

THANK
EARTH
YOU

BY

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SAUSAGE PRESSURE

I'm sitting in an examination room, waiting for a man semi-famous around town for his vasectomy procedures. Lining the wall across from me are pictures of men in hip yet nondescript shirts and jeans, wearing big, fake smiles while they high-five their doctors. To the right, there's a strange, subtly angled operating table with a short, grooved seat slid up tight beside it that looks like a device saved for specialized cases or when someone's got something notches above bad.

For six months, the pain has been mild; manageable would be a good description. It's not enough to make my parents privy, but they aren't about much in my life these days. I've also been putting this visit off for so long—busy with work, “I'll go after my next deadline”—that I don't really remember what it's like to have normal testicles. Would the discomfort be more noticeable if I had a different job? Would the procrastination subside? Even now while I'm somewhat nervous

about what the doctor might find, mostly I'm thinking about how late I'll have to be at the office tonight to catch up on the hours I've missed.

The constant worry, the hard-to-reach subcontractors not making schedule, the early morning *ob shit* e-mails, the unnecessary budget-eating meetings, the over and over and over—it's all wrapped up into a big, fat bee that dwarfs the physical pain and buzzes around in my head, with unlimited stingers and tiny, mocking laughs. Things go so fast during the day that she's kept quiet at work, but she enjoys cranking up the volume after hours until I can't hear anything else, forcing me to spend a quarter of my money on booze and Oreos just to shut her up and relax.

And so she goes.

The door clicks open and I get a first look at Dr. Slice, the man whose name years ago I saw on salvaged shirts with the various and obligatory plays on words. He's much older than I'd expected but grips my hand like a vise. After he introduces himself, I look to the floor—a crutch I've unconsciously developed over the long haul—and almost get through giving him my name before he says, “So, what can I help you with?”

I'm sorry, Doctor. The middle of my sentence interrupted the start of yours. Forgive me.

“Well, it's not really pain, more like an uncomfortable feeling that I've had in my testicles for a couple months,” I say, understating the duration. “I've gone to two other doctors, went through all their tests, but neither could tell me what's wrong.”

“Describe the pain for me.”

“It's not terrible. It's as if someone were grabbing, maybe gently squeezing them . . . but at all times.”

“Well, let’s take a look.”

Dr. Slice scoots his stool toward me like he’s on his way to some chore, and then his eyes look into mine as if he knows something I don’t, something that’s just innocent enough for him to give me a wink.

Don’t. Just . . . don’t wink at me right now. Thanks.

I slide my khakis and boxers to the ankles, and Dr. Slice begins to test my instrument. While he’s getting comfortable at crotch level, I tell him the discomfort came after a weekend at a friend’s lake house where I wore a life jacket like a diaper for most of two consecutive days. I don’t tell him of the prolonged nut hugging, but I do say, “perhaps there was some bacteria in the water that swam up the urethra?”

“Pfff. That’s not it.” I imagine him thinking he can’t wait to get off work so he can go home and polish the medical awards above his staircase.

“Hmm. Okay. Take your boxers all the way off and put your elbows on the table.”

Um . . . elbows?

One after another, arm hairs stand up, but I do what I’m told. I’m half naked and moving to where he wants me when the short seat stops my knees from bending as I awkwardly try to lean over the table; motor reflexes take over and my right leg lifts, allowing the knee to slide perfectly into one of the two grooves. The same thing happens with my left leg, and everything clicks at once. The seat below me isn’t a seat at all; it’s a knee rest designed to properly elevate the body.

Dr. Slice makes a noise over my shoulder. I gulp hard.

“Relax,” he says, now directly behind me. “Take a nice, deep breath.”

No. He can’t be thinking that. The pain is in my—UH!

AHHHUUUUUHHHAAAHHH!

Dear God! Every thought I have is overpowered by pressure—enormous pressure in a place I’ve never felt it before. He’s only inserted two fingers, but it feels like I’m on a farm and he’s elbow deep. His free hand comes around to the front of me to press in on my lower abdomen, issuing an intense ballooning feeling that sends the experience skyrocketing up the pain index. And his breathing next to my ear is even and superior as he works me like a drunk ventriloquist. (None of the awards Dr. Slice hangs above his staircase say the word “gentle.”)

Both my body and mind struggle from the severe lack of warning; every muscle is clenched tight, unable to move. And yet he somehow goes in further, to places no one has ever been, where time isn’t a concept anymore, where all there’s left to cling to are the sharp spasms shooting through my taut skin bag.

Years pass while the massive pain storm rolls in my head, although deep in the intrusion, there are only brief flickers of reality. Wherever I am my brain isn’t able to gain control, but luckily instincts don’t require much. They tell me I can keep on fighting these violent sausage fingers with all my strength or completely let go and step aside for my puppet master. I can’t imagine the latter could feel any worse . . . so I choose surrender.

I’m yours, Dr. Slice. Do as you must. Take me.

My muscles relax one by one. As I let go, pee dribbles on the knee rest and drips down to pool on the floor, but not a cell in my body cares because the pain is diminishing. I let go further, until my entire body goes limp and I become jelly. Slick with armpit sweat, my elbows slide wide on the table.

My head and neck sink between them while my abdomen loosens in odd, discrete steps before filling out to its normal, droopy condition. And with everything else spoken for, all of my sphincters stand down.

The pressure is still savagely measurable, but the shooting pain has left my insides, allowing the examination room to reconstitute. Dr. Slice continues to root around under my hood, and I can't help but wonder if he's painting a mental picture of my insides, amplifying his senses like blind men do, or is he purely focused on the strict mechanics, the methods, the by-the-book of it?

At long last I feel him start to pull out. He eases up on my front, and the industrial grade clamp on my midsection loses its hold. His fingers hesitate at the exit for longer than they should, but thank my lucky chicken he finally gets them out of me and cabin pressure is restored. He backs away in silence, leaving me exhausted and sprawled out over small puddles of my own fluids, thinking, *Until now my mother is the only one who's ever seen me like this.* As I try to catch my loud, uneven breaths, Dr. Slice removes his gloves and sighs with a slight tinge of pleasure. Motor control creeps back, and my legs quake from the virginity he's stolen, but my thoughts are only on the man stepping on my boxers as he crosses the room. How Dr. Slice must look at the world. How he must look at the men of the world. Having the ability to completely change someone's day for good or for bad, having these intimate interactions be a part of his everyday work—I couldn't imagine. Does the power of routine desensitize him to what he's actually doing, and everything else for that matter?

Desensitized or not, he's getting his things together while I still feel like a sex doll, naked and used, having no idea what

just happened, what Dr. Slice has given me. I'm sure he has no idea either. I try to read his face, but he makes no attempt to acknowledge his last appointment of the day; he just reaches into a cabinet and tosses a box of Kleenex at me like he's throwing meat scraps to his dog. He makes his way to the exit, but before he leaves, before the steel bolt clicks in the door, this semi-famous, award-winning doctor looks over his shoulder and says:

“I'm done. Clean yourself up.”