

Bite Your Tongue

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Kiersten walked into my office, weary and reluctant as usual. The last place you would want to be the Tuesday morning after Halloween week. The dentist. She sat in the dental chair, bib dangling off her cropped pink sweater, sunglasses perched on her highlighted dirty blonde hair that looked about four years too young for any 14-year-old to be wearing. She was looking down at her phone scrolling through her Instagram feed when I walked into the room.

“Hi Kiersten, how are you doing?” I asked smiling with my impeccable pearly whites. She ignored me and continued to scroll through her Instagram.

“How was your Halloween, did you go trick or treating?” I asked once more.

She chuckled, “Dr. Goodman, Halloween is always great, you don’t even have to go trick or treating, all you have to do is run up to a couple little kids and scare them into giving you their candy.”

I wasn’t surprised by her unacceptable behavior. I mean, her parents had been patients of mine since they were her age, and the resemblance was disgustingly striking.

“Brushing and flossing twice a day I hope.” I said, knowing she hadn’t.

“Uh huh”, she responded not even glancing up from her phone.

I sighed. Obviously, a lot of work needed to be done.

“I can’t put fillings on fillings, you know” I said disdainfully.

Once again, she ignored me. I sighed, prying open her mouth with my forceps and a mirror. I could see in less than 5 seconds that she had about 2 more cavities than last time.

“Look, you have two more cavities, on your molars,” I paused, “where there already are fillings.”

“I’m just going to give you anesthesia to knock you out. Bubblegum flavor” I painted on a fake smile, clenching my jaw. “You won’t feel a thing.” I told her.

I slipped the mask over her doll-like nose and let the drugs do their thing. She was out cold in 20 seconds. If Kiersten was so much as an inkling like the next patients to come, I would rather be at home watching Grey’s Anatomy, but I wasn’t always like this. I used to love my job. I always knew I wanted to help people, but I was too squeamish to be a surgeon, and emergency room doctors were too depressing, so I decided dentistry would be a good route.

I snapped into Kiersten’s mouth; her tinted yellow teeth stared back at me like evil eyes inside of a dark cave. It was then a disturbing thought crossed my mind. What if I just pulled out the tooth. I could always put the fillings on it but, it would be so much work to put another filling on, not to mention spending more time with Kiersten. I thought and thought about it, what could she or her spoiled rich parents do about it? When permanent teeth come out, they come out and they never come back. She deserved it anyways. I used my elevator to loosen the tooth, and then I took my forceps and closed in on the tooth, yanking it out of her mouth. The blood started to flow. I smiled at my work. I bet another tooth or two wouldn’t hurt. I did the same thing to all the other teeth with cavities. She had 6 of them.

I put gauze in her mouth and stopped the anesthesia. She stirred a little bit later, groggy and completely out of it.

I smiled my dentist smile and told her in the nicest voice possible, “Kiersten, I wasn’t able to put fillings on fillings, so I just had to remove those teeth.”

She obviously had no idea what I was saying, but she nodded anyways. I escorted her out of the chair and into the waiting room where her mom was waiting for her, head stuck in a people magazine. I told her mom what I told Kiersten, she looked horrified. But what could she do about it? Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

The weeks passed after Kiersten's visit and I grew more and more tired. I hated this job. I asked one simple thing, brush and floss two minutes, twice a day. That's it. Four minutes out of a day with twenty-four hours. Why should I help people that didn't even care about their body? Every day it was another bratty teenager, snobby businessman, lying ten-year-old. I was sick of it. If they weren't going to do their job, why should I?

I continued to do the same thing I did to Kiersten, take out unnecessary teeth. One day a boy named Ryan walked into my office. Ryan was eleven and had been coming to my office for two years now. He never brushed his teeth, but it was ok right? He was little. No, I was done. It wasn't ok, it never was. I was done making excuses for people who didn't care. I smiled the fake smile like always and pulled on my blue latex gloves.

"Brushing and flossing twice a day I hope?" I said for the fourth time today.

"Yeah, for sure." He said a tone of uncertainty in his voice.

I sighed, looked into his mouth. What did I see, cavities? Maybe two of them. My inhumane hunger surged inside of me again, the questions in my mind started coming like flooding water. Why should I take care of him? Why don't they take care of their body? What can I do about it? I used my elevator and removed the teeth with the forceps. Two tiny gaps like black holes sat in between his tiny teeth. I escorted him to the waiting room where he picked out a goody bag. I told his mom, they were babies, they would grow back. It was ok. She and her son could think that for now.

Four weeks after Ryan had come to see me, Charles decided to pay me a visit. I had known Charles for almost fifteen years. He had been coming to my office ever since he was a child and now, he was a rich banker working in Downtown Vancouver. He walked into my office, briefcase in hand, designer suit tailored to perfection on his fit body, dark brown hair slicked back.

“Hi Charles, how are you?” I asked him, pushing my glasses up onto the bridge of my nose.

“Listen Goodman, I don’t have time for chitchat, especially not for people like you. I have a meeting in two hours, and I need to be there.” He scoffed back at me.

I put the mask on him and only gave him a little anesthesia. He was out cold, but it would hurt when he woke up. I didn’t even bother to look at his teeth. It didn’t matter if they were the most perfect teeth in the world. Teeth didn’t matter to me. I wanted more, no I needed more. I had this insatiable desire pulling at me that I couldn’t control. I didn’t care about teeth. I wanted more. I wanted flesh. I wanted muscle. I pried open his mouth, took out my dirty medial scissors and sliced out his tongue.