

A Matter of Extraction

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THE DENTIST

BLACK ROTTEN HOLES of decomposed tooth enamel. The yellow ochre crust of gingivitis as it spreads along the edge of bloody sore gums. Putrid breath as it wafts through the air. Teeth so affected by disease, the surrounding bone is deteriorating, leaving nothing to hold those suckers in.

That's what I, Dr. Ginger V. DeKay, am talking about.

People who don't floss. Really. What is so hard to understand about using a little mouth wash and brushing after each and every meal? I don't mean to be a heel, but it would make my life a lot easier. All I ever wanted was a world with perfect, straight teeth. I've tried to schedule people in for appointments, but for some reason they don't appreciate my skills. Perhaps this is because they rarely leave my care alive. I've tried to keep a dental hygienist on staff, but every one of them quits on me after a mere two days. They don't like my practices, they say. Ha! They just don't want me to see the subtle traces of plaque they have left behind in their mouths. I've taken care of each and every one of them.

My theory is simple. If you show me you don't have the maturity to handle the important responsibility of the proper care of teeth and gums, you don't deserve the privilege of ownership of these pearly white gems. I rip them out, one by one, and set them free from a torturous lifestyle of abuse. I maintain them in a special case—a home for under-

privileged teeth, you might say. I don't use Novocain on my patients. If you have neglected your teeth, you get what you deserve.

I mean to free each and every tooth from their life of slavery and mistreatment, one poor defenseless incisor at a time. No one can stop me. Don't bother trying to avoid my office. I make house calls. I will find you and your little rotten teeth too.

I HAD JUST RETURNED to my office after an exciting appointment. I was still glowing from the memory of the pleasure of taking care of a vile putrid mouth. Lara Larsson had required skills only an expert such as myself could have provided. We met in the grocery store, in the candy aisle. I find some of my best patients there, and Ms. Larsson was no exception. She was missing two top right bicuspid and a bottom incisor. My special vision could see a cavity was already forming in her left canine, and if not treated soon, the tooth would fall out. Irreprehensible!

How can I tell someone has a cavity from half way down a grocery aisle, you ask? Don't I need an x-ray machine to be able to see the decay in Lara Larsson's mouth? An ordinary dentist certainly would, but I am no ordinary dentist. I have been able to see each and every person's mouth with intimate detail, since birth.

The deterioration of Ms. Larsson's teeth made my blood boil with surmounting anger. I felt nauseated, as I imagined her eating chocolates and other sugary sweets, abusing those poor remaining teeth. Sugar would stick to the enamel and turn into acid, eating away at the precious enamel. Ms. Larsson wouldn't take the time and care to brush her remaining teeth, and they too would rot and suffer an anguishing death. I could hear each molar in her mouth screaming in agony as she tortured them repeatedly.

Ms. Larsson waddled towards me, meaty fists clenching bags of chocolates and gumdrops. Her smile was huge, showing her remaining teeth. Had she no shame? I gritted my own teeth in horror.

"Girl's gotta have her chocolate, y'know?" Ms. Larsson held up a candy bar.

I wasn't certain, but I think I was supposed to laugh. I forced a smile. Her expression changed to a grimace as she raised an eyebrow and snarled

her lip, brushing past me. I could hear her teeth rattling, begging to be rescued. I decided she had to be my next patient.

Following Ms. Larsson to her home proved to not be as simple as it sounded. She liked to drive fast, and wove in and out of oncoming traffic; nonetheless I managed to keep up and parked my Mercedes a few houses away from a beat up ranch. I kept a slower pace; allowing Ms. Larsson time to hobble up her walkway, so as to not let on she was being followed. I checked her mail and learned her name. I liked having the name of my patients so I could bill them later should they live.

I considered knocking, but decided I preferred to let myself in quietly. Sometimes patients reacted adversely to the idea of an unplanned house call from the dentist and refused to let me in. It could turn into a rather ugly scene, one I liked to avoid. No need getting the neighbors involved. I could only do so many house calls in one day.

