

## Just Below the Nose, a Hole

There are teeth on the subway. A representation of teeth, really. Ceci n'est pas une teeth. An advertisement for dental care. A woman smiling, not her whole face, just the lower half, mouth open, upturned in service of some disconnected joy. This poster of teeth, fangs bare, Nosferatu, so white. All lined up in a row, pressed together, no gaps. Sunk into the pink flesh. The longer I stand here staring at these enlarged mandible prongs, the more sinister they become. What are these visible bones that just sit in the wet window of flesh and get sensitive in the cold air? Teeth, bones, hardness that flows through an otherwise pleasant face and ends in little alabaster knots in meat beds. Has this person ever had a cup of coffee? A glass of red wine before bed? Some cotton candy before robbing an armored car? There's nowhere else on this subway for me to look. To my left is someone far too attractive to be glancing at. To my right is someone far too unfortunate to dwell on. I can only look ahead, right into the mouth of cleanliness, glossy finish beneath the thin pane: teeth. Not white but pearly, not perfect but better: well-maintained, aloof, affluent—These Teeth Have Been To That New Place, the place with the good bread, the wait at the door is always an hour. These teeth will get the check, it's fine, I mean it's only money. Don't be so uptight. Relax—you should free your mind, you know, travel to Europe—it's good for the back. Teeth! Teeth! Counting them now, oh, I'll see you in my dreams, picket fences around a perfect house, a rectangular sign that says beware of tongue.