

Split Tooth

“IT’S EARLY MORNING. The Frosted Flakes have grown soggy. I’m stuck staring at one of the half-submerged flakes, half-crispy, half-mushy. Tap tap tap the spoon against the ceramic bowl; it seems to help shake off the sleep that refuses to lift from the top of my head. It feels fuzzy and numb. Boredom hangover. It’s pitch black outside. Dead winter. We have not seen the sun in weeks. Stars stare at me through the window. Wind screams urgently, shaking the house. Wind sings but carries an axe instead of a note.

A dog howls. Five more follow suit. I put on my kamiik and kick the door open because it has frozen shut. School has not been cancelled: it’s not cold enough outside. It has to be at least minus fifty with the wind chill to merit a day off. The roads are frozen solid; they will stay that way until May or June.

The permafrost is living under everything, slowing time and preserving what would normally rot. Kamiit help feet deftly navigate the slip of the ice, the crunch of the snow, and the depths of the drifts. The sealskin is warm, but I have lost the blood my feet carry. The Cold has scared the blood out of my toes. Our feet have built-in memory of which tendons to curl to prevent falling on all different kinds of ice. The Snow would sometimes slice the surface of the ice in half with a drift and try to trick us into falling. The Snow could crunch underfoot or chase you loosely. The Snow could hold your whole body weight or decide to deceive you and plunge you into the down underneath.

Snow is fickle. Snow picks itself up and goes wherever Wind tells it to. One element controls the other in a cyclical oblivion. Weather is just the earth’s breaths. Wind is the cold bearer and the death bringer. Streetlights hold halos of swirling snow; rainbows appear if you look at the streetlights and squint. My footsteps the only sound of any human being, I continue the hollow morning walk to school.”

Source: Tagaq, T. (2018, September 18). *Split tooth*. The Walrus. <https://thewalrus.ca/split-tooth/>