

The Boy Who Turned Into Butter

1. The boy presents his fallen baby tooth, now soft and spring yellow, pincered between malleable fingers. A loose printed T-shirt now greased to his chest, the boy accidentally carves a chunk from his cheek, though he manages to seal it back before his father turns around. 2. When the father sees his son, glossy under the nearby lamp, he does all the usual things. He swipes his hands over his son's arms and digs at his shoulders, desperate to find a boy beneath the butter. He calls his brother, the butcher, and asks to borrow a walk-in refrigerator. He pushes against the boy's abdomen, expecting skin to push back or, at least, guts to answer. It is all butter. 3. The father moulds his son to be a little taller before entering the refrigerator. 4. Overnight, the boy is startlingly calm. He pinches his left hand every few minutes and feels no pain. 5. The father does not check on the boy. He sits awake, two rooms away with his door firmly shut, unmoving. 6. Hours pass. The boy believes his father is coming to save him, though he is still unsure if he is alive or not. The nightmares have been getting worse but the boy is not afraid of death. His father told him, after his mother died, that 'death cannot be so bad, no one has ever come back!' 7. His father doesn't speak much. He still sits awake, still unmoving. 8. The boy's denial does not dissipate. It is swiftly swallowed by fear. When he runs out of the refrigerator, he leaves fat between the ridges of the seal and misshapen footprints on the linoleum floor. 9. His father catches up to him in the driveway. There is a thread of dawn in the sky and no witnesses. When he reaches to tackle the boy, the concrete is wet with dew and everything must slip to the ground. It is shockingly easy to break a boy made of butter. It is just as easy to put him back together, though his neck is now buffed with fingerprints. I'm sorry. I wanted to stay with you. I didn't know how. 10. If they remain, holding one another, for a while longer, the boy will melt over his father's beating chest.

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