

Drain Hair

I cannot stand hair.

When it's on someone's head, it's fine, but as soon as it's off I can't handle it. Disgusting. I didn't know I had this... phobia, I guess, until I moved in here.

It was cool at first. Just me, my buddy Rich, and a guy I knew from the computer science program at college. We'd spend nights playing Katamari on Rich's PS2 and get trashed most weekends watching shitty movies. It was a way to handle stress.

Then the semester ended. Keith graduated early and Rich decided to move in with his girlfriend. I needed some new roommates. So I made calls to friends, friends of friends, people I knew from school, even the weird people I barely knew. But on Craigslist, I got a response from a couple. Despite my intuition, I shot back a message and soon enough they were signed onto the lease.

They were disgusting. From their smell I'd say they showered once a week between them. They were pale and skinny and had awful complexion. Even as a computer science major I was disgusted by them. But what really bothered me was their hair

Ben's hair was thick and black, and a fine sheen of oil always glistened from it. His beard was overgrown and usually looked like it was full of food residue. Julie's was blonde, thin, and wiry, the color of musty straw, and coated in dandruff. It was long, bushy, and frizzy, trailing down to the small of her back. Ben's came down to his shoulders.

I ignored all of this out of desperation. And it wasn't so bad. Rent was paid in full on time, every time, even though I never saw them leave the apartment. I put up with them.

Until their collective musk leaked out from behind their door. I had to wade through that filthy air to get to my room. So I had a talk with them, and after a few days the smell dissipated- some. I figured I couldn't do anything else about it, and there were only a few months left on the lease anyway, at this time.

I got a knock on my door from Julie one day in March, a few weeks after I had told them about the smell. She said their bathroom broke and they needed to use mine for a while. I told her, "sure", once again ignoring my better judgement. She never did elaborate on just how her bathroom was 'broken', but it was better than them pissing in jugs- which honestly could've been the case. 'A while' became a week, which became two weeks and change. Greasy, stinking clothes and crust-laden underwear piled up in my bathroom. The shower was usually bone-dry, but when it was used they left behind a corona of...shower muck, some kind of ooze I couldn't place the origins of. And hair

Oh God

hair

Hair in the shower. In the sink In the drains, on the floor, embedded in my shower mat, coating the piss-stained rim of my toilet, caught in clumps of gunk on the vanity

Horrible, disgusting, flaky, stinking hair

Greasy, wet, slimy, invasive hair

Getting caught between my toes as I walk

Getting caught between my fingers as I wash my face and brush my teeth
Rolling around like pubic tumbleweeds, always pervading

The first time I saw this I pounded on their door. Ben answered, his face vacant. I told him not to leave a mess in my bathroom, and he apologized and closed the door. The mess was cleaned- by me, but at least it was cleaned.

Until the next day, when I saw the same sight. I nearly beat their door down, but neither of them answered. Every day the bathroom became worse, and even when I put a lock on the door, they found some way to get past it and defile my bathroom.

The sink got clogged after the first two weeks.

I was terrified to see what horrible, hairy mess was stuck down there. I could sense a faint smell coming up from the drain. I didn't have anything to dislodge it, so I used a Q-tip and wrapped my hands in toilet paper. I lowered the Q-tip into the drain, quickly finding a soft, squishy mass. The Q-tip swirled it all around, like mixing rocky road ice cream in a soft-serv machine. My stomach began to lurch. I slowly pulled it up from the drain discovering a lumpy gray mass hooked on the cotton tip. It was hairy, and the smell caused me to retch. I looked closer, bringing it near my face, and saw tiny pricks poking out of the sludge like beard stubble. Now wanting to burn off my hand, I dropped the swab and fuzzy gunk into the trash.

I sweat I saw it squirm.

Spring Break came, and in tradition, the stress and exhaustive workflow of the semester put me in a cocoon of blankets, fighting the flu. This was common, but I had never been so disoriented, absolutely bedridden by what should've been a routine cold. I spent the first few days drifting in and out of consciousness watching movies on my phone, dotted by the odd venture out to the bathroom. I heaved myself up and out of bed, opening my door as Ben left my bathroom. He stopped and stared at me like I was the one in the wrong.

