

The Tooth Fairy

I don't know why I let myself under him. Second time this week. I start out liking the way he looks at me when he pours me a beer.

I'm thirsty. He's hungry.

At bar time, I follow him upstairs to his apartment. It smells like sour clothes and boiled potatoes. His mattress lies on the floor, pushed against the wall. Whatever we spent two nights ago is still on the sheets.

The bar's neon sign hangs outside the bedroom window. It glows through the cheap plastic blinds, my naked skin striped blue and pink.

He's not a good lover. He's not even a good man. I know he cheats his customers, kicks his dog, lies through his tobacco teeth. Yet, I put myself under him.

I close my eyes and listen to the shuffling squeak of the bed and the damp slap of our thighs. I'm reminded of my grandma. She killed salamanders with her bare feet. "Those goddamn good for nothing things!" She'd complain, then catch their tails between her toes and squash their speckled, wet bellies. Our fucking sounds like those dying salamanders. Squish, squish, squish.

I picture myself picking up his sweaty body with my toes, flipping him over, stepping on his neck while he gurgles, stops breathing. Like those goddamn salamanders.

He rolls off me. I black out.

In the morning, his back is to me. My head feels like bruised fruit and my foot throbs. I hobble to his bathroom, sit on the edge of the tub. Something brown is stuck in the pad of my foot. I lick my thumb, wipe away dried blood, and pick out the shard, hold it up. A tooth. I run my tongue around my mouth. Got all mine.

I go back for my clothes, stare at his mottled back, spotted with moles. His neck is crooked, blood smeared in his hair. I leave his tooth under the pillow.