

“The Garglers”

The sun rises on a professor gargling. Because it is morning, gargling makes perfect sense to him. Overnight a great drama has taken place in his mouth—growth, decay, procreation—the whole gambit, schmear, shebang.

As he gargles, he hums his morning mantra which helps him disregard the mob with torches in his mouth. I have my health, he hums, and you can't take that away from me. He consults his watch—almost two minutes now, nothing can have survived above the gumline, surely by now he more or less has his mouth to himself.

In fact, the lining of his mouth itself has begun to question his jurisdiction over it. A terrific stillness has fallen over the bathroom, as if the sink and every pipe are waiting for him to spit.

He's just approaching a particularly crucial octave change when his wife leans in and asks, “Do you love me?” He nods, pointing to his watch, but with a look that says, “You know how important fresh breath is to rhetoricians.” “If you really loved me,” her look says, “you'd say so. You'd splatter whatever was keeping you from telling me all over yourself in order to keep me.”

He looks from his underarm spray to his cologne and back again. It is morning. Gargling makes perfect sense. But he expectorates and says, “I love you, do you love me too?” But it's too late, because his wife already has a mouthful and is gargling and pointing at her mouth as if to say, how could you ever doubt it . . .