

The Apoplectic

by Taylor Farner



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Prepping
you
for
fish

The kids all just stared out, not really seeing anything. Toby was familiar with this face. He'd gotten used to it as a substitute, going over times tables and getting the kids to understand photosynthesis. They didn't really hear him. They weren't really in class, but staring outwards, day dreaming about space and wizards or princesses and whatever else they felt was more important than the practical things, the real things.



Slamming the 25 pound catfish onto the long lab-room table startled them a little. A couple jaws dropped.



"Alright, c'mon guys, wakey wakey," Toby said. The kids' attitudes didn't change much.

The classroom was cold. Outside the windows everything was dark. The lights in the back of the room were off to reveal the work Toby set to work on. Tonight the kids would learn by watching, and then doing. If it worked before, it would work again. It was all about having the right message. If you have good intentions, why would anyone want to stop you? And why would anyone suspect the sub?

"I know you don't like regular schoolwork, so I came up with a surprise for the lesson plan, but don't tell Mrs. Miller!" Toby told the kids, lightly shushing them with his gloved fingertip. "I'm going to teach you practical skills, like preparing your food, that way when you're older and out there on your own, you'll know how to feed yourselves."



The kids seemed to be a little confused.

"Has anyone ever seen their mommy or daddy clean a fish before?" Toby asked.

One of the boys, Gregory Trotus, looked from side to side at the other kids, and raised his hand. Toby pointed at him with the long serrated knife in hand to call on Gregory.

Gregory slowly put his hand down. Mumbling, "Mi-mister S.... Can we please go? It's cold in here, and scary."

The other children nodded in anxious agreement.



"Is that how you all feel?" Toby had his feelings hurt like this before, something that stemmed back to when he was their age. It had become a passion of his to impart his knowledge onto children, and teach them to understand what he has to offer. But after months of subbing, the heartlessness of kids taught him that they didn't care.

"Well, you kids have done a number on my heart, you know that? You're just gonna sit, and watch, and maybe you'll learn something. You're all fish that I'm guiding through these dark waters," Toby gestured to the outer walls of the sealed shed, referring to the outside world. He was obviously angry, and he realized he frightened the kids even more. He didn't mean to, but sometimes you had to put a little fright in the kids to make them listen. Toby knew that.

"I'll run through this quickly to give you an idea of what to do. Make sure you have a clear workspace. You want to have a bowl," he paused and lifted the bowl on the table so the kids could see.

"Then you take your knife, and cut from the dorsal fin on the back, to the one at the tail end of the fish," as Toby moved the knife, there was a soft sliding-sound. "Then you grab pliers, and peel back the fish skin, take your knife again, and make a cut from the fish's butt all the way up to its neck, pull out all the guts, and drop them into the bucket here." The entrails made a wet flopping sound as



they hit the bottom of the bucket. "After that, you just have to rinse the fish off."

Toby cleaned up the fish, put it in the bowl, and into the cooler behind him.

"I told you guys I had a surprise," he said, walking to the other side of the table and turning on a lamp to illuminate a sheet-covered mass atop the table. He grabbed the end of the sheet and yanked it back.



"It's Mrs. Miller!" the kids shrieked.

Indeed, it was. The naked corpse of the children's school teacher lay on the table growing blue and cold. The kids started scrambling up on their feet and pounding on the wall and locked door behind them, deafened by their own screams. They could scream and cry all they wanted, it didn't make a difference. It never mattered before. No one was on campus anymore. Even the janitor had ended his shift and gone home hours ago.

"With people, it's really the same process as the fish," Toby said, unmoved by their continued screams. He proceeded to skin the woman, gut her, and dispose of the scraps. He then lowered her into the large rollaway cooler behind him. The kids gave up on escaping halfway through the routine and instead stood still, watching Toby's every move.

When Mrs. Miller was in the cooler, Toby turned back to the table and grabbed the knife. The kids shuddered.

"Now, which one of you wants to go first? Melanie, why don't you go first, you've been the





closest thing to well-behaved today.” Toby held the knife out to the girl, handle first. “You see, you’re all fish swimming in a pond that’s too small, and there’s just not enough food for all of you, and someday, this is what it’s going to come down to. Gregory, why don’t you lay down on the table for Melanie? You’re the one who wanted to leave so badly.” He patted the blood-smeared surface of the table for Gregory to lie down.



