

A breakout of red spots all over my body from some unknown cause. I tell the doctor what I think it is and he says I'm probably right. I pay him 25 euros, the entire visit having lasted seven, ten minutes tops.

The pharmacy clerk asks if I have insurance and I say "no". The total cost, after the government helps out, is 1,23€. She asks if I want a receipt to send to the insurance I already told her I don't have. I say "yes" without thinking, and she hands it to me looking pissed.

My roommate sends me a message, telling me he took my duvet off my bed cause he had to wash his own. He hopes I don't mind. When I get the duvet back it has a strange orange, red stain spreading across one corner.

My other roommate, with whom I share a wall, has the worst cough I've ever heard. At night I can hear her retching and tearing herself in two. She tells me she's not sick, it's just she can't stop coughing. When I wake up coughing myself she asks if I got it from her.

I sleep in layers of clothing as my duvet is still drying. The heater on high, with the wet laundry hanging, makes my room feel like a sewer. I picture a mushroom growing from my throat.

I awake sometime later sweating through my clothes. After checking the time I realize I've only slept for about an hour. I dreamt about supermen who were evil and destructive. I worry they'll kill me now for seeing how they look.

A message from a stranger briefly lights my phone up. She's single and she says she's looking for a man to milk dry. I see a message like this almost every day now, but the girl's name keeps on changing.

There's a lump in my throat and my body starts itching. I break out the cream the pharmacist gave me and start rubbing it in. The more I apply the more spots I see. There's an orange, red stain on me I just can't find the source of.

I hear a cough through the wall and for some reason I feel guilty. It's my other roommate now and I worry I passed it on. I know I didn't start it, but I know I didn't help.

I hear it raining outside and think how my boot sole is ungluing. I had it repaired a few months ago by someone bad at their job. A thin line of glue is still curling up the heel.

I'm still disconcerted by my interaction with the pharmacist. I wish I could tell her I haven't slept and that's why I'm dumb. But every explanation is an excuse of some order. I feel the white stalk of the mushroom press against my teeth.

When I want to sleep I can't, and I lie there for hours. I wonder about all the things I lose during that time. I wonder about the kinds of things that only grow in the dark.

I once stepped in a puddle and fell all the way through it. But today I stepped in one and absorbed it like a sponge. It rose up inside me til I was sodden, then flushed me into the pharmacy. I said dumb things to the lady there in the hopes she'd wring me out.

There's a hole in my boot or there's something off in my construction. I was blocking bots on my phone when the doctor called me in. I took off my shirt for him but he didn't seem inclined.

Thin glue, clear and hard, is still clinging to the leather. I wonder what I can wear that won't crack under my use. My body still surprises me in ways I wish it wouldn't.

It's humid in my room and I'm planking on the floor. I look in the mirror and see my face straining in one corner. My roommate walks in smiling, wearing my blanket like a cape.

Swift figures fly around some science fiction Olympus. The leader stands astride it looking right at where I'm hid. I awoke from that nightmare but somehow I still believe it. There's a threat seeping into my skin these days that maybe no sleep could solve.

"What if superheroes were evil?" is my new million dollar idea. The pharmacist was professional but I saw behind her mask. And my roommate put up posters to cover the black mold in the bathroom.

But the glue never holds and the air is full of water. When I opened my mouth to say it only fungus plumed out. I hacked and I coughed, as if that passed for language. I found it hard to answer when the doctor asked me if I was stressed.

