

# Traces

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When I brush my teeth I know what my pussy tastes like.

Don't let your mind automatically go there – I've got boyfriends and an adroit hand if it should come to that. It's just one of those things. Standing wet-haired at the sink in an old T-shirt I can taste the inside of my body, chest loosened and hips giving slightly with each genius stroke.

I used think it might be the repetitive brushing motion, or the nearness of my body to nakedness at nighttime, freshly-lotioned and worn-in by the mandatory sunlit hustle, but now I know it's something subtler, something between me and the steamed mirrors. It's something more attuned to the tiny sting of blood in the slits between my teeth when I push the brush too hard too long and point my eyes towards the ceiling rather than at my reflection, moist and giving in the glass. In real-life I am quick and lean, but in the bathroom brushing teeth I become suddenly passive, my center shifts from belly-button to brown-nipple, and I wish my hair Godspeed.

I dredge from the billowing skin of my mouth an intimate taste like reprieve. Like flesh: familiar and no-nonsense. A capsulated sigh. It's sort of like nostalgia, but for something I still have, or am.

Like tonight. Tonight I had so much to clean out of my mouth – weed, kisses, curry, cum, cigarettes, and oranges. A boy with bad skin and a spike through his septum was rolling a spliff in my bed. We took the long way home and he gave me his jacket, black fabric made heavier by the smoky b.o. and inevitable ocean-shaped blotches of beer. We marched through the dense woods, collecting dirt and calling out. He called out to me still, practicing my name in the supposed privacy of flowered sheets (pink background strewn with red). We were both students of obscurity, and sluts on top of that: tacky and jacked-up on hope. I'd gathered so much since the sun simmered down. In two public restrooms, I'd had my moment: bent-double with love in an under-aged club, and later slowed to a halt by implacable shame in the dingy barely-lit gas station bathroom.