Darla held the cover of the newspaper to my face. The cover photo showed her being hauled into a police cruiser in blood soaked clothes with a grin plastered to her face. The bloody handprints she made in wiping her brow made her hair cling to the corner of her lip. Above read *Queen of Hearts Murders Family!* I simply looked past it, terrified of what was going to happen.

"Oooo, I look good in print, don't I?" she said. She set the paper down on the table behind me, returning to the chair ahead.

It was hard to tell where I was from the inside this garage. Concentrating on anything was



nearly impossible. Everything was blurred. A dark blue bruise spread across the top of my thigh, just below the seam of my skirt.

"You know, I fanaticize about the two of us," Darla said from her chair, not ten feet before me.

It was so hard to make sense of anything--of what happened and when.

"Especially in the beginning, I liked having you for a psychiatrist," she said, raising a cigarette to her lips, holding a gun in the other hand, limp, like a glass of scotch--the remote control to my uncertain fate.

She has a lean pose: her crossed legs cascading to the right, her upper half twisted to the left, gun hand resting on the chair-arm—her left propping the cigarette within reach of those dark red lips.

"I guess it's ironic how the tables have turned. I'm healthy and in control, and you're there, in the bad chair," she said, waving the gun towards my face, "You're cute, doll, but right now you look like a mess—hahaah."

I felt sweat running down my brow, and my hair clung to my skin like I was fresh out of the shower. My skin was pruning from all the sweat and I had goose bumps where the night air wafted over my exposed flesh. Blood trickled down my nose from our scuffle, which I obviously lost. Darla gave me another bruise: there was a blue spot on my left breast where she slugged me with the butt of her



gun. Plus, I'm pretty sure my ankle was sprained. I felt it swelling under the panty hose; my heel was kicked off from the struggle.

"So tell me Doctor... Or I guess I'm the Doctor now, *you're* the one who's strapped down to the chair." She was right. I looked down and saw duct tape securing my wrists to the chair, up to my hands of broken nails.

"So tell me, Dawn, what are you feeling right now?" she asked me, the sinister grin on her face erasing all the work I've done with her over the past five months. Saying anything felt impossible, my mouth was dry, and my whole body shook from fear and dread.

"I..." clearing my throat was rough, like scraping dry sand off your legs when leaving the beach. "I want to go home," I said, thinking of my husband.

"Now I don't think that's fair," Darla said, straightening in her chair. "Here I am, trying to help you, and all you want to do is go back to him. Surely he can't love you as much as I do.

"No, you need to talk about how you really feel for me; that's the heart of the problem here, isn't it? We were bonding and really getting to know each other—you requested to see me *more*. And then out of the blue, you recommend me for more thorough treatment, and have me sent off. I think that's a funny way of showing that you care for someone. Don't you?" She raised the cigarette



to her lips one last time and let a large cloud of smoke float upward from her lips.

It took me a minute to process everything she was saying. My spine tensed with each of her movements. I held onto the ends of the chair's arms for dear life.

Sent her away—yes, okay: she was becoming more and more erratic, showing romantic desire for me, and her fantasies of lust, violence, and passion were growing worse. That's why I'm here now. She was too much for me to handle.

"Well Darla—"

"It's *Doctor*," she said.

My whole body shook rather hard when she interrupted me, "Yes, yes of course I'm sorry, Doctor," I tried to clear my throat again. "When I first began to see you, you had been doing so well, even though it seemed a bit difficult for you to open up, and—"

"Don't tell *me* what's difficult to open up about.," Darla said. "I've seen a handful of shrinks and doctors, thinking they could poke around in my brain and fix me, and the instant I show a *little* bit of honesty, I'm shot down, treated like a fucking lunatic, and I'm put through more radical treatments. So no honey, don't talk to me about not being able to open up," she said.

"Okay, I'm sorry," I recoiled quickly. She looked like anything could set her off the way she waved that gun around. I had to regain composure if I wanted to make it out alive.



"You're right, we did start to bond, and I'm glad that you could feel comfortable talking to me about what happened," I said. Darla seemed to ease back in her chair a little bit at that. "I felt that we were making progress with your condition—"

"No, no, no, stop that, this isn't about my condition, this is about why you can't let us be happy together," she interrupted again.

"Right, my job was to care about you," I said. "And from a professional standpoint, you seemed to be expressing feelings of understanding for what you did, about why you did it, and how you could recover and move on from that spot in your life." I paused. Darla leaned back in her seat, and grinned again. I didn't know if that was good or bad.

"And then you expressed that you had had romantic feelings for me, and of course, I was flattered, and I thought that maybe, having someone to feel affection for would put things in perspective for you. I just wanted you to get better, you see." I paused, waiting to see how she would react, and how I should proceed.

