

"Is That So?"

CC's premier newsletter

CHRISTMAS BREAK, OR, CRINGING AS PEOPLE IN SCRUBS POKE ME WITH TERRIFYING OBJECTS (A

MEMOIR) *by Anna Cain*

The trouble began one fine January morning, when my eardrum exploded.

Yes. They can do that. I was surprised, too.

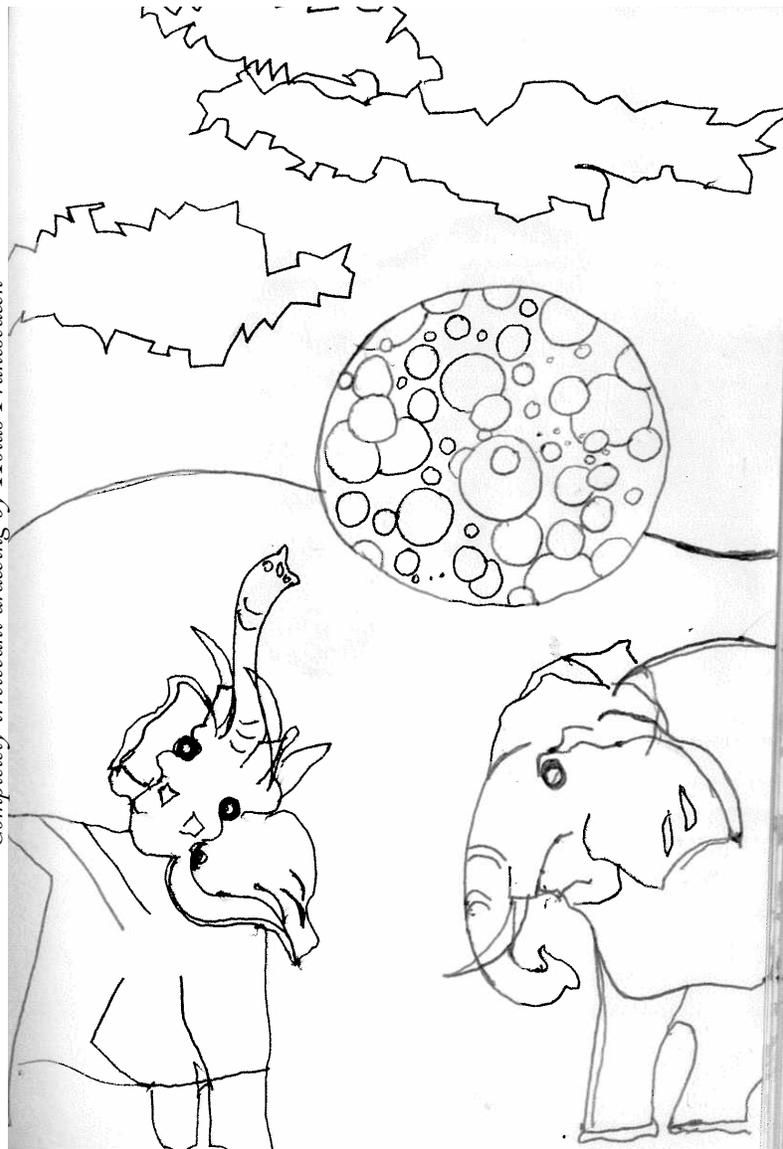
At the emergency room, nurses, then PAs, then doctors, then specialists, rummaged around my ear canal with a needle and a squirt gun.

"Torture" is an overused word—let's go with those infamous Enhanced Interrogation Techniques. After a few minutes, I was ready give the coordinates of the rebel base or return the stolen Death Star plans.

Yet surprisingly, given my hypochondria, I was undaunted by the threat of permanent hearing loss. A friend from high school suffered from Sudden Deafness Syndrome, a mysterious ailment that does exactly what you think it does. Though originally devastated by the diagnosis, she perked up when her overpowered hearing aid let her eavesdrop on conversations across the school. If I could become a super spy though bionic aural implants, deafness seemed rather exciting.

