



# The Peace

I have teeth and I do what's necessary for them.

But I've always hated brushing and flossing them.

At night I can hear the toothbrush and the floss crying.

Sometimes I join them. I guess we're all tired of fighting.

I wonder if I'll live long enough to witness the Peace.

# For What For

A curtain rod was in need of a ring. Not that it thought itself lucky enough to ever hold on to a curtain, but perhaps a blank sheer to give it the pale illusion of self-dignity.

“Any day now,” patronized the grimy, flush mount ceiling light from the corridor.

“Fuck off and pass away, dim shit,” the rod barked and nearly snapped.

“Well said good rod,” chuckled the tawdry chandelier from the dining room.

“You’ve been unkind to yourself. You should have done things differently. It’s okay. I believe it’s never too late. I’ve got a ring for you. But moving forward, you’ll have to follow the way I tell you to.”

Feeling ten inches shorter and desperate for quiet and solitude, the rod responded, “Shatter where you hang.”

Moments later, the window-facing sofa shuffled a pillow. Two soft knocks startled the door awake. A handsome figure was welcomed in by the homeowner and lovingly guided toward the sofa. A bouquet of flowers was placed on the daft table.

That night, the guest and the host kissed and shyly touched each other where they sat, occasionally inconvenienced by the sight of the newly-erected streetlamp outside the window.

More days of frustration and humiliation passed for the rod until one bright morning, the master of the house lifted it and placed the naked thing upright against the wall.

“You should have taken the ring...”, “And done what with it?” The barrage of ridicule from the light fixtures was swift and painful.

A thought persisted in the inch-thick rod, *I must have done a terrible thing before being recycled into this. All I want now is a blind hand to wave me against the ceiling lights.*

Just then, two familiar knocks directed everything's attention toward the entrance of the house. The door complained open and a smiling figure stepped in. This time, instead of flowers, the visitor was carrying a heavy cloth covered with patterns of colorful birds and flowers.

Holding an end each, host and visitor helped slip the rod through the narrow pocket sewn into the top length of the three-layered curtain. Caught in an undertow of orgasms, the rod heard in muffled sounds what the host said to the guest, "the new light and chandelier arrive in an hour, will you help me install them and throw the old ones out? Then we can eat and relax on the couch, I promise."

# Need A Heavy Hand

All the bathroom door wanted was to be keyed and slammed. What it got instead was an egg knob and a hand that continuously left the door wide open.

Dismal, suicidal, and with much begging from the stingy hinges, the door closed to a third. An orange candle burning by the filled bathtub gave the toilet the wrong idea of handsome. Someone entered the house. The unmistakable click of the entrance door as it closed and latched gave the bathroom door envious tremors and folded the candle's righteous posture in half.

The hand that had been so kind to the other, now pushed this one wide again. The essence of the tub pulled a third of her nakedness out of the water and greeted the master of the hand.

The candle, caught in an existential struggle, somehow managed to escape drowning in the moat of liquid wax surrounding it and straighten its flame.

After a short moment, the hand pushed the bathroom door to a gentle close.. Given everything, that was still a moment to cherish.

# A Pen Completes Its Work

Two incomplete sets of stories were left on a wobbly desk to marinate. One was called, “Happy Tales,” the other, “Somber Fables.”

The pen that had written both was exhausted, uncapped and left on its side. Cold plastic pressing against its near empty cartridge, the pen could do little about the desk mocking the stories as, “incomplete births.”

Feeling powerless to sow the cursed chasm between happy and somber, the pen decided it was time to tell another story instead.

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Ink-stained fingers stacked two piles of papers into one and placed them in a wooden box. Later, an ugly table, cursing the pen that had bled itself to death on its surface was pushed outside for trash.

# The Cuddle

We used to lie together.

Now, many things lie between us.

I lie to myself for a little sleep.

# Giving Blood

I've been waking up every morning at 5:37 AM from nightmares, my asshole screaming, "hemorrhoid." Last night, I was caught in a dead end. Before that, the nightmare had chased me. And when I finally faced it and set it on fire, I felt no safer. Nor was it any more dead.

I haven't slept well for weeks and my asshole hurts all the time. Ointment, epsom salt baths, better diet, I'm doing everything it takes. But the asshole has never really liked me. Deep down, it blames me for not allowing it to exercise a level of freedom of expression enjoyed by most assholes in society.

I'm tired of being made to feel like I'm passing shards of glass every few months. Some therapy may not be a bad idea.

# The Lonely Toilet

A pub toilet went to a therapist for all the right reasons.

“How about the smartphone? I’ve heard it makes people bond with their toilets,” the therapist asked with heavy eyelids.

“What phone? I’m tucked under the stairs next to the fuse room. Everyone tumbles in and almost always misses the bowl by an inch. If and when they return, the abuse is worse than before.”

The therapist had fallen asleep, his mouth wide open like a dead body on a chair.

The toilet nearly cracked and thought about flushing and leaving. “Doctor?” it called desperately.

The therapist sat up startled and quickly wrote a few words on his yellow paper pad. “Look,” he began. “Earlier today, a banana came in and said that it used to be the only member of its hand that was not curved. It wasn’t bullied or anything. In fact, it wanted to make sure I understood that. But the banana was horribly misunderstood.”

The doctor put aside the paper and clasped his hands together. “As more time passed, it didn’t brown as fast as the others and eventually ended up being the last member of the hand not yet cut. When I saw the banana today, it was peeled and half mashed.” The doctor’s gaze felt forced and sleepy. “The banana told me that time had finally come to fulfill a dream and embrace what it called ‘the banana inside,’ and become a banana milkshake.”