“What?”

I told him, “Never use my bathroom again or I'll call the goddamn cops.” Granted, this only felt appropriate in the state that I was in at that time, but I feel it got the point across. I noticed at that time there were white specks scattered in his beard. Ben gave me an indignant “Okay, Jesus,” and turned to go back to his room. I went back to mine, but couldn't get the image of his beard out of my mind.

His greasy, prickly, overgrown rug that he probably never trimmed, or maintained in any way-

Were they moving?

Those white specks

I think I saw one move

Texture is what did it. I bolted up and leaned into the sink, dry heaving and spitting up a fine strand of saliva. I could feel a strange tickle in my throat, and cautiously stuck a finger into the back of my throat. I could feel that familiar

Slimy

Stringy texture and began to pull.

It came out in a long, wiry strand. Like a filthy birthday party clown's magic trick, it did not end. Soon there was a trail of hair coming out of my mouth, one strand wide and a mile long. It came to a stop, tugging at my throat and hurting when I pulled too hard. But I knew what was next. I knew.

I yanked hard and fast

The stinging pain

Eyes watering

Coppery taste of blood

The strand was out, and the retching began again. This time, this time I could feel something working its way inexorably up my throat. I knew what was coming. I hated it. Hate it Hate it Hate Hate Hate Hate Hate

Slime

And the hairball was resting in my sink a second later, coated with mucus and chunks of congealed blood. Palms flat against the ceramic, tears flowing freely. A dull pulse thrumming beneath my fingertips.

It came from the sink, I knew it. Choking back disgust, sifting through the mass of hair and

Slime

Expecting to find some kind of beating heart. But it was solid, consistent. The pulse came from under it, to a kind of fleshy pink bulb at the nexus of the long strand of hair. It squirmed, wriggling in its nest. It seemed to want to crawl, rocking back and forth, its insides pulsing gently under its thin translucent skin. Without thinking I put my thumb over top of it, stopping its motion, and pressed down hard and

Squished

Popped it. Blood squirted out from its side and pooled amongst the hair in the sink, looking like an engorged tick that had burst. Maybe that's what this was, some unheard of species of tick that burrowed under your skin, deploying a long antenna to absorb nutrients, draining you of your vitamins, your minerals, sustenance, blood, life, sanity.

In my mind I saw Ben, standing where I stood and looking where I looked in the mirror, his hair dripping with grease, his beard sprawled out in every direction. I saw Julie beside him, inside him, on top and in front of him. The dandruff in her hair turned into eggs clinging on to each hair follicle like a hive of caterpillars in their cocoons, breathing and waiting to hatch, be born into this world. Ben's beard was living, crawling with maggoty white worms, tiny, feeling around for food, eyeless, mindless, there is no mind, no mind to be had, no mind, never mind. Ben and Julie see me, faces vacant, jaws slack, eyes dead and white, not seeing but seeing without seeing, seeing without seeing, seeing, the mind, it's in the mind, their mind, my mind, all in the mind, the collective ocean of consciousness accessed, hacked, infiltrated, the mind, the mind, I have to

And that is why I'm standing above both of you tonight, in your stained bed and bedsheets. I'm sure you tried to keep your door locked, but a lock on my bathroom never stopped you, did it? And your stink, this foul air you've surrounded yourselves with, may have stopped me before, but tonight it's all in the mind, in the mind, Your snoring would keep me up nights, but in this moment you've given me perfect cover as I plug your open mouths, your disgusting orifices, with my own hair, making you eat it, making you choke, the mind, in the mind. And you flit your eyes open and see the moonlight gleam off my smooth head, and feel my hands clamp onto your faces, denying you air as you denied me so many times of peace of mind, maybe you'll feel the sense of finality that I feel, that sense of retribution. It's in my mind, your mind, that I have to.

I have to.

I have to.

I have to.

I have to