The screen door creaked, and hit my black bag of tools as I entered, but Ms. Larsson didn't seem to notice. I crept along the beaten, stained carpet, climbing over full trash bags and cat excrement to what I believed to be the kitchen. My nose stung from the pungent smell of urine. I was doing those poor teeth a favor, taking them out of this place. Ms. Larsson's back was to me, humming, as she blew dust out of a bowl and poured her candy into it. The corners of my mouth turned down and I fought the urge to gag. I slid my hand into my bag and pulled out a silk scarf.

I am a tall woman, in good physical health. I stood a few inches over my victim, and made easy work of gagging her, and tying her hands behind her back. Her eyes bulged from her head, recognition apparent. Ms. Larsson struggled to get away from me as I pushed her to the chair in her living room. Not as convenient as a dentist chair, but it would have to do.

I like to work in silence. I feel my victims understand their crimes well enough without me blathering on about it. I tied her to the wooden chair so she could not move while I performed my art. I made eye contact with Ms. Larsson as I removed the gag. She tried to scream, but her voice had escaped her. It was another talent of mine, but it only worked if I could see the pupils of my patient. I have special custom made clamps I stuffed into her mouth, pushing up on the palate and down on the tongue, so she couldn't clench her teeth or try to bite me. One by one, I ripped each

tooth out of her mouth with my forceps. I didn't hesitate to slice the gum or cut away part of her jawbone to remove full teeth. Only the safety of the tooth mattered. I relished in Ms. Larsson's attempts at garbled screams. After I had removed a mere six teeth, Ms. Larsson lost all consciousness. I may have accidentally slit her throat when I was finished. Each tooth was placed in its own special black silk drawstring bag, where it could be comfortable until I was able to place it properly amongst my other teeth. I left Ms. Larsson to bleed. I no longer cared about her fate. If she bled to death, I didn't believe the world would miss her.

It had been exhausting but exhilarating work, and I was experiencing quite the adrenaline high upon returning to my office. I was surprised to find a small blonde woman in my waiting room. I had not scheduled any appointments, and I almost never had walk-ins. I looked down my aquiline nose at the tiny woman. She adjusted black wire framed glasses, and offered me her hand.

"Hello, Dr. DeKay?" I allowed myself to look into her mouth as she spoke. Every tooth in her mouth was neatly placed: straight and erect. I didn't see the slightest trace of plaque, and this woman had never had a cavity in her life. Either she had the best orthodontist, or she had the best orthodontia I had ever seen. She was in no need of a dentist. This made me suspicious.

"Yes."

"Um. I'm Candi Kayne. I noticed you were hiring dental hygienists, and, um, I'd be interested in applying for the job."

I took her offered hand. "My what beautiful teeth you have."

"Thank you. I brush and floss every chance I get." Candi blushed.

"I have very low tolerance for people who don't take care of their teeth properly."

"Oh me too. Really there is no worse crime, is there?"

"I don't believe so."

"Sometimes I wonder if people even deserve to have teeth."

This was turning into the perfect day. Regardless, hired help rarely lasted. "You're hired. I work a lot of evening hours. Will that be an issue?"

Candi's brow wrinkled and she hesitated. "Don't you need to see my resume? I can show you my credentials."

"Your teeth are enough to convince me, darling. So, evenings?"

"Evenings."

THE PATIENT

HARLAND TOSIS, or Hal as everyone knew him, had been turned down by three different women in one night. It was an all time record, and he was feeling rather dejected. He wasn't trying to get laid or anything. Hal didn't even expect to get a date. He wasn't the type of guy who managed to pick up women in bars. He was a brilliant salesman, specializing in bio-electronic turbo toothbrushes.

