

# Cavities

I wiped the blood off my fingertips, and tossed the wad of soiled cotton into the bin. The screams from earlier went quiet. I held the button on the chair to lower the patient into a sitting position

“You're all set! Take care of those teeth now. You were a lovely patient, but it would be a shame to see you back in here with more of those yucky cavities.” The child wiped away her tears and twisted her face in a funny way. I dug through the drawer of prizes and handed her a sticker and a pink toothbrush. “Here you go sweetheart, Don't forget to brush every day and every night.”

“Thank you ma'am, let's go sweetie.” The mother of the girl helped her down from the chair and led her out of the room. As soon as they left I removed my mask and snapped off my latex gloves. At last the exhaustion set in, a heavy weight dropped onto me. I sigh with relief at the notion that I could finally relax and take a break. The door clicked open just as I was about to grab my bag and head for my car.

“Hey Jamie, did you have another appointment scheduled for today?” Tom asked. He looked up from his clip board and met my eyes. “A man going by the name of Bob just claimed that he was here to see you.”

“Last name?” I asked, attempting to mask the whine in my voice. I reluctantly opened the gear cabinet and began to put on a new mask. “Unless somebody got redirected to me, I don't remember having a Bob scheduled for today.”

“There isn't one listed. It just says "Bob". Tom flips around his clipboard nervously and shows me what is printed on the list. I hesitated, doubts like spiders scuttled up my spine and

crawled through my ears into my head. Despite my unease, the drowsiness of working the night shift doused those spiders in repellent, expelling them from my better judgement.

“Send him in. I'll check the online files afterwards.” Tom nodded and left the room. After a short while, a broad man entered and sat politely in the dentist's chair. Regret seeped into my stomach the moment I laid eyes on him. His clothes were lightly damp, and something about his complexion put me off. The skin on his face seemed wrong. It looked like his head had aged faster than his body. I felt a slight itch of disgust, followed by an immediate pang of shame.

*I shouldn't think such things. It's not his fault he is like that.* I thought, but then I heard his voice.

“Hello there ma'am. I am Bob. I am here for my teeth.” The man said. I could barely squeeze the words to reply to him out of my mouth. I heard his voice but he did not speak. His mouth has not opened. The almost corpse-like skin around his mouth seemed to sag loosely when he smiled. I looked back at the door for Tom, but he had already left the room. A boa of dread wrapped itself around my body, constricting my speech into a simple, auto-piloted response.

“Of course...Bob. What seems to be the issue?” I asked. I questioned if I even wanted to know the answer at this point.

“I think my tooth has a...cavity. It's been hurting. Toothbrushes don't make it stop.” The husk of a man explained without speaking. He stared up at me with hollow eyes from his position lying down in the chair. I suddenly felt more like a mortician about to process a corpse than a dentist working on a patient.

“Open up”

The sight of a man's face opening up into something adjacent to a leech was enough to make me drop my tools. Five rings of opalescent knives descending into the void. The void of pulsating crimson flesh that was this thing's throat.

"Fourth row. Third tooth from center. It hurts." Bob explained. Despite having his face stretched open like a tear in reality, he spoke politely. My hands trembled as I grabbed the mirror off the floor. I bolted for the door of the building, but before I could even leave the room my head shattered into a thousand pieces. I collapsed onto my knees, clutching at my ears as if I could rip the heart stopping pain right out of my skull.

"Come back. You are not done." His voice boomed, the sound waves violently ricocheting off the walls of my mind. I staggered to my feet, reaching for that door like water in a desert. Inky blackness crept into my peripheral vision, like a mold slowly infecting an old chair left to rot in a damp cellar. I stopped in my tracks, and took a deep breath. I didn't dare risk the chance of ending up out cold on the floor alone with a monster. I took a hammer to the fear scuttling along my spine. Doubt like a roach's guts strewn across the floor as I walked right right up to Bob and began examining that thing's teeth. The tooth he had mentioned was partially rotted away. I operated in silence. I have danced this dance of drilling and filling hundreds of times before, but this time presents a new challenge. The performer steps onto a stage littered with broken glass. Bob's teeth inadvertently nicked at my flesh as I worked, however the show must go on. I soon finished the operation, and lowered the chair to an upright position as I took my final bow. Bob licked my blood off his teeth, then closed his mouth. The skin clung to his face, a latex glove. He turned to me, and smiled an almost human smile.

"Thank you, dentist. I appreciate your assistance. Your service will not go unrewarded." The thing handed me a laminated sheet of paper with blood red words printed across the page.

“Certificate of recognition. The owner of this certificate is not to be harmed nor consumed by any supernatural entity identifying as a semi-aquatic vampire, or otherwise. Warning: Certificate will be void if contact with any form of legal authority is made regarding the encounter. To join the committee of supernatural survivors, call 666-survivor.” As soon as I finished reading I looked up to see that Bob had left. I immediately rushed to the front of the building only to witness Bob nosedive into the river running beneath the bridge. My mind became a fuzzy battlefield. All logic and reasoning were screaming at me to report this to somebody, anybody! But then there was that second half of me, the one that was curious, and above all, scared. Swords clashed against each other, stabbing and slicing at their opponent’s argument. Logic tore a gash in security’s leg.

“It’s the right thing to do! People could be dying under the nose of the public and we can stop it!” Security hacked off Logic’s arm.

“We are not joining them in the grave! They will hunt you down and suck out your life.” The two sides bantered for what seemed like an eternity, until one of them played a foul trick, tipping the odds in their favor. Metal rang, flesh tore, and at last one side had won. My hands trembled as I took out my phone and began to dial a number.

“Nine...One...one...” And with that Logic reared its head, and stood up tall, having plunged their sword into Security’s heart.

“911 what is your emergency?” the person on the other end of the line asked. My phone became slippery as my hands started to sweat.

“I’d like to report a suspicious person. Six-foot five man, short back hair, greyish skin. He caused some...Trouble at my workspace.” My voice trembled as I spoke.

“I’ll send an officer your way, can you give us the address?” Before I could speak I was lifted into the air from my neck. My phone hit the pavement.

“You’re not supposed to do that. I’m sorry.” The air began to evacuate my lungs as if it too was scared of being eaten alive. Before I could process what was happening, I was tossed into the river. Water blurred my vision and shoved its way into my body. Darkness began to swim alongside me. It promised to hold me gently. It whispered of safety and peace. The last thing I saw before accepting that warm embrace was the face of a monster swimming towards me. It was the face of a leech about to feast.