There was a moment of silence during which both sides were hoping for a reaction. Nothing. The toilet closed its lid and thought more about the story, but it still felt irrelevant somehow. “Why did the banana come to you?” it finally asked.

But the therapist had fallen asleep again.

This time, the toilet flushed itself and left with a melancholy smile, but a smile nonetheless.

# They Fly With Grace Somewhere Else

“Mosquito,

“You don’t say!

“Mosquito,

“Don’t speak its name today.

“It has a sting.

“666 has three sixes and that’s it.”

The audio message was left on my grandmother’s answering machine by her aunt followed by customized well wishes for each family member.

Thirty years later, an older relative opened up about the true meaning behind the little song. He recalled being very young at the time the piece went from folk memory to its modern rendition. To his understanding, auntie was relaying it in old tradition.

He told me that while there are many circulating versions today, the original came with a foreword, which his great-great-grandfather had passed on to his grandfather on a Tuesday.

“Apparently, my ancestor had said, ‘Boy, the true curse of aging is not the loss of loved ones in your lifetime. It’s the gradual discoloration of wonderful truths. One day, moments before death, bewildered and wide eyed, we’ll realize that we lived among strange creatures such as trees. That we considered another as our next of kin. And there’ll be no more life after those thoughts to live.’ Then, he sang the song and explained its meaning.”

While telling me all this, my relative looked much older than he was. The spots on his hands had instantly doubled and his voice was less urgent. “As no one defecates in hell,” he began, “mosquitoes come to earth for a taste. Different types of feces make them different kinds of high, and we have it all here. Given

our current diet, human shit especially drives the flies mad with joy. Don't judge them here. Sober, they fly as graceful dragons in the underworld."

My hair graying as the poem involuntarily sung itself in my head, I finally cleared my throat and asked, "How did it come about in the first place?"

He shrugged and said, "Probably while someone was taking a shit."

# The King Around Here

Once, a curly strand of pubic hair defied the toilet's flush.

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Toilets and sinks are distant relatives that share pipes. However, as long as they have existed, a wet animosity has persisted between them.

Urinals never get close to the conflict, mostly due to their repelling scent. The showerhead claims neutrality on the subject and has always maintained that it has no time for petty power struggles of yesterday's conquests. Instead, it is obsessed with humiliating those who use it. Moody as fuck, the hot is quick to boil and then good luck getting help from the cold. No amount of it seems to exist to chill the burns.

I like my showers hot though, which robs the showerhead from its sadistic delight. It frustrates the metal piece so much that it has turned to bullying the poor drain instead. "You're as ugly as him," the showerhead says with a wet grin.

What the drain calls "Sweet quiet" finally happens late at night when the bully goes dry. Some nights, the sink consoles the drain by reminding it of their connecting pipes.

But the drain can neither ignore nor trust the sink. It just waits until it, too, goes to sleep. In jealousy, conspiracy and war for supremacy, what remains is either pubic heroism or patience for strategy.

# Then We All Went To Sleep

The other night I heard towels whispering. It was the same night a guy had pulled his blade on people at the liquor store next to where I work.

From where I stood, I saw a black police van pull around. The commandos burst out with determined aims. Before long, a group of four had formed a half circle around a homeless man sitting outside the liquor store. Two more were standing a few steps behind keeping guard.

With the tip of one boot, one officer whacked the sleeping bag off the homeless man's lap, scattering his collection of cigarette butts. "Why are you bothering me?" he shouted at the armored officer, helplessly scraping the cement around the heavy boots.

Just then, a customer entered the store and I had to return to rolling snacks for the drunk. Much later, the liquor store's security guard told me the details. His order was a lamb kebab with fries.

"Give me the Holy Trinity on it." Which meant, chili, barbeque and garlic sauce. Then he told me the story of what had happened. "So, this guy goes in and threatens to stab everyone. But then he, himself, calls the cops."

"What?" I stopped and looked up.

"Yeah. The guy with the knife called the cops to make a complaint about the homeless guy sitting outside the shop."

"Shit."

"Yeah."

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"Stop," yelled the soap bar from its small bed of white water. Deep in my own thoughts, I'd missed the escalation to yet another brawl. Big surprise, the showerhead was at fault.

I shot the water off and grabbed a towel. The drain was silently sobbing, gulping water from under my feet.

I stepped out.

The sink's metal spout let go of a long-held drop.

Then we all went to sleep.

# Shampoo Day

I was going bald, so I changed to shampooing less.

I started to carry a smell.

Soon, street animals started stalking me on my way home from work. In a week, they'd settled their differences, made a gang and planned my hunting.

I went back to shampooing more.

Tonight, I heard the shy drain say, "Your hair isn't greasy enough for a Wednesday."

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Recently after every shower, I've been turning the showerhead to face the ceiling. One that a great man now in his eighties built with his two hands. And in the face of greatness, the showerhead has been humbled.

[Rest in Peace Papou. I'll never forget our backgammon games and your love when I was away from my own grandfather.]

# My Time Now

Two young souls were chatting. Backs to the boundless brightness they had yet to become a part of, one turned to the other and asked, "What's next?"

"It'll be my seventh."

"And mine, the ninth."

"My time now. Same spot, soon enough." Gently shivering as if it were cold, one faded away for a seventh rebirth.

"Same spot, soon enough," replied the other. Alone and waiting to be next, the spirit looked behind at the endless light. For a moment, it didn't want what was to come or what was behind. Just to be seated forever with its soul mate as they had done was grand. "My time now," the spirit shivered and disappeared.

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The day's last customer was young. He was not drunk or by anyone's side, which was rare for that time of night in Melbourne town.

After eating, he asked for a serviette and cleaned his mouth. One foot out the door, he hesitated and turned. "I can see that while the only proven solution for our species is hard work, the only people left behind in this life are those who work hard."