Hal had been laid off three times during his career as a software engineer, before he decided he just didn't have the talent to succeed in that field. With no other training to speak of, he had wallowed in self-pity for a few months as the bills began to creep up. Then, after a harrowing trip to the dentist, he had come up with his idea for a specialized toothbrush that would eliminate the need to ever go to the dentist for a regular cleaning again. After several trials, he managed to create a toothbrush that flossed, irrigated, scaled, and polished regularly.

Only, dentists refused to sell Hal's devices in their offices as they worked too well, and decreased patients. Hal had to be more creative in how he found potential customers. He had some success in door-to-door sales, and a few stores were willing to carry his product. Hal was hoping to get the sponsoring he needed for a real infomercial. Then he was certain his business would really take off.

One might not think people would buy toothbrushes from some random man in a bar; however, Hal had made a booming success of it. Hal had a boy-like charm, which made people willing to talk to him. People didn't expect to meet up with someone trying to sell them anything other than booze or sex in a bar, so they were more inclined to hear him out, if only for the novelty of the matter. After a few drinks, people were also a

lot looser with how they spent their hard-earned cash. Hal felt no guilt taking advantage of the situation, as he was confident in the quality of his product. Even if they had buyer's regret in the morning, they now were the proud owner of a fine new toothbrush.

However, Hal could not score tonight. The first woman had told him to bug off. The next had thrown a drink at him, and accused him of hitting on her. The third refused to even acknowledge his existence.

Hal knew some nights were like this. He decided it was time to pack it in and head home to where the most beautiful woman in the world waited for him. All right, maybe Candi Kayne was rather plain, but she loved him, and that made her amazing. She wouldn't care that he'd had a bad night. She would kiss his wounds and all would be right in the world. He knew she was proud of the work he did.

He finished packing up his supplies, took a swig of his beer, and rose to leave, when his cell phone buzzed. He would have ignored it, but it was Candi. Hal loved the sound of her melodic voice.

"Hal?"

"Yes, sweetie."

"How's work going?"

"Meh. Could be better. I was just packing up to leave, and come over for a little visit. Is that cool?"

"Well. No. I wanted to see you, but I can't. Work called. You know how it is."

No. Hal didn't understand how it was. How could a dental hygienist work such strange hours all the time? It was nine o'clock at night. Hal didn't get it, but he loved Candi too much to start an argument, even if it was the third time this week. He would have been suspicious of an affair, except Candi was just not the type of girl who would do that.

"Bummer. You know, that McKay really ought to keep more normal hours, don't you think? I know it's a brand new job and all, but maybe you should find a job with a different dentist."

"It's Dr. DeKay. I don't think so. This is the right place for me." Candi's voice sounded funny.

“What time do you think you’ll get out? Maybe I can come over after?”

Candi stifled a yawn. “How about tomorrow night? I’ll even cook dinner, ok?”

“Ok, I guess. I look forward to it.”

Hal disconnected from the call and sat back down, hailing a waitress over. If he was eating alone, he might as well just order a burger right here. Elbow on the table, cheek resting on his fist, he watched the ball game on the wide screen television. He wasn’t certain who was playing, but apparently his team was winning, given the roars of the rest of the crowd. Fists were shaking at the screen as the game flipped off and a newscaster appeared. Hal sat straighter, eyes alert.

“We interrupt this broadcast to provide you with updated information about The Extreme Exodontist.” Hal couldn’t hear Abby Abbson over the other patrons, but dialog ran across the bottom of the set at a speed the man could follow well enough. “The police believe the Extreme Exodontist is female, approximately five foot-eight, but this has not been confirmed to date. They are urging everyone to be cautious and keep all doors and windows locked. The Extreme Exodontist is considered to be armed and dangerous. She breaks into homes while people sleep, forcefully removing the teeth of her victims and leaving them for dead. Again, she’s considered to be armed and dangerous. Please exhibit caution as she has already taken the lives of at least ten people, maybe more.”

