

1993

# The Tumor

Patricia Murphy

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Murphy, Patricia. "The Tumor." *The Iowa Review* 23.3 (1993): 137-137. Web.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.4329>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact [lib-ir@uiowa.edu](mailto:lib-ir@uiowa.edu).

## The Tumor · *Patricia Murphy*

The first was broccoli pulled like a pimple  
from the left cheek-bone, the second a diamond  
scraped out of an itch on the right shin,  
the third a black plastic horn where an eyebrow should be.  
Each time I woke up panting, sweating, the night pressing  
down like a foot, but dreams fleet like sneezes  
so I wasn't worried until the fourth, the teeth growing  
from a finger, and the fifth, a thumb protruding  
from the upper lip with the nail on the center not the end.  
I thought of seeing a shrink until the sixth, a dawn-tinted  
vulva jutting from my left breast. Then I bucked up  
and phoned the OB-GYN, and after the initial appointment,  
after calling my father to inform him his daughter  
was really a farmer cultivating hillsides once  
believed to be full grown, the seventh came, a white knob  
on the sole which I shaved frantically, leaving a hole  
to rival five of J. Christ's. And now, before the excavation,  
I dream of scrutiny. Not the lascivious gazes  
of oily-faced frat boys, but the terrified glances  
of blond bank tellers who fumble with twenties,  
whose fifteen hours of Robbery Prevention Training  
are lost in the second it takes to recognize  
a woman's responsibility, a woman's reality staring  
straight through the cotton blouse, silk bra,  
through the nipples like eyes which can't hide shame  
behind them, the growth. Good-bye, they say to my torso,  
my reminder of what happens when you smoke and eat cheese  
and maintain you're too busy to poke and handle and worry.  
Under the ether I am floating over cities convincing faithful  
nymphs to remember duties: to face mortality on a daily basis,  
to touch the untouchable. Tonight I hear fifty thousand fingers  
circling twenty thousand mounds of soft, fleshy skin.  
An orchestra of goddesses tuning their crystal cups.