Darla didn't say anything for a minute. Instead she raised her cigarette to take another hard drag. She was a tough one to read: I never knew what direction she was aimed.

She raised the side of the barrel to her head to rub at her right temple, "Don't talk to me like you *had* to care about me. I used to think that—but when you would talk to me in the sweet sort of

voice, you really did want me, the way that I want you now. After you sent me away," she leaned forward in her chair, "I knew the truth of it—you were somehow scared of your feelings, and you didn't know how to deal with them—how to tell your husband, or your bosses that you had sunk to my level, fallen for a crazy. That's it, isn't it? Because you loved me?"

The truth of it was I didn't think I could help her any more, and with her romantic feelings mixed in, I didn't think that she would get any better the longer she stayed under my care.

It seemed like I had been here for hours. I don't even remember her grabbing me. She must have drugged me. I was too afraid of what she might do if I started looking around. I straightened up and tried to focus.

"*Well?*" Darla asked. Her grin dropped to a frown, and her brow furrowed.

It snapped me back into the reality of the situation—knowing where I was meant a hell of a lot less than trying to escape. "That... that may have had something to do with it." I didn't know what else to do but start lying to cater to her delusions.

"That's what I thought." She put her cigarette out in the ashtray; the gun lay sideways in her other hand, aimed somewhere off to my left.

"I think that if we want to move on from this, you're going to have to be honest with yourself and confront your feelings," Darla said. "You have to say it, you *have* to say it; you want to get better,

don't you? You don't want to be living a lie anymore."

I gulped; it felt a little easier this time, she was feeding me the script. "I love you," she said.

"I love you, Darla," I said.

She smiled. She got up, and slowly started to saunter over to me, hips swaying. But she still held the gun in her hand.

She walked up to me, first touching my right hand, moving it upward as she walked to my side, gripping my wrist over the tape. She knelt down directly to my side.

"There, doesn't it feel so much better to let it all out, to be honest and true to yourself," she said. She was real close; I could feel her warm breath on the nape of my neck, and hear her wet lips smack together and slide, inches from my ear.

I didn't look at her. I just stared straight ahead, and nodded.

"Say it again," she said. I did.

Darla set the gun down on my lap and clung to my torso with both arms. She sighed in my left ear, and I felt her straightened blonde hair cascade down over my auburn sweaty mat.

She reached down and felt my breasts, sighing more into the side of my head, but I didn't feel anything. I was just sat frozen in the chair, afraid to do anything that would stop her from moving this all along and setting me free. She let go, stood behind me, then started to walk away, but

I couldn't see to where. All I heard were the clicks of her heels again.

"Luckily I know what you need," she stopped walking, and then turned back around and started coming towards me, the gun sat in my lap. She was right behind me again.

"You used to think I needed pills to be set straight," Darla said. I heard her peel off more tape from a roll, and my whole body tensed up again. "So it makes sense that there are some things we'll have to take care to set *you* straight," she said, pulling the new strand of tape tight across my face, covering my mouth and lower jaw. I wanted to yell, but the fear had overtaken me. What was next to come in this nightmare?

She started walking away again. With her turned, I tugged at my bonds harder than I had all night. My right hand was getting loose.

"I don't like this anymore than you, but it's the cost of our love," Darla stopped again, and started walking her way back towards me again. "People will be looking for you," she slipped some kind of black cloth bag over my head, and I lost it.

I started thrashing, trying to fling my head back at her, and bat her hands away. With the bag over me, I could barely see anything through the dark material. The tears came on fast: nasty crying, with snot shooting from my nostrils, and the choking sobs, barely audible through my restraints.

"I knew you would react this way. I know you'll feel better once it's all over and done with,"

Darla said, stroking my cheeks through the cloth and my merciless thrashing. She sounded sincere.

"Stop crying, it hurts me to see you like this," she said. She stepped away again.

"I'm going to go to your house, and—listen, stop.... I'm going to your house, and I'm going to have to kill your husband. It's just the way it has to be. There's no way you can truly be rid of him unless he's dead," she said.

I was crying and wailing madly, begging her not to do it. I couldn't even move, I was so tired and emotionally devastated. Now all I could think about was her going to my home, and killing my family. *Queen of Hearts Strikes Again!* She kept telling me how much she loved the name the papers gave her. I remember the way she would describe how she had killed her family. She gathered them all together, and started executing them one, by one, by one, against their pleas and cries, begging her not to do it. Now it would be my family. *Queen of Hearts Escapes Police Custody! Queen of Hearts Shoots Psychiatrist's Husband in Cold Blood!*

I vomited. It just came gushing. It filled my mouth, unable to escape through the tape. It shot through my nostrils. I choked through my sobs.

