

Tooth Abstraction

By Kirby Olson (April 2018)



The Dentist is In, Anthony Falbo

Years back I thought to escape Endodontic Associates and went instead to cheaper Thomas Hebert of Utica, who performed a root canal for half price on French Road at some point in the year 2002. He listened to cool jazz as he dug down into the tooth.

He took smoking breaks. On his wall

was a framed Siberian tiger, whose tooth
he had treated at the Utica Zoo in 1987.
In 2015, the root canal failed. My cheek
blew up like a pee-wee football. Dr.

Hebert had passed on at age 65. I
drove to Utica and got Dr. Walker
at Endodontic Associates, and paid the full
price: \$1500. He went in and fixed it,
and I was in good hands but not in Utica.

I was across a river in New Hartford.
After the third visit I drove down to the Munson
Proctor Museum to see their Salvador Dali. "Cardinal!
Cardinal!" which features Gala and gnomish
chessplayers before tiny obscure birds in the lower left.

I visited the Utica Library where an older
drunken couple were yelling on the steps
of the neo-classical façade across from the
Proctor. "I just want you to try!" He yelled.
He had glasses and rudimentary decency—

a London Fog coat, and pants, and leather shoes.
He was a darker person—maybe Croatian or Serbian.
She was blonde but had seen hard
treatment. “I’m done trying! I’m moving
out!” She yelled. “Out of your house!”

“Before you leave, can I have 75 cents?”
The man pleaded, as she walked away.
“Hey! Get out of the road!” He said.
“I don’t care!” She yelled. I
turned away, as they went different ways.

He lingered longingly on her retreating form.
I then went into a Ukrainian Catholic
Church house and bought a dozen pierogis
for 6 dollars. I asked the old woman
if I could see the church. “It’s locked,”

she said. “There have been robberies.”
“I don’t have the cheese to the kirk.”
We laughed at the inverted letters.

I drove through the ruins of Utica,
thinking of Rust Belts and Ginsberg's sunflower
Sutra, and did actually weep in a parking lot
before a Barnes and Noble once I got back to
New Hartford and bought Art of the Deal,
wondering if Trump could help East Utica with its
vanished glory and its surviving residents
trying to hold on to what was left
while around the neighborhood young
men stalked with pants down around their
hips, some on their way to prison—
of which East Utica was their alternative.

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