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Its Catching

by Victoria Watson

My dentist was a man who seemed to be made up largely of legs. His name was Mr. Love and from my perspective he had a kindly face, hair like a black Labrador and a white coat that just made it to his knees. Unusually, his surgery was on the first floor; the waiting room their conservatory, the surgery itself, a large shed overlooking a well-tended yet extensive garden.

My mother would disappear to the kitchen as soon as we arrived, for a good gossip with his wife, while my brother and I were sent to the waiting room. This was a sanctuary of musty cushioned window seats, diamond-paned windows looking out over the garden and best of all a library of National Geographic magazines.

My brother always went in first for her appointment.

There, my brother and I would ignore each other while we worked our way through the magazines. I loved being in the waiting room; the only magazines we had at home were Motor Sport and the Sunday supplements and here was a vast selection of the world, they were a wonder and delight to both of us.

My sister who ruined our dental visits.

She would be happily lying on my stomach on the parquet flooring amongst the spider webs and dust bunnies, enraptured by the pictures of African deserts or the ice floes of Antarctica, while my brother scrutinized articles on the naked women of the Amazon, both of us engrossed in our own private worlds when inevitably there would be a loud disturbance from the garden.

My mother knew what the cause was, and would look knowingly at each other, then carefully clambering up onto the window seats our stares would follow the running, yelling figure of our sister, paper towel still pinned to her dungarees. She would be expelled herself out of the dentist chair and was now running amok among the dahlias. Open-mouthed and wide-eyed, she was followed by lovely Mr. Love, his long legs working like pistons chasing her around the garden. She would shout "Pippa! I haven't even looked at your teeth yet!"

My brother and I would be embarrassed yet agog, unable to look away at the hilarity of a grown up with a head torch.

e, bless his white coat, is responsible for the mouth of mercury I have today; although some might argue that y to rolos and tizer did not help. All those fillings each carried out without any anesthetic, my mother firm g, it was going to hurt anyway, so you might as well get on with it. I spent what felt like hours in that black y two feet dangling level with Mr Love's bowed head.

her always went last, which by then poor Mr. Love was probably at his weakest, and they both would stumb e shed, as if from a war zone, my brother ashen faced yet determined to show ardour, Mr. Love urgently hea ks cabinet.

in the car journey home, my brother would entertain my mother with tales from the chair, like Mr. Love's al suggestion that he had primordial teeth, probably related to dinosaurs or strange mystical beasts and real e subject to some anthropological study as he was a great interest to science. All this boasting was to divert r sister's flushed embarrassed face and tearful sniffs. I stared hard out of the car window, already nostalgic f f National Geographic I had been wrenched from.

her would never admit to it, but we shared a heady mix of schadenfreude and abject terror that day and mar her wailing around the flower beds continued at all dental checkups; and like good memories should, they v embered, over-exaggerated and blatantly made up to form the fabric of our family lore.

