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Rootrol

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Rootrol

Josh Matthews

Once a month I dump a product
down the toilet in the basement.
It glows as neon-blue dust exploded
eons ago from supernovae, fallen
through the atmosphere, collected
and sold in Pixie sticks, left
unsorted at birthday parties, then
gathered and placed into the can I hold,
the blue dust I flush down the john.
The product just harms babies
and pets seriously enough
to merit long warnings of possible death—
for adults, no death, only
burnt skin and damaged nerves.
The sewer I think deserves this stuff,
the place where tree roots seek
sources of new opportunities,
expanding down there where
I have not been, would not go,
do not care to smell or see.
The product does the work for me.
Once flushed, the sulfate dust
releases gasses that stultify
the opportunities of trees
searching desperately among the muck
and stank of the depths of Sheol,
paralyzing possibilities.

I cannot afford the growth of roots
that clog the waste removal system of my life.
I cannot bear to see what's under me,
those midday nightmares of years ago,
the scum of last week's stomach pain,
pushed up by roots that grope for life,
pooled in places I prefer to step.
I would rather risk the product's harms,
the scent of the dust and its noxious release,
the chance of the baby eating out of the can,
than dream again the dream
of the roots growing up through my drains,

climbing over chairs and clawing up the stairs,
to twine their delicate tendrils around my body
and dandle me as if I were a lost child,
then carry me back into the ground
where I become another root in a system
that searches for water endlessly.