Hal thought of Candi alone working at night. He hoped this Dr. DeKay had taken security measures. *What was the world coming to?* Dentists stealing teeth was a new one. He shook his head.

WHEN THE BURGER ARRIVED, the bun was limp, the meat overcooked, and the fries were soggy, but at least Hal didn’t have to cook it himself. Hal was not known for his cooking ability. Opening his mouth wide to take in the dry bun, Hal didn’t expect to find something rock hard in the middle of the ground meat. He let out a sharp scream as he felt the searing pain of a cracked tooth. Spitting out chunks of hamburger, Hal found the culprit.

“How the hell did they get a rock in my hamburger?” It was near impossible to understand Hal, as he held onto his cheek and spit out a glob

of blood. Within moments, the manager was at his side making a big fuss over keeping the incident quiet, and offering his meal for free. Aghast, Hal picked up his belongings, figuring he was in need of a dentist. Fortunately, he knew of one open this late. Dr. DeKay probably didn't take walk-ins normally, but perhaps she would make an exception for her hygienist's boyfriend.

THE DENTIST

I WAS AMAZED. It had been a month and Candi Kayne had been the perfect hygienist. Granted, I hadn't shared with her the depths of my practice techniques, but I sensed she would understand. I had observed her days before with a patient who had a disgusting case of halitosis and bleeding gums. Candi's pallor was green, her face scrunched up as though she had been sucking on lemons. You can't fake a response as strongly as she was exhibiting. The patient let Candi know she was being rough on him, and he was experiencing pain. Candi responded by tipping his head further back, forcing his mouth to open wider as she scraped the back wisdom teeth.

Candi would be pleased; I'm sure, of how I resolved her case following her appointment. I allowed Candi to leave before the end of her shift. I followed the patient to his home, and dispatched the gentleman of his teeth, removing his tongue for good measure. I have no use of the tongue, but it is the fastest way to cure someone of intolerable breath. Candi had been such a good employee; I was considering allowing her to come with me in my next house call. I believed, with Candi by my side, we would be a formidable team.

There was one more patient for the evening, and then Candi and I were going to discuss her progress as an employee. I was planning to offer her a raise, and let her in as part of the team. I liked to work alone, but there was something special about this girl. I felt a kinship with her I had never experienced before.

Candi was on her cell phone at the front desk, when I left the exam room. Her mouth turned at the corners as she spoke softly. I hadn't been

too keen about other employees using cell phones, but Candi had been such an exemplary employee, I chose to overlook the transgression. She disconnected the call and forced a smile in my direction.

“Is everything all right, Candi?”

“I’m sorry, I was on my phone. I won’t let it happen again. I needed to let my boyfriend know I’d be late for dinner. I think he’s having trouble understanding why we work so many evenings.”

“I’m sure it can be frustrating. I’ve always been more comfortable working in the evenings, and it is terribly convenient for working people.”

“Oh, I totally get it. Hal gets it too. He’s just disappointed because he was looking forward to it.”

“Hal. What a nice name. What does he do?” I didn’t really care, as long as he paid proper attention to his teeth; however, it was a good idea to keep a good employee happy.

Candi’s face brightened at the opportunity to discuss her boyfriend. “He sells toothbrushes. Really awesome toothbrushes. He calls them bio-electronic turbo toothbrushes; he’s such a dweeb. The toothbrush is cool though. It flosses, irrigates, scales, polishes, and probably would do the dishes too, if you asked.”

“Why would anyone go to the dentist if they had a toothbrush like that?” I wasn’t sure if I liked this Hal.

“That’s his biggest problem. No dentist wants to sell the product.” Candi moved to the computer, banged the monitor a few times, and punched a few keys. “Looks like our last patient is Alice Anderson. How is she as a patient?”

“Oh, lovely woman. Barely needs cleanings. Near perfect teeth. Won’t be bad, and then I’d like to discuss your career here, Candi.”

Candi’s eyes widened. “I hope I’m doing all right. I can try to do better.”

