

2017

Twitch - 2nd place 2017

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The smell of formaldehyde hit like an ocean wave. He couldn't remember the time, or how long he'd been working. All that mattered was finishing the work. Each incision a step closer to rest. Palmaris longus. Innervation by the median nerve. Flexion of wrist. Popular for tendon grafts. He would surely be reprimanded for sneaking into the anatomy lab, but he would rather spare himself the humiliation.

He continued, taking care each tendon was intact. He slowly peeled back muscle to reveal the arteries and nerves underneath.

"How pleasant to be tucked underneath a blanket of flesh," he thought to himself.

"What an odd thing to think of."

He concluded it was simply the lack of rest. Looking into the metal table he could make out dark shadows underneath his eyes. He ran through clinical information on the nerves. Halfway through he noticed something. A twitch. He stared intently at the pale red flexor. Nothing happened.

"I'm losing it," he said out loud half-jokingly. But he felt his sympathetic response. His heart was racing.

Outside the building the bright fluorescent lights shone from the second floor. Someone watching could have sworn at that moment the lights flickered. But it was nothing.

He decided to take a break. He went outside to the bathroom. After splashing his face, he got a bottle of water from the vending machine. He took a pill.

He reentered the room feeling much better.

He moved on to the hand. Time seemed to pass quickly after taking the pill.

"Almost done," he sighed. He had been dissecting the hand. He placed the scalpel down and turned to drink.

At that moment the color in his face dissipated. His heart jumped. It did not come back down. Around his wrist was the hand of the woman he had been dissecting. Her cold flesh hanging loosely from the bone down onto his arm. He should have reacted. Done something. Anything. But he was paralyzed.

The corpse raised her half mutilated face. Upon meeting her desolate stare he was drawn in. Her gaze showed him rest. Eternal rest. He could finish this goddamn work forever. He finally broke from her gaze. As soon as he did so he looked at her arm and what he had done to it.

“Wait.”

The arm was his. She tore flesh from his bone and swallowed. Hot blood streamed down his arm past his hand to the floor. The room spun. And spun. And spun.

He woke up gasping in a hospital bed. He looked frantically around the room and finally to his arm. It had a few stitches, but that was all.

He looked toward the doctor.

“You took a nasty spill, son. Took the equipment tray with you and hurt your arm. Now tell us, why’d you take so many of those pills?”

He did not say anything. He closed his eyes to rest.

The following day the lights in the anatomy lab were replaced. They had all burnt out.