

Hygiene

by Epiphany Ferrell

I peed on Rick's toothbrush. I nearly repented and cleansed it with hydrogen peroxide in the middle of the night. But I didn't. I put it back in his overnight bag, which is where he keeps his toothbrush even though we've lived in this apartment three months now. He doesn't want his toothbrush in the holder with mine because it's too close to the toilet, according to something he read on the Internet, and so mine probably has gross bacteria. When I remember, I clean mine in peroxide but most times I just put the toothpaste on and brush.

I laid there beside him that night, beside my mighty hunter who put two turkeys and an old doe in the freezer for us, and I felt how the ice formed on his side that was exposed to the air. I had the power to warm this skin, to melt this ice, but we'd grown so aloof from each other I took comfort in the patterns of frost instead. We weren't even roommates any longer, not really — one was always surprised to see the other. It was awkward climbing into a bed he occupied. I wore my sneakers, my pink Chucks, to bed. It was a bluff, me dressing like I was ready to leave. Leaving a lover is like raising bail —you know you won't get back what you put in so the motivation isn't there.

The pee on his toothbrush was the most intimate we'd been in a month.

I wondered if he was the type to sniff his toothbrush before using it. Did he check for the scent of stale spearmint? Did my pee smell like pee? I'd been drinking a lot of water, maybe it didn't smell like anything. It's not my fault, I reasoned, he trimmed his toenails in bed so I know, I just know it's over. That was two months ago. We're just limping along. We see so little of each other, we'll have to schedule a time to say we're done, we're not renewing the lease, not on the apartment, not on each other.

I think about his pee-soaked toothbrush in the overnight bag downstairs.

I'll find out later it wasn't his at all, it was his other girlfriend's.

