



After the good doctor finished suturing my gums—
 periodontal deus, ex-machina of scalpel,
 thread, a trapdoor flap of cadaver flesh
 stitched to the eroded ridge of my incisors,
 he paused. As if to let me ponder,
 consider the foreign meat
 he'd just served
 to the upper room of my mouth—
 jellied tidbit, a red membrane morsel
 some kind donor pledged
 before exiting this life.

I said nothing. Spit the last mucous stream
 into his paper cup, my tongue
 finally at rest in its numb cheek tomb.
 What was there to say? Hadn't I
 been taught to taste the blood,
 eat the body of an unknown brother?
 And to what purpose
 if not for mystery,
 for human communion
 with every sister
 roaming this frail and fallen planet?

Here's to you, nameless one,
 for inking the little O
 on your DMV form,
 for prettying up my smile,
 giving me a sturdier bite.
 We're family now.
 May the words of my mouth
 be worthy of your end,
 your great gingival sacrifice.
 Asleep in the earth
 chewing dust,
 or at sea, drunk
 on the watery abyss,
 may you decay
 in all the right places
 and be glad
 as I am, for the feeding.

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Michelle Bitting has work forthcoming or published in *Glimmer Train*, *Swink*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Narrative*, *Poetry Daily*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Small Spiral Notebook*, *Nimrod*, *The Southeast Review*, *Passages North*, *The Comstock Review*, *2RiverView*, *Valparaiso Review*, *Many Mountains Moving*, *Poetry Southeast*, *Boxcar Poetry Review*, *Rattle* and others. She has won the *Glimmer Train*, *Rock & Sling*—Virginia Brendemeuhl Award and been an award finalist multiple times. Her chapbook "Blue Laws" is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press, December 2007. Visit her at: <http://home.earthlink.net/~verarose/michellebitting/>

