

toothache

Sarann Spiegel

I go to the doctor and I tell her my mouth hurts.
she takes a peek, says,
it looks like you have a cavity.
you should go to the dentist.

I go to the dentist and I tell him I have a cavity.
he pokes around, says,
it looks like it runs deeper than that.
you should go to an oral surgeon.

I go to the oral surgeon and I tell them the cavity runs deep.
they peer inside, say,
this looks unnatural.
you should go to the psychic a block over.

I go to the psychic a block over and I tell him the cavity runs deep and is unnatural.
he reads my palm, says,
something dark stirs within you.
you should go to my lighting guy.

I go to his lighting guy and I tell her the cavity runs deep and is unnatural and something dark stirs within me.
she puts a lightbulb on my tongue, says,
you bit down on the glass.
you should go to the ER.

I go to the ER and I tell them the cavity runs deep and is unnatural and something dark stirs within me and I bit down on the glass, only I bit down on the glass so the words are blood in my mouth, on my chin, dripping down my front, pooling at my feet.
they make me open wide, say,
horrific.
someone get a doctor. STAT.

they get me a doctor and I tell her (as I lay on the table) the cavity runs deep and is unnatural and something dark stirs within me and I bit down on the glass and it's horrific, only my mouth is propped open so it's all blood gurgling in my throat, threatening to choke me.

she plucks out the shards of glass, says,

oh, geez, we should check if you swallowed any.

let's get an x-ray.

I get an x-ray and I tell it the cavity runs deep and is unnatural and something dark stirs within me and I bit down on the glass and it's horrific and I might've swallowed some, only it doesn't hear and I probably didn't speak it, my mouth being full of gauze and the rest of me high out of my mind.

it scans my innards, says,

you sure swallowed something.

get a surgeon on this.

I get a surgeon on this and I tell him the cavity runs deep and is unnatural and something dark stirs within me and I bit down on the glass and it's horrific and I might've swallowed some and I sure swallowed something, only I'm speaking through the laughing gas and my lips are slugs.

he cuts me open, says,

dear god. there's a black hole in h-

he slides sideways into the pit of my stomach.

everything does.

his assistant, his scalpel, my teary-eyed mother, the homeless couple outside begging for change, every president, the UN, the kids playing soccer with a can in the street, the dog mewling in the empty lot, the world.

help.

only the stars are around to hear.

I tell the stars the cavity runs deep and is unnatural and something dark stirs within me and I bit down on the glass and it's horrific and I might've swallowed some and I sure swallowed something and help.

they blink wildly, swooning through the sky, winking.

they slide in too,
slow, incandescent fingers reaching for one last caress of life.

I lay still, winking help and I sure swallowed something and I might've swallowed
some and it's horrific and I bit down on the glass and something dark stirs within
me and it's unnatural and the cavity runs deep.

I stare out.

nothing stares back.

slipping sideways, I devour myself, joining everything on the other side.

my mouth aches the whole way down.