Autobiography of My Hungers
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extraction

The second and third molars of my lower right jaw were impacted and had to be yanked out, finally, because one of them was turning black. I’d open my mouth and tongue the small blocks of enamel huddled together—a veritable pietà of bone.

I chose to remain awake during the extraction because I wanted to see the teeth stripped of gums. I imagined the oral surgeon plucking one out, then the other, with tweezers and placing them like a pair of beetles on a porcelain dish. I would take them home and make a necklace of the one that looked like a chip of obsidian arrowhead—an Aztec relic—for luck. But what I got instead was a doctor in comic goggles, a drill, and the cracking of quarry stone—a tin dish of breakage. The stitching, the tying of a shoelace. How everyday the procedure, how ordinary the numbness and subsequent pain.

The next morning I claimed my moment of originality, stubbornly, when I sneezed at my desk and spat out the stitches clutching to a piece of gum that landed on the computer screen like fish bait. The drops of blood splattered like on a television crime scene and the keyboard blurred like an X-ray of my skeletal teeth.
“That’s a new one,” the receptionist said when I wrote out an explanation on a piece of paper, my mouth stuffed with reddening gauze.