"It's the only way," Darla said.

The adrenaline finally kicked in—I was able to pry the tape loose from my wrist. I grabbed for the gun on my lap. I felt it, and swung it up haphazardly. I thought I made contact with her—there was a *thunk*, and I felt her withdraw from



behind me. I wasted no time. I clawed at my other hand, tearing at the tape to free myself.

I pulled the hood off in order to see my ankles. Once it was off, I leaned forward, and—

I felt something sharp puncture my shoulder. It was the most painful thing. I whirled my neck around, and picked the gun back up off my lap. I tried to aim it at her, but she was behind me, and easily maneuvered away. I pulled the trigger in panic, firing off into the corner of the room.

When I turned back around to try and get a shot at her, she caught my hand. We both scrambled for the gun. I tried using my right hand in the struggle too, but the knife in my shoulder caused my hand to violently shake, weak and useless.

Both of my hands were trying to steer the gun towards Darla, who, standing behind me, then played with the knife in my shoulder, moving the handle up and down, dropping my right arm and causing me to scream in agony. She finally withdrew the blade from my backside. I looked to my right, and saw her driving the knife down. I lifted my hand in a panic, and caught her hand, driving the blade down my wrist.

I held my own for a moment, but my combined wounds were defeating me. My hand trembled as Darla brought the knife closer and closer down towards my neck.

"Please... please," I said through the tape. It didn't move her at all. She kept bringing the knife in closer and closer.



“You stupid bitch,” she answered.

The blade was now level with my face. I stared in it, and saw my reflection. My eyes fearful, hair deep red. I tried everything. I pushed away at the side of the sharp blade with my face, anything to get it away from my neck. It didn't work. Darla had the advantage. I shook hard, trying to do anything. I accidentally pulled the trigger again—closer—and again—I felt the blade touch my neck—again—and it sunk in. I waved the gun again, and fired... and then.

Black.

White. Like waking up from a severe impact—a car crash, or a good knock on the head. The floor was cold and wet. I opened my eyes, but everything was so bright, and my head was killing me. I pushed up off the floor, setting my hand in warm coffee. My eyes adjusted, and I realized it was blood. I looked up, and saw a battered corpse slumped over in a chair. A blonde.

“This isn't right,” I said. When I spoke there was incredible pain in my jaw, welting from a pistol whip. I reached up to clutch it, my shoulder no longer in pain, and found my hand now held the knife. I looked down, and found myself wearing Darla's clothes. The hunched over, bloodied corpse wore the same battered and worn clothes I had worn moments ago. Starring at the knife, I once again saw my reflection. It was me, but...



Panicked, I stepped closer, and pulled back the sweat matted mane, and saw Darla's face. There was duct tape over her mouth, and two sloppy, deep stab wounds in her neck and shoulder.

"What the fuck.... No, no what is this?" I felt light-headed and swiveled around. I tried to walk towards one of the windows in the back, but collapsed at the edge of the table, planting my hand down on the newspaper. On the cover was a snapshot of a crazed looking redhead behind lowered into a police cruiser, the face was undoubtedly mine. Above read *Queen of Hearts Escapes Police Custody!*

Big Red Roger

Sarah loved the night shift. After scrubbing the sides of the tank for a while she looked down and saw Roger staring up at her. She instinctively put her hand on the emergency switch to close the metal grate, but it didn't seem Roger was trying to escape. She looked out over the dark aquarium floor, and didn't see anything unusual. She held still, trying to listen for the sound again, but didn't hear anything. A shiver passed through her spine, but she went on with her job.



Roger was the world's largest giant red octopus, and the only male. When the founder of the Ventura Aquarium first caught Roger, he weighed 125 pounds, and stretched out to just over 7 feet. After three months of living in the aquarium, Roger had grown exponentially, possibly because of mating season or something, they were sure.

Just as Sarah started brushing again, a huge weight pushed her to the ground. She screamed and started flailing and managed to hit what had knocked her down.

"Nick! You fucking asshole!" she yelled.

"Jesus babe, you got me right in the nuts," Nick said.

"Good, you scared the shit out of me."

Nick pulled Sarah back to her feet. "Sorry babe. I wanted to surprise you," Nick said, leaning in for a kiss. Sarah brushed him off.

