

6.

My first winter Anthony could not find a fever in me. There was no headache, no body aches. But I could not leave my bed.

He took my jaw in his right hand and stuck out his tongue, miming what he needed me to do. I complied, watching his eyes scan my tongue for ridges, papules, and coatings to see where my blood was moving and where it was stuck.

Satisfied, he released my jaw and stepped away.

I had been eating soda crackers and thin broth. Using a bed pan like an elderly monk. I had been watching my sleepless self appear in outline on the wall as the sun rose. If I had wanted to, I could have talked to this shadow.

Anthony appeared with a small packet of dried mushrooms, licorice root and tiny rose buds. On a slip of paper he had written the correct ratio of material to hot water and the frequency of consumption.

His eyes did not ask after me. *Cry into your pillow* is what his shoulders said.

The sickness lifted, but my brain felt slow and damaged, blunted and shallow, for weeks.