

He stood at the sink in his white undershirt and boxers, looked into the mirror, ran his hands against the stubble on his face, reached into the medicine chest and took down his Ivory-handled Gem razor, long bristled shaving brush and soap.

Shaving soap came in a tube. He squeezed a bit onto his palm, wet the brush under the faucet and swished the soft bristles against the dab to raise a rich lather that he brushed onto his face like an artist swirling texture onto canvas.

He moved the brush from faucet to hand to cheek until his face was a white mask and only the tip of his nose remained unfrosted. He smiled approvingly and took a final swish across his chin.

I leaned forward against the sink. He dabbed a soapy-white beard and mustache on my face. The long bristles were soft and wet. The sweet smell of the soap filled my head. He paused, nodded and gave me a final stroke as well.

He took up the razor like a violinist with his bow; fingers and wrist gently bent just so. With his free hand he reached over the top of his head, pulled at his skin, and puffed his cheeks like Dizzy Gillespie.

The Gem made rasping sounds as it moved against stubble. The sound of water from the tap sang as he flicked the razor through its stream.

His free hand stretched his nose to this side and that. He contorted his mouth to elongate the space over his lip where the angel Gabrielle had touched his soul before he was born.

Beside him, I mimicked his every twist and pull.

He filled the sink and splashed handfuls of water against his face. He made funny blowing sounds as his hands passed over his lips.

He dried his face, carefully rinsed each object and returned it to its place in the medicine cabinet.

The ivory-handled Gem eventually gave way to Blue Blades. Tubed soap and brush fell to Foamy. The memories are forever.