

Shower
by Eric Cecil

I'm in the ruins of a damp and unfamiliar bathroom. A demolished shower burbles in a near corner. Water seethes from the base of its former stall, now an upheaval of concrete, tile, freckled plaster. A steady torrent falls from the end of a mangled spout overhead.

It streams across the floor and funnels toward a large hole in the opposite corner. As this opening draws water and debris into its recess, a deep purling resonates from below. The sound is curious, almost hypnotic. But it's also ominous: the deluge, I notice, is too much for the hole to bear. Small pools are already forming in the craters that dent the floor.

Water minnows my ankles as I wade toward the wreckage of the shower, reaching for taps that aren't there. They're gone, or hidden, nestled somewhere in the bramble of pipes set deep in the wall. I knock away a patch of cracked tiles, pull at the spout overhead, but it's no use. There's no stopping the flood.

No way out. The door is locked. Several horizontal slots gill its surface, small metal shutters shielding each. These, too, are bolted tight. I pry at them with wet and clumsy hands, stopping only when I hear a commotion on the other side.

It's a voice: a woman's. I don't recognize it.

High or low? she asks.

Open the door.

High, she repeats, or low?

Both. Either. Let me out.

One of the lower slots trembles, hefts open. It reveals a small, painted mouth. The dark red lips curl into a sneer, then part into a grotesque smile: a gnash of chipped and tarnished teeth. A hiss slips from between them.

The hiss swells the whole of the bathroom's interior. Jets of water spray from cracks that limn from the wall. A fountain erupts from the halfmoon of a fractured sink. Rain falls from the scabbed ceiling.

I lower myself, seeking the certainty of the floor. The rising tide cups my chest, hickeys my neck.