The Tumor

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The Tumor · Patricia Murphy

The first was broccoli pulled like a pimple from the left cheek-bone, the second a diamond scraped out of an itch on the right shin, the third a black plastic horn where an eyebrow should be. Each time I woke up panting, sweating, the night pressing down like a foot, but dreams fleet like sneezes so I wasn’t worried until the fourth, the teeth growing from a finger, and the fifth, a thumb protruding from the upper lip with the nail on the center not the end. I thought of seeing a shrink until the sixth, a dawn-tinted vulva jutting from my left breast. Then I bucked up and phoned the OB-GYN, and after the initial appointment, after calling my father to inform him his daughter was really a farmer cultivating hillsides once believed to be full grown, the seventh came, a white knob on the sole which I shaved frantically, leaving a hole to rival five of J. Christ’s. And now, before the excavation, I dream of scrutiny. Not the lascivious gazes of oily-faced frat boys, but the terrified glances of blond bank tellers who fumble with twenties, whose fifteen hours of Robbery Prevention Training are lost in the second it takes to recognize a woman’s responsibility, a woman’s reality staring straight through the cotton blouse, silk bra, through the nipples like eyes which can’t hide shame behind them, the growth. Good-bye, they say to my torso, my reminder of what happens when you smoke and eat cheese and maintain you’re too busy to poke and handle and worry. Under the ether I am floating over cities convincing faithful nymphs to remember duties: to face mortality on a daily basis, to touch the untouchable. Tonight I hear fifty thousand fingers circling twenty thousand mounds of soft, fleshy skin. An orchestra of goddesses tuning their crystal cups.