

Blood

by John Wentworth Chapin

We decide not to go to the emergency room; explaining what happened would be beyond embarrassing. Once the blood stops gushing from my mouth and the pain subsides, we have a good laugh about it. It looks like domestic violence, but it's anything but that.

We crawl back into bed and nestle in each other's arms. Sex is out of the question, but that hunger for intimacy lingers, dissatisfied. I show him where the BB lodged decades ago in the palm of my hand, a faint scar where the pellet entered and an even fainter one where it was surgically removed. He traces the spot with his thumb, and I feel his pulse. He shows me the scar where a window sheared a cone of flesh from his teenaged palm. Blood spurted like you wouldn't believe, he says. That pale oval is colder than the rest of him, and I warm it. Ravenous for more, we go on.

Gay men fear each other's blood, so we don't kiss. It is perhaps the answer to a lifelong prayer that we can't couple just now. Wrapped in arms bigger than my own, I am satisfied.