I waved my hand at the younger woman to hush her. “Candi, you are the best hygienist I’ve ever had.”

Ms. Anderson didn’t fail me with her excellent teeth. I’m really a sweet person if your mouth is in tip-top shape. Ms. Anderson can attest, as she

is one of my few regular customers. Candi barely had to clean the teeth before I performed an oral exam. Ms. Anderson's teeth assured me they were comfortable where they were, and once again I determined there was no reason to forcefully remove them from their loving home. The appointment was short enough; I believed Candi might even be able to get home to her dinner after all.

I directed Candi to my office. It was nothing flashy, but I had a newer mahogany desk, and two comfortable chairs. The wall displayed my numerous degrees and proof of my credentials to provide general dentistry to the public. I motioned for her to be seated in the chair up front, while I sat behind my desk, resting long shapely legs and cherry red pumps on the desktop.

Candi chuckled as she wrung her hands. "Wow, I've never gotten to sit in here. Not even when you interviewed me."

"I could tell I had a qualified candidate, and I was right. Candi, I am very pleased with your performance. I think you are going to go far with me by your side. I can tell you share my, how should I say it? My distaste for people who don't know how to care for their teeth. I hope I haven't misinterpreted your response."

Candi wrinkled her nose. "I can't believe the disregard people have for their teeth. I mean really. How hard is it to use a toothbrush. I wish some of them would buy a brush from Hal. I mean, I never suggest that. I know enough not to try to send your customers away."

I brought my hands together in front of me. "I believe some people shouldn't even have the right to teeth. If you abuse your child, family services comes and takes them away from you. Why not teeth?"

Candi's eyes widened and she wrinkled her forehead as she leaned forward. "What do you mean?"

The buzzer at the front door of the practice waiting room started going off. Someone was here. We had no more scheduled patients, dammit! Whoever it was, they were going to feel my wrath. A stunned Candi and I bolted to the front of the office to see who was there at this late hour. A short man with scruffy black hair and wire rimmed spectacles stood at my entrance holding his cheek. I could see with my special vision, he had

cracked his tooth. I could hear it screaming for help. I wanted to cover my ears to block out the high whine of the poor little creature. It was no use. I couldn't save the tooth, and it would die. This man had committed murder, and he would have to pay the price.

"Hal, what are you doing here?" Candi's pallor was whiter than usual.

THE TOOTH FAIRY

LIFE WAS GETTING more and more complicated day by day. I feared I would fail my special mission. Flossy Sugarfield herself, High Tooth Fairy, had asked for me, and no one else to deal with a little transgression. It might not have been so difficult had I not kept all of my normal duties as well. The responsibility of gathering lost teeth for two hundred children a night could be quite exhausting, and it was considered a full time job for most of us. I was expected to maintain the normal duties of a tooth fairy, but I was also a special agent. I took care of special situations.

Ginger V. DeKay was definitely one such problem. She had been a nice kid, but something went terribly wrong. She had been playing capture the tooth, not dissimilar to capture the flag, like some humans play. Ginger was knocked on the side of the head, and was never the same. She forgot all of her tooth fairy training, and started behaving like a human mortal. The general consensus had been to just let her be as there was no way to regain her memories. No one had considered she hadn't lost her tooth fairy abilities when she started dental school. The rumors of a serial dentist in the human world didn't start until much later, and it was not immediately connected to a fairy. Flossy brought me into her confidence, noting she believed the voices of teeth were still speaking to Ginger. Flossy was concerned the voices could be causing madness. She had heard the reports of strange occurrences where adult humans were having their teeth stolen and left for dead. Flossy was suspicious a fairy was involved, though why she didn't share. She strongly believed Ginger was involved. If she was, Ginger was breaking fairy code and would need to be stopped, but first I had to confirm she really was the culprit.