Nick was the kind of guy who got a DUI crashing his dad's BMW on prom night. And Sarah loved him.

"I got you these," Nick said, pulling a plastic wrapped bouquet of roses from his back—price tag still intact.

Sarah sighed. It was hard to stay mad at him sometimes. She pulled the flowers in and gave a whiff.

"Thanks babe. Why'd you sneak in? You know I'm off in like, 20 minutes," Sarah asked.

"I wanted to surprise you. Tonight's our 5 months," Nick said.



Sarah's face went flush, and embraced Nick in a slobbery smooch. The brush fell down to the net beneath the metal bridge over Roger's tank, they started necking pretty hard, and Nick began to undress.

Sarah followed suite, then Nick set her butt down on the cold railing.

"Hey, babe?" Nick said.

"What?" Sarah asked, now blushing that they were both naked, once again, at her work.

"Don't freak out," said Nick. And with that, he shoved her off the side. Sarah gave a brief scream before she was caught by the net beneath her.

"Ugh, you dick!" she yelled at Nick, who was jumping down to her side.

The tension on the net made a grinding sound as the two lovers swayed briefly, some ten feet over the water. Sarah looked down, and saw Roger drifting across the bottom of the tank.

Nick started kissing Sarah's neck. She was mad, but still very excited. He was always a madman when it came to public indecency.

The two rolled around on the net more and more, making it shake and sway. Roger looked up and saw the dangling fruit, tantalizing him from above. He swam near the surface and reached up briefly before returning to the cool waters, wading in anticipation.

The tank's lights shone up through the waters below them. Sarah was hot and sweaty, and



endured Nick's repeated pummeling. Both were breathing heavily. Sarah turned her head and saw Roger below them, staring up. Suddenly everything was drowned in sensory overload. She heard the screeching of the swaying net, felt Nick's hot breath on her neck as he thrust over and over again. The tension on the net rang louder and louder, like a collar being torn slowly with each movement.

"Nick," she said. He didn't seem to notice. He kept working away at her.

"Nick!" she said, more firm this time. She put her palm against his chest, but with each movement he pushed her hand farther away. "I think we should get out, I don't like this—can we go..."

Nick looked down at her and saw the panic in Sarah's face. Sarah sat up, and something snapped. She let out a quick yelp. Her hand fell through a large hole in the net. She spun around, trying to gain leverage, but a larger hole ripped open, and she fell through, bottom first.

Nick made a grab for her wrist, but missed.

Looking down, Nick yelled after her as she descended into the cold blue water. Sinking, Sarah looked around, trying to get an eye on Roger, but she couldn't find him. She swam to the top as quickly as possible.

Sarah swam furiously to the edge of the tank.

"Grab it!" Nick yelled, extending the end of the pole towards Sarah.

Sarah looked up and saw the end of the pole extended towards her. Nick surveyed the rest of the waters. No sign of Roger. His heart began to calm as Sarah neared the pole.

I've waited long enough. If I'm going to strike, let it be now. The girl wasn't expecting it. She was in frenzy, flailing about. Real quick. One solid motion, and she'd be dragged back down to the depths of the tank.

Sarah grabbed the pole. Nick struggled to pull her up one-handed, while still keeping hold of the net. He managed to get her high enough out of the waters to grab the net. Her skin was shivering and white with fear. Then she felt stuck. She didn't feel pain at first, but after a moment her dulled nerves screamed after what felt like a whip stung her calf. She was yanked back into the water before she could look down.

"Sarah!" Nick yelled. He looked down, not seeing anything right away except the sloshing water and the black and white contrast of dark hair and pale flesh. Then all he saw was red. Big Red Roger.

Nick froze. He needed to act fast. Instinct told him not to jump in, but if he didn't, there'd be no chance of saving Sarah. With the pole in hand, he jumped in.

Once beneath the surface, he saw Roger had swum a good twenty or so feet away, and was diving farther down. Nick pursued him, his vision

blurred by the salty water. He detached the brush from the pole, revealing a semi-sharp attachment.

Roger had set to work on Sarah, engulfing her. She could barely see around one of his giant red tentacles. She flailed hard, but Roger's tentacles held all but her left leg. All she could see was the darkening insides of the monster, as she felt its strong, warm grasp engulfing her. The pain felt like her flesh was being fed through a wood chipper.

