Her tin ring roughed and wire thin on her thumb, dull in light. Her hands reddened from dishwater, darker than her arms. Slight smell of bleach. Her short brown hair triangles a widow's peak, points to her lips, splinter dry.

Nights are broken waisted.

"Night," she says.

She shuts the door to my room. The worn handle shifts horizontal metal. The room turns incomplete darkness. My animal nightlight glows by the door, slouching black ears, white face, black eyes, belly a bump of sun. I say animal generically because most animals are all dead now. The Coke crates, coat hangers, cement blocks, all angles of dark.

My abandonment issues reside with LIFE not with my mother to clarify.

Fuck Freud: psychoanalysis is piss poor astrology.

I have always swallowed my teeth. For as long as I can remember. They rattle against my cheeks. Ball down my tongue. If you suck on them they chalk apart tasting of exhaust. If you bite them they sugar

then nothing, tasting of blood. I have always swallowed my teeth. Low into my chest.

Tonight, I wait a couple minutes before I check for the tooth fairy. You never know with her. If she's late or early. She comes every night. In through the radiator and up the curtain. Or in with the sliver of light under the door, a short fat crawl. I feel through the pillow with the back of my skull for her.

My hand slides under the pillow. I feel her hair: rat warm yarn. Soft stubby arms. Studded denim overalls. I pull her out from under my pillow. In the glow of the nightlight, she looks cracked. A pocket stitched onto the denim of her little overalls with tiny rivets. Inside the pocket, I finger out a little tooth. A smooth tooth, polished and slightly chilled, pink or blue.

I'm in the kitchen on an unrelated morning:

"This, this is a tooth," – my mother says, holding a pink tooth in her hand – "look."

The radiator trickles heat into my naked feet. Except my toes, they only get the linoleum. 7:16 am always: the clock on the stove is busted. The morning sun dusts over the trees. Long cold lumps the air. No steam rises from the bowl of carbohydrates on the metal table. The steam left minutes ago. Little red flakes of protein pool on top of the slop.

I nod, look down, can't speak, away from breakfast, check my feet, fiddling, letting them cool and reheat, waiting for her to shut up so I can eat.

"Teeth are seeds that sprout into new teeth. The more teeth the better," – she steps to the table and puts the tooth into my carbohydrates – "When you're bigger, the tooth fairy will come at night."

Her cigarette ashes to the filter in the ashtray on the countertop.

The morning isn't unrelated after all.

Dark. My bedsheets loosen. I carefully take out the tooth from the tooth fairy's pocket and hold it in my hand to warm it up. I hold it for a minute, put it in my mouth, then swallow. I fumble the fairy.

My eyes click and click and my teeth tickle. No sleep. None. Inside my eyelids: dirt holes: nausea. I slow my breath, black siphons into my mouth. All's I get is the taste of baking soda stuck between my teeth.

The sound of my father's phlegm cuts into my bedroom through the wall. A light switch snaps. He shuffles past my door.

Black creeps my bedroom. I wait a couple of minutes before I check under the pillow for the tooth fairy. I feel through the pillow, with the back of my head, for the soft lump of visitor. She's there. I reach under my pillow and hit a palm full of warm plastic. A fur heats fiber optic. I pull it out from under the pillow. A palm full of light. An animal. My animal nightlight, soft minus its three electrical prongs. I hold the animal in my hand for a few minutes, touching its belly, its bump of sun. The animal jerks slightly. It crawls down my arm, past my shoulder. Little claws prick into my bare skin.

The animal sprawls on my cheek and paws at my eyelashes, chews on them, not really hard. It rests on my left cheek, its belly becomes warmer and larger. Its belly breaks. Warm orange spills down my cheek and into my mouth, tastes of vitamins, unsweetened and acidic. A slight burn begins in the cracks of my lips and spreads to my cheek. A slight itch begins in the cracks of my lips and spreads to my cheek. My brain skits. I scratch my face: deep nail scoops to get it off. The animal bleeds somewhere in the sheets, the same orange blood that's under my nails, down my fingers, glows in the dark. I scratch and scratch and scratch. My cheek splits and spills down into my mouth, blood. The burning increases. I scream for my mom, but my screams only mix with hers, crawling through the drywall.

Carbon Cycle

Symptoms will not be described.

Secondary/opportunistic infections will not be described.

Stages will not be described.

Fluid levels will not be described.

Cell/viral load counts will not be described.

Words: sentences: narrative: dead lips can't bear stretch marks: can't describe disease or a slight case of singularity (DEATH) or much else for that matter.

Air tastes better when it's split. My syntax stinks acetone.

No description of the non-describes is possible because it will never match reality.

Besides the non-describes are not me because they are symptoms of me.

Microbes eat where they sleep where they shit where they fuck where they me.

Microbe me: they make me decay me carbon me cycle me nothing new.

Microbes are me. Disease is me. I am I saying I like I know what it is: changes every unit of whatever. Little room now for disease, the I disease. The I is dead the first time I leaked from my face. I makes ghosts of future mitosis. I is dead already, move on, only thing to be

done. I am already a ghost ising: is is blunt is sharp is death is decay is entropy. See it work: how purdy like. I never was I from the cunt to the black. My disease doesn't really matter: call it X, Y, Z: don't matter much: all ends in the carbon cycle.

The best definition of post-man is this: a dildoing on two or more or less legs.

Language is disease is biotic is prophylactic is abiotic is cloud is plastic.

Cut your hand in a crowd and see what happens.

IV

My IV crawls into my arm. I'm not sure of what's going in but I'm aware of what exits. My IV pumps the highest grade numb I'm sure. The smell of esters nestled in my elbow, bent against my arm. Where's your IV? Me. Might be saline. Might be strychnine. Might be main-lined sunshine. My IV I've carried my whole life. I decide to pull the IV out to give my arm rest but can't. The gauze gropes together with the medical tape. My IV let's see. My IV is me. My IV, HIV-less. Or is it? Too late. My IV, a symptom of me. Let's start again. I'm poisoning the well again. Yes. I'll strip the gauze. Let's start again. I pull the medical tape off my skin. Let's start again. Oh wait. Let's start again. We can't start. The well is poisoned well. If I pull, will the gauze go? What about the gauze? That grey mass of progress that can't even be pulled already clotted down. Should I start again? No. Wait. I should. I really should. My arm pains. Let's try a lump sum, got caught somewhere in my throat. Fuck it. Fucking. A fucking that's what got us here. Time does the darndest things. We're all here in the well being poisoned. The same well. Does the well exist? No but Yes. Well OK. I'm ripping off the tape. What am I now? Not quite, the IV is still stuck in the well because the well is me, water and hole. There's no grey here. Only red here. Gauze clot with my arm hair. Loose air. Let's start again? Can They? Let's start again. What will we gain? The gauze

is off. I think I need another. The clumped clot. Lump of stick. Let's start again. The tape sticks to my thumb like a symptom. Let's start again. Let's start again. Stuck to my thumb. Let's start again. The well is never poisoned.

COLOPHON

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