I could have complained about my insane schedule. Like most fairies, Ginger was programmed to work nights, which meant I had to gather all of my teeth and keep an eye on her at the same time. It was no use to mention the inconvenience. Flossy would have just pointed out it was probably unwise of me to have a human mortal boyfriend. I liked Hal though. He was a good guy, and dedicated to proper oral hygiene. I couldn't see how his presence in my life would have a negative impact on my job. That is, until Hal walked into Ginger's dental practice right as I was getting a confession out of her.

IT WAS EASIER THAN I EXPECTED to convince Ginger she should hire me. I hadn't expected her to trust me. If she believed herself to be a mortal human, Ginger should have been a bit paranoid regarding why teeth were speaking to her. I had considered the possibility she could sense she and I had more in common than she normally experienced with other people. True she was not aware either of us were tooth fairies, but she was still one of us.

Ginger was very careful not to allow me to witness her with patients, making it difficult to prove she was, without a doubt, guilty, as Flossy had suggested. Nonetheless, I had confirmed several of my patients had their teeth stolen and had died soon after seeing me. I was going to need to tread carefully, to make certain somehow I didn't end up a suspect with the police.

Ginger sat in her chair across from me, red pumps on top of the desk. Wild fiery hair framed her white porcelain face and green eyes which shown with a madness I cannot describe. Her voice was cool as she started explaining to me her belief teeth were like abused children who needed to be rescued. My heart beat faster in excitement. She was going to explain everything to me right here. I reminded myself to play it cool. I was little quiet Candi, who agreed people took awful care of their teeth. I would be shocked to learn my boss was stealing teeth when I was not looking. I had not expected her to come to me with the information I sought. I had firmly believed I would have to take her by force. Perhaps I could convince her to come with me at her own free will?

I was lost in those thoughts when I heard the front buzzer ring. My stomach dropped to the floor when I saw Hal standing there, clutching his cheek. Of all the choices, why couldn't he have chosen an emergency room?

THE VICTIM

DR. DEKAY'S OFFICE was set in a small cape just outside the commercial district of Cavity Falls. Hal noticed Candi's small compact car parked out back in the driveway, as he headed up the walkway. The lawn had been mowed, but there were no flowers or bushes to be seen. A small non-descript sign stood in the front lawn marking the location as Dr. DeKay's practice, otherwise there was little to make the place stand out.

Hal jumped a little when he heard a buzzing sound as he entered the office, but he easily determined its purpose. His mouth jogged, causing a new wave of pain. It had worsened since entering the office, but he figured it was mostly due to anticipation. He had never been a fan of dentists. Despite his business, Hal had always had terrible teeth, and figured he was facing dentures in old age. He had a number of fillings and it was probable he needed another.

Hal expected Candi to be surprised to see him; he had not expected her to turn green. Her eyes were wide, mouth in a wide "O", legs standing apart. She brushed her short blonde pixie hair out of her face and forced a weak smile.

"Hal! What are you doing here?"

Another woman entered the room. Candi was an attractive woman, but she faded into the background with Dr. DeKay standing behind her. Hal found himself immediately drawn to the dentist's full lips in a half smirk, which did not reach the empty emerald eyes. Luxuriant fiery curls fell about her shoulders, drawing his eyes down to a perfect body and legs. Lots and lots of legs. Hal found himself wishing he could work a late night

or two himself with Dr. DeKay. He shook himself and reminded himself he was in love with Candi.

“He broke his tooth, the poor dear. Is this your sweetheart?” Dr. DeKay put a long manicured hand on Hal’s shoulder. He felt the warmth tingle through his body. Only one other woman had made him feel a similar tingle—Candi. He liked it, and wanted her hand to remain there. *How did she know my tooth was broken?*

“Yes.” Candi hesitated before she answered. *What was her problem anyway? Was she embarrassed?* Hal wasn’t perfect, but he wasn’t bad looking. “Hal, maybe you should go to the emergency room. Dr. DeKay and I were just closing up the office.”