For the next week, I moped around the house with a heating pad pressed to my face and a fuzzy blanket tied around my shoulders. At the next appointment, a Dickensian doctor prescribed a daunting regimen of drops and pills to keep my other eardrum from popping like the

Completely irrelevant drawing by Hotus Prunescaen



proverbial weasel. Modern medicine won another resounding victory, and my hearing returned. I gained three things during this saga: an interesting story, a possibly addictive painkiller called Tramadol, and an even deeper phobia of doctor's offices.

The next day, while I adjusted to life with two ears, my Mom "suddenly

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remembered” my dentist appointment. I had a sudden, horrid vision of a masked man in scrubs prying open my mouth and sticking sharp objects into my cheek. After .67 seconds of polite consideration, I declined. Thus began the cruelest deception of my young life.

Mom returned fifteen minutes later, still cradling the cell phone to her ear, and said there had been a mistake. This wasn't a true appointment, but a quick consultation; they wanted to glance at my mouth and chat about the post-braces life. I agreed and, in the misty happiness of deception, drove to the dentist.

When I signed in, the two receptionists exchanged a significant glance. A few minutes later, I was rushed deeper into the office and strapped to a gurney (okay—not really). Finally, I started to suspect my mother had lied. Then the dentist appeared, looking like a mad scientist and bearing a whirling drill. The dark truth was: I had a cavity.

My elementary school was visited annually by a band of roaming dental warriors. They would enter solemnly and show a low-budget cartoon about brave tooth soldiers who fought an unwinnable war against the forces of Mordor. As the propaganda neared its conclusion, my favorite anthropomorphized enamel was surrounded by dark minions of plaque and sugar. The dentist would here pause the movie and survey the audience of shivering third-graders.

This battle, we were told, was happening today. Brave teeth were even now fighting to protect our mouths from cavities. And every time we ate candy, every time we forgot to floss, we joined the forces of darkness.

The Healthy Tooth Pledge lasted a few days, but the horror of dentists never abated. In fact, for most of my childhood, I believed cavities were (A) a moral failing and (B) almost certainly fatal. Even today, I make the dentist remind my parents that these appointments are not my fault. I was born with abnormally thin enamel. Also, something called “deep grooves.”

In fact, I'd like to pause this personal reflection piece and emphasize that fact. The cavities aren't my fault, I swear. **I have abnormally thin enamel and “deep grooves.”**

While I fought back the old childhood fear, the dental minion shot me full of anesthetic. The barrage of injections, to their surprise, did nothing. Twenty minutes after the first round, my teeth were perfectly sensitive. They gave me a few more numbing shots and left me alone with my thoughts. This procedure repeated three or four times, until there was a stack of hypodermic needles laying on the table next to me.

As I was expecting “a quick consultation on the post-braces life,” I had neglected to mention the Tramadol, those powerful little pain killers. While I stared at the ceiling and waited for the dentist and his drill to return, the Novocain and the Tramadol formed a heady mix. Lulled deeper by the creepy elevator music, I tumbled into the void of my own thoughts. Freud would have been delighted—it was like stumbling into a vat of suppressed memories. I realized that my crippling arachnophobia began, in kindergarten, when a black widow crawled up my neck. During the third round of shots, I excavated what may be my earliest memory. My Mom swears it's impossible for me to remember being

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mauled by my Aunt's demented cat, as I was thirteen months old. Oh, but I do. Quaking from the pain medication, I watched again as Blue, that starved wraith of a kitty, leapt at me with bared claws.

My memories were so clear, my thoughts so lucid, that I decided to channel this strange brain power towards something useful. But before I could fix my own personal neuroses, the dentist reappeared. He poked around some more and declared me at last numb. The bright overhead light flicked on, and the drill began to whirl. The dentist asked me to open wide. I tried, I really did. Apparently, all those shots of Novocain had finally kicked in. I could no longer move my mouth.

When I came to, (I don't remember blacking out, but I definitely remember coming to) the dentist had drilled so thoroughly that I suspected my teeth were now enamel dust. They helped me up, passed me a cup of water, and giggled as it all dribbled down my shirtfront.

