

## When She Had Teeth

There was once a time when Mary had teeth. A full face of them: when she smiled the whole world was reflected back. She was 8, but her figure wasn't curved the way an 8 was quite yet. That would have to wait until she was 14.

Mary descended from a family tree that clutched religion in the tip of its roots. Religious events brought the entire family under one roof, each branch with 5 or more kids. The appetizer of each meal was "Bless us, O Lord, and these, Thy gifts..." which would be followed with binge drinking in the name of the Lord.

Mary lacked the reverence of the rest of her family. She didn't cross herself when hearing about a friend's injury or rising gas prices. Her mother would snap at her for keeping her eyes open during prayer and Mary would retort: your eyes are open too!

Though this isn't all to say Mary didn't love her family. She thrived under their guidance, and when her stubby legs waddled around the living room she had something of a glow that was eerily halo-esque.

One such religious event was Mary's communion. At her Catholic grammar school, her second grade year was centered around this doctrinal jamboree. Half the day every Tuesday and Thursday was reserved for religious refreshment and flavor. The children memorized the ten commandments and inhaled the seven sacraments that was to be their future. In second grade, their main focus was, of course, the communion. The partaking of the consecrated bread and wine so that they all may be filled with the body and blood of Christ.

Mary impatiently waited for October to bloom. She loved to read, and thus developed a proclivity towards metaphors and magic. On every Tuesday and Thursday during their lessons she would fancy how romantically enchanting it must be to be filled with the body of someone else. She wondered if He would take shape under her skin, if she would be able to hear His thoughts when He reached down into her throat.

Her brother called it cannibowlism, and claimed he would never do it. He was 6. She told him it was just because he was a boy, and boys don't like to kiss boys like that, but she found it to be mighty romantic.

The first Sunday morning of October she woke up first with her body, then with her eyes.

She sat in the middle of the pew between Billy and Harrison. The teachers always herded them into the pews boy-girl-boy-girl style so that they were less inclined to talk. The air was thick, and she took this to be representative of Christ's presence-- though it was more likely the air recycled from coughing coming from the old people. As the priest proclaimed his homily she could hardly grasp his words; they were drowned out by the harsh throbbing in her chest. Billy was massively cute, and whenever she thought of Jesus she knew He looked like Billy. Taking this as a sign from Christ himself, she thought of the way Billy's skin would feel under hers.

*"AND TIMOTHY SAID, 'how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.'"*

The roots of her hair were pulling back on her forehead mercilessly, making her eyes bulge out like a bug. Blinking was painful. Her eyes began to water from refraining to blink and she was scared the mascara her mom applied for her that morning would start to stream down her eyes. Clutching the rosary between her thumb and forefinger, she prayed to the Lord to stop her tears because she wanted to look pretty for her first kiss.

*“Train up a child in the way he should go; Even when he is old he will not depart from it.”*

Her pew was the third to stand. Her palms were sweating from nervousness and squeezing the rosary so tight. As she stood she felt she could hear a small gasp of pride from her grandmother sitting in the back pews with the rest of her extended family. Her chest continued to thump, with increasing frequency every step she took. As Harrison took his communion, she bowed her head just as she had practiced every Tuesday and Thursday and felt as though she might faint. She watched as he took the communion between his greasy fingers and slip it into his grinning lips. He didn't appreciate Christ the way she did.

It was her turn and everything blurred into itself. She placed the bread over her tongue and let it dissolve into her taste buds. Right when the chalice met her fingertips, it slid out of her clammy, sweaty grasp and fell with an elegant gravitational performance, hitting the floor and instantaneously distributing shards to every surrounding inch. She let out a cry as the blood of Christ seeped through her pretty white shoes and cradled her toes. Everything was silent, except the quieting echo of the fall bouncing around the walls.

After mass, her father gripped her by her tightly wound pigtails and punched her face three times. Once for the Father, once for the Son, and once for the Holy Spirit. It was the punch of the Son which took her left front tooth from her.