She wasn’t embarrassed. She was jealous, Hal thought. *Candi doesn’t want Dr. DeKay’s warm sensual hands to touch me.* The idea made him smile.

“Nonsense. He’s family. Come on into the treatment room, Hal dear. I’d like to show Candi a few new techniques.” Dr. DeKay gestured towards the door and headed there.

Candi shook her head and mouthed no. Hal shrugged. She pointed towards the exit to the street, her face almost angry now. Hal shook his head. He saw no reason why he should go to the emergency room when the lovely Dr. DeKay was more than happy to treat him. Candi pulled at his elbow, as he turned to follow the doctor.

The exam room was typical for a dentist, but something didn’t feel right. Hal wished now he had listened to Candi and left. She hadn’t been a jealous girlfriend. Bad things happened in this room. He turned to look Dr. DeKay in the eye, and he didn’t like what he saw there. With more strength than he had expected, she pushed him into the exam chair and straddled him. A moment ago, Hal would have loved to find himself in this position, but he was no longer certain. His mind flashed to the television screen at the bar earlier. Recognition hit hard.

“You’re the Extreme Exodontist.”

Dr. DeKay nodded slowly, pleased with herself. Hal felt his bowels turn to water. He feared he would urinate his pants. *Why didn’t I believe Candi?* Candi. What did she have to do with all of this? She must know something, but Hal refused to believe she could be helping this demon.

“Candi, I want you to observe appropriate treatment for a loser like Hal here, who doesn’t take proper care of his teeth. He should be ashamed of himself, really. Sells special toothbrushes but he damages his own teeth. I thought better of you, too, Candi. I thought you understood, but to think you actually kiss this vile mouth.” Dr. DeKay shook her head, disgusted. “I am going to remove all of your teeth, Hal. One by one, I am going to save them from you. I’m not going to use Novocain. I want you to feel the pain. Then I’m going to kill you in front of your pathetic girlfriend. Look at her. She’s so shell-shocked; she can’t help you. Poor, poor Hal.”

Candi stood, eyes closed, mouth agape, legs akimbo, entranced by the scene before her. At least before Hal died, he knew Candi wasn’t a part of this nightmare. It was a small comfort. Hal noticed odd changes in his girlfriend. She had never been tall, but he was certain she was shrinking. Her skin was taking an iridescent purple glow, and was she growing wings? She reached out and punched Hal, causing his world to go black.

THE DENTIST

FROM THE MOMENT that man entered my office, his teeth were screeching at me, begging me to rescue them. Hal didn’t neglect his teeth like most of the people I contended with. He was physically beating them with his damned fandangled toothbrush. I would leave every last neglected tooth with their horrid owners in exchange to be able to save Hal’s teeth, and any other teeth being abused by his foolish invention. No wonder no dentist would promote the evil device.

I fought to keep calm and not allow Hal to see the pain I experienced. The piercing whine of those enameled beauties made my ears feel as though they would bleed. I couldn’t rescue them fast enough so they could stop screaming at me. I paced myself. I wanted Candi to understand what sort of monster she had been dating.

Mounted on top of Hal, I began fishing for my mouth clamps. I wasn’t surprised to see Candi’s fist. If she was truly in love with this detestable man, she might try to protect him. I had not expected her to punch Hal.

“Good girl, Candi. Now we can get to work.”

“Not so fast.” Candi’s voice was shrill and higher pitched than normal. “I just don’t want him to get hurt, so he’s best unconscious.”

Fair enough.

I moved my head so more of Candi’s body should have been in my vision, but I couldn’t see her. I whipped around to look all around me, but I couldn’t find her anywhere. She couldn’t have left the room without my hearing the door open and close. I waved a mosquito out of my face as I continued my fruitless search.

“I’m right here, Ginger.”

