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Procedures

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Pleiades: Literature in Context, Volume 40, Issue 2, Summer 2020, p.
199 (Article)

Published by University of Central Missouri, Department of English
and Philosophy

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/plc.2020.0109>



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<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/759348>

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I had a tooth once that erupted in the roof of my mouth.
They rigged it with a wire and it was night when I woke
in the office. A nurse waited. When she switched off the lights,
I switched off. I wasn't a kid anymore. I rode the elevator,
hailed a cab, fingered the gauze and snow fell,
that swirling acceleration down Lake Shore Drive
to Mom. Our house was dark, I remember, the energy crisis.
Mom in the kitchen, high heels clicking to the stove
that caught the blue and I swam, a melting glacier
of painkillers. Sweet tea for the gritty tooth that pounded.
I remember Mom left the room, heels clicking, and the dark
healed after her like a skin of water. Our first home is water.

Today I wake in a hall of a hundred cots in perfect rows.
My neighbor stares at me like a fish,
everyone in gray smocks after the abortion.
They don't tell you this part.
I brought myself here and I need to get my things.
They don't tell you but your own blunted limbs
know cold, no one here to help.
The anesthesiologist laughed, I remember, the entangled cords,
and beeps and I carried laughter's gas into the dark
of a light switched off. In the cab down Park, tulips nod red-orange.
This is the past catching me, Mom's bright, blurred dress,
her splotches of big flowers on the hook
behind the bathroom door—her Crate & Barrel,
five pregnancies, six years straight—
too close, too fast. How can I dissolve?
Home, I bring sweet tea to the bath,
I bring the whole trickling house of me.

