

Routine Procedure

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SCLOOOPpp schwweeeeeeeCHLOOOOUUUPPP.

The probing tube in my mouth greedily sucks up watery red, and my mouth tastes like metal and vinegar. A UFO-like beam is adjusted, pixelated lights radiating from it. Nothing can hide. I think of all the cliched ways to describe pain. 'As sharp as a knife', 'gut wrenching'. None of them feel quite right. It's something like an enraged gorilla using a screwdriver to try to pry my top lip from its partner.

The tube cranes its neck to investigate once more, followed by a hairy hand that almost dislocates my lower jaw. I clench the bench and try to calm my shaking body.

'We're running half an hour over time,' a voice murmurs. 'Should I cancel the next appointment?'

The sky was lush when I was bouncing up the street for a routine appointment, daydreaming about what had just happened rather than what was to come. I should've been more wary. I don't exactly have much luck when it comes to these kinds of things.

'Nearly there now, you're doing a great job. Is it hurting badly?'

'Ayyyhooowwwwuuufff.'

If only he knew.

'Hmm... Yeah, could you grab the size 6s? None of these are working.'

As his assistant leaves yet again, light from the room spills out into a dark and silent corridor. I need to find a way to escape. My mind is normally like a pond, clear and smooth, but now fragments of memory, words and sensations float in the abyss of ache. I have a bad habit of overthinking in times of intensity, which in return renders me thoughtless.

The gorilla continues to hack at my face, triggering me to consider the state it must be in. It feels like a lonely, bruised tomato, smashed on the sidewalk of an Italian market, but it's probably just a little bit flushed and swollen. Or maybe not.

Maybe I do look like the bruised tomato. Solo pomodoro they will call me in my Italian class.

Solo pomodoro.

And like those words are the password to a locked door, there is a crunch.

And I am free.

'Well, that was certainly a tough one,' my captor says. 'But not as tough as you.' He smiles, his face creased.

I just smile back puffily and waddle out the door, barely keeping bloody goo from seeping out of my lips. I've learnt what gratitude looks like, a 'See you again soon' sign by the exit.

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When the door shuts torture tools are rinsed and stored close by. A hand flutters hesitantly over a light switch.

'Need me to do anything before I leave?'

The dentist's face is as pale as the x-ray he is staring at, a blur of jaw and teeth.

Silence.

'Doctor?'

He gulps then hiccups out, 'You'll have to send a follow up e-mail to her dad.'

The assistant peers at the screen, unpuzzling it.

The dentist growls, 'I can't believe after all, that I got the wrong damn one.'