I was already angry. Now I was pissed. It wouldn’t have been as bad if the damned mosquito hadn’t landed in my hair. I swatted at it, causing it to fly away and land directly on my nose, staring into my eyes. It wasn’t a mosquito. It was a tiny person with purple iridescent skin, delicate butterfly wings and the face of my hygienist. I wanted to smack her with the palm of my hand, but I was too startled to react before she flew again out of reach.

“I’m too fast for you. Don’t bother.”

Regaining my composure, I shrugged and returned to fishing for my mouth clamps. “I don’t think you can really stop me at that size, sweetheart.”

“You’d be surprised by how much more we can do at this size, Ginger. Why don’t you shrink yourself down and you’ll see. You can’t hear the teeth at my size.”

I snickered. I couldn’t shrink myself—of course I had never seen anyone else manage such a transformation, either.

“You can do it, Ginger. You just forgot how.”

It was time to accept I might really be losing my mind. I had accepted I could see teeth with x-ray clarity. I was tired of hearing teeth speak to me, but I had found a way to stop it. Little talking fairies were more than I could believe.

“I’m real, Ginger. I’m a tooth fairy, just like you. I hear the teeth. I know how to block out the sounds, but they are there. I know why you steal

them. I know you can see them with your bare eyes, while other dentists need special machines. Let me help you.”

“This is ridiculous.” I opened the unconscious man’s mouth to place the clamps. A blinding flash of light and cutting pain in my fingers forced me to hesitate.

“Humor me. Try it. Close your eyes and picture yourself small. If you are crazy, it won’t change anything. If I’m right, I’ll make the teeth stop.”

I held my hand, examining it for damage, but found none. I closed my eyes. I’d make a hot little fairy. I wanted dragonfly wings, and none of that purple skin garbage. I wanted soft pink skin, and no one was taking my hair from me. I felt a gentle warm tingling in my limbs, like a soft caress of a man’s strong but capable hands. I imagined myself wearing a floral print flowing dress just covering the essentials. A gentle breeze wisped through my hair and wrapped around my torso. I felt my body lift off Hal. I was floating. It was the most beautiful feeling I had ever experienced. The teeth stopped screaming.

“Ginger. You’re flying.”

I opened my eyes and smiled; a refreshed feeling washed over me. I had never felt so free. The ground was gone, and I lifted in the air. Candi was right; she had helped me. Most importantly, the teeth were silent. I wondered, how many more ways were there I could save those teeth now? If transformation between human and fairy was this easy, I could perform searches with my human ears, shrink down and fly into the patients’ homes completely undetected. I would have no need for apparatuses to tie people up, which had always been sloppy and risky.

Candi’s face was stone cold. She threw something at my face, and everything else went dark as I fell the long distance to the ground.

THE TOOTH FAIRY

IHATED DOING IT. As soon as Ginger managed to pull herself back into her fairy form, I could see her madness would come to an end. She didn’t remember. She might never remember, but she had been

released. My duty was to bring Ginger back to Flossy unharmed. I couldn't do it in a more human form. The fairy dust I threw at her would cause her to sleep until I returned her to our home. I just wished Flossy would order problems such as this to be rectified before it was a full disaster, but that was my personal opinion. There was no room for personal opinions in my world.

I looked to Hal, still passed out. He had missed the majority, but he had seen me in my fairy form. He probably would think it a dream, or no one would believe him. I decided it was best to let him forget me completely. It wouldn't hurt if he forgot how to build those damned toothbrushes either. I sprinkled fairy dust on his tongue, whispered in his ear, picked up Ginger's limp body, and flew away into the night.

AFTER FIFTEEN years in the rat race, Lynn Mohney left a career to pursue her lifelong dreams of being a professional artist and writer. By day, Lynn can be found carting around her two beautiful children, but by night she is a professional metal-smith/jewelry designer, and co-owner of Prunella's Workshop located in central Massachusetts. In her spare time, she enjoys writing fantastical stories, and she looks forward to being published in four different anthologies through out 2014. Keep an eye out for a novel sometime in the near future!