

You Don't Like Your Dentist

It's not odontophobia. Your only dental trauma happened at the hands of an older cousin when you were five. Harry wanted to play Horses. Said *Open your mouth*. Laid a jump rope between the gaps of two loose teeth on the bottom row of your mouth. Pulled hard when you didn't follow. You remember tasting iron, blinking at fresh blood on white rope. Collecting double from the Tooth Fairy. Hating dental floss and horses.

You don't like your dentist.

Prone in his chair, faces inches apart, your inhale is his exhale of stale smoker-breath.

A voice says: *Do you want a man with a dirty mouth investigating yours?*

He asks if you floss regularly. You lie and say you do.

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His greasy fringe falls like a soiled curtain over his mud-brown eyes—windows to his dirty mind. His nicotine-stained fingers loiter just outside your mouth.

You want to scream, but that's just what he wants—access to a wide warm wet hole.

When he says *Open your mouth* you close your eyes.

You don't like your dentist.

He wears a white dental tunic with two silver snaps at the neck. Its smooth front is stained with spots of rust, or dirt. Or blood. You saw him in a restaurant with his dental assistant.

They were laughing. His gold band shone as he stroked her hand, her arm, her cheek. A smear of gravy stained his shiny purple tie. In the bathroom, you watched her ringless hand apply scarlet lipstick. She wiped the colour off her teeth with care, but you still saw it there.

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The smell of latex suffocates as his rubber-gloved fingers brush the edges of your lips. Touch your tongue. Memories rise. A drunken college fumble, the eager tear of a small slick square. The moist sound of unrolling sheath. Pressure as firm cool meets yielding hot-hot-hot. Faster than you could blink, in the quick thrust of lust, you're a victim of stealthing long before it trends.

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His tray of steel instruments glister, wait to poke your soft pink mouth: sickle probe, excavator, curette. This time you keep your legs ankle-crossed together, not stirrups apart. His dental assistant holds the suction tube. Joins him in your mouth. Its sound makes you panic then gag as he scrapes away your plaque. He withdraws his fingers. She sits you upright. When you spit, fat red globs and thin crimson strings stain the small white sink and you hate them both.

Afterwards, your dentist says you have a beautiful mouth. Shining teeth. Perfect bite. But you need to floss more. You shrug. A clean bill of health from a dirty dentist means nothing. You smirk when he praises the whiteness of your teeth. Tell him it's Mr Clean's Magic Eraser: a household cleaning product neither magic nor eraser. Certainly not for teeth. Still, it covers life's stains. You suggest he try it. Smile at his disdain.

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