Nick was close. The monster's back was to him as Nick thrust the end of his makeshift spear into the monster. The red creature spun around. Looking into its eyes, Nick was certain he saw the eyes of death. Its mad gaze shook him to the bone. Real terror.

Roger extended an arm and grabbed the pole, ripped it from Nick, and cast it aside. With another arm, Roger reached out and grabbed a hold of Nick's torso, holding his arm tight to his side.

The pain was tremendous. Nick smashed his fist down over and over again, trying to loosen Roger's grip. He failed. Nick made a break for the spear again, reaching outwards, kicking his way closer. He peered back down, and saw Roger had focused again on eating his catch. Although it didn't look like he was *eating* her anymore.

Nick grabbed the end of the spear. When it was lined up with the back of the creature's head, Nick drove it home. This time the contact was much



more solid. It broke through the creatures flesh, dipping into the back of its head.

Once Nick was certain the spear was well-lodged in the back of Roger's head, he set to trying to peel off the suckers from his other arm and ribcage. It was a slow process, and incredibly painful. If he drowned, there was no way he'd be able to save Sarah.

Nick began to cough as Roger's blood bloomed into his face. He managed to peel off the suckers, and started kicking for the top, dragging Roger and Sarah with him. He'd made it. With all his strength attempted to push the hulking, slimy, bloody mass of Roger and Sarah up out of the water.

Turning, Nick started to climb the net with his feet and one hand, the other holding onto Sarah's free limb. He struggled to climb the net, but used Roger's weight to peel the suckers off Sarah.

It was working. Sarah's head was revealed. It was relatively untouched, but was smeared over with Roger's blood. The creature's inner beak clung onto Sarah's midsection, just below her abdomen.

The farther out of water Nick pulled, the weaker Roger's grip on Sarah became. The creature eventually fell back into the water, floating near the top in a bloody cesspool. Nick prayed against all hope that the net held this time. Only a couple more feet, and he'd be able to resuscitate Sarah.

At the top, he swung Sarah over the edge, onto her back. He climbed over the edge himself,



and over her pale body. Her entire midsection was completely ravaged.

He started blowing air into her mouth and pumping her chest. Everything was moving at top speed—he didn't know what to do, *what did it do to her? Oh god, oh god, oh god, please Sarah you can't die, no, no, no, I'm sorry, this is all my fault, this was so stupid, please no I love you.*

He got up and grabbed his phone, dialed 911, then went back to chest compressions.

"I'm at the Ventura Aquarium, my girlfriend is downing, she was attacked by the octopus here... I... Jesus Christ, I know it sounds stupid, but she needs help, send an—"

Uhh-huuuaaack! Sarah spewed out a mouthful of water, and then another. It made the most God-awful puking sound. Nick was so shocked he lifted his head up, sending the phone bouncing from his shoulder to the ground and into Roger's tank. He backed off of Sarah.

More water came gushing out of her, and she started coughing. It was a horribly sour cough, like a running garbage disposal.

"Oh thank god," Nick said, tears welling up in his eyes.

Sarah lay on her side. Nick looked her over; the color began to return to her skin. Even some of the wounds from the suckers inflicted only moments ago began to fade. He looked at the wounds on his arm, the swelling flesh was still



throbbing and beginning to sting very badly as the adrenaline left his system.

He looked down to find his phone floating in the tank.

“Oh crap. Well I hope they’re sending someone,” Nick said, clutching at his arm. “You’re going to be okay—wuhh!” he said before Sarah pulled him down to meet her face. She embraced him in a deep kiss, and he let his eyelids collapse.

If he’d left them open, he’d have seen the crazed, deep, dark red eyes, the same as Roger’s. The eyes grew larger and larger.

Dazed, Nick submerged his love and passion for the woman in his last eternal kiss.

Then something actually felt wrong. Sarah’s tongue—it was doing something weird. It felt like it almost bit him. Nick opened his eyes, and then it sunk in. Something was definitely wrong. Sarah’s eyes were huge, mad, and horrifying. He screamed a noiseless cry. He tried pulling away, but something gripped his tongue, pulling his face in closer and closer. Then up the sides of his face, red tentacles spouted out from Sarah’s mouth. He cried and screamed, and tried to push her away. It didn’t take long before Nick’s entire face was consumed.

There was a sharp suckling sound, and then Sarah peeled away, taking Nick’s face with her. It went quiet before Nick’s corpse slumped over, and then fell off the side, into Roger’s tank. His body floated up to the surface, revealing the empty shell of his skull. Chunks of skull and brain floated and

bumped into each other as the waters swayed and jerked.