It was two days before I could really move my mouth again. That afternoon, I spent a good twenty minutes poking my face. I was trying to determine if I had swelled from the medicine, or if these were my usual puffy cheeks. The results of the experiment were inconclusive.

The numb face led to the cruelest betrayal of them all. According to the Cain family's most ancient and sacred rule, after any sort of medical procedure, we get fried chicken for lunch. When I got my braces on, when the Doctor expressly forbade solid food for the next few hours, we got crispy tenders anyway. My wire broke after the first bite. We choose to see these events as unrelated.

But our drive home from the dentist did not include any detours. As we neared the turnoff for our neighborhood, my Dad put his hand on my shoulder. He

said he didn't want me to embarrass myself in public, and that I would have a hard time ordering when my lips were too swollen for speech. For lunch, I sadly gummed a banana in the corner. *O*, I whispered to myself again, *O monstrous betrayal.* ❀

GET KATY PERRY OUT OF RASTALL *by the Sultan*

I haven't done my SOCC show in four months. This is because the dining halls have only been broadcasting the disgustingly mainstream radio station. It used to connect to the stream that broadcasted the SOCC, which reverted to the jangly alt-rock-gearred KRCC played whenever students weren't broadcasting. But now, I'm trying to enjoy my breakfast while the song "The Best Day of My Life" by American Authors plays in the background. That song makes me want to wring the neck of a small animal. Right before I left for Winter Break, I was in Rastall trying to have a serious conversation with someone I respect but don't know too well, and I'm trying to ignore this fly of a song buzzing in my ear: "Girl you're my angel / you're my darlin' / angel / girl you're my friend when I'm in need / baby." (That's "Angel" by Shaggy, if you care.)

Word on the street is that someone at KRCC is out sick; I've also heard that some cable is broken. Whatever the reason, this soundtrack just adds a manufactured feel to the school, and I feel like I'm in a dentist waiting room or the Southern Methodist University dining hall or something. Can someone fix this, please? I used to do this bumpin' SOCC show where I played lots of Stereolab and said song facts, now, what's the point?

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There's a chance when I spill this newsletter around Tutt, the sound will have been repaired. If so, I hope you enjoyed my catharsis. ❁

HEY LOVELORN PEOPLE: SNAG THAT PIECE OF ASS YOU WANT IN TIME FOR VALENTINE'S DAY *by the Sultan*

If you're like a most people, your love interests primarily lie in people you see from far away, but have never met. For any given guy, (this is me speaking from my man-loving perspective, here) you have no idea about his personality and you instead project wonderful traits onto him such as "inquisitive" and "great at handstands." And if you're like a lot of people, you're too scared to talk to him. And we all know that saying hi is just plain weird. Well, here are some tips on how to get him to talk to *you!*

1. Wear great clothes. That raggedy sweater with hand-knitted black and white pinstripes? Those hi-top moccasins? Put them on and strut your stuff, because if he sees you it will surely change everything.
2. Follow him while wearing a nondescript outfit. Invisibility suits are stored in the bowels of Tutt Science, but if you suck at picking locks, studies show that an outfit of grey jeans, a pseudo-Native American shirt from Urban Outfitters, cheap flats, and a Herschel backpack is 25% more effective. Follow him to a party Friday night. Pickpocket his Gold Card, or simply pick it up if he gets drunk and drops it in between two couch cushions. Then send him an email and

tell him to meet you at Rastall Sunday Brunch to get it back. He will think of you as a really kind person, which you are.

3. Go to the building where he takes most of his classes. Change the desktop background of every computer within the building to images of you and him together. If there are no images of the two of you together, create one with Photoshop. There are plenty of wedding photos to work with on Google Images.
4. Open credit card accounts in his name. Tell the people at the desk that you know it's weird, but your parents thought they were going to have a boy, and when you came out, they still decided to name you Brian.
5. Murder a celebrity
6. Get on top of an upside-down bucket and preach in front of Worner at lunchtime. Be sure to speak about how sexual intercourse is sinful, so he sees you as forbidden and desires you. ❁

Is That So? is themeless, spontaneous publication with no standards of quality. We accept all kinds of writing and grayscale art. To comment or submit, text the Sultan at (858) 603-5355.

