

KILLS 99.9% OF GERMS  
THAT CAUSE BAD BREATH,  
PLAQUE & GINGIVITIS



Bobby & Shiloh  
Save The Night

FOR A FRESHER &  
CLEANER MOUTH THAN  
BRUSHING ALONE

A Short Short Story  
by Meredith White

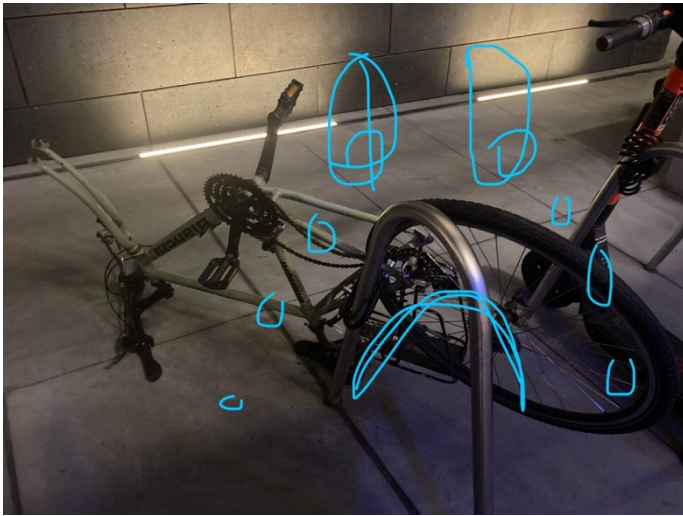
Let's pretend Bobbie and Shiloh save the night.

I was not totally focused when leaving for shut up and write on Monday. I went on a hike with a neighbor and it was better than expected so I was in kind of a floaty, energetic place from all the laughter and conversation and cardio. I forgot my notebook so turned around and went back for it, but when back en route after retrieval, I did a mental check in my bag to see if I had remembered my u-bar lock, and yes I had, in the front pocket, there from this morning when I went swimming. I reflected on how I usually bring 2 u-bar locks, but then how maybe that's part of settling in—I'd been here 4 months now—trusting my spot more. I thought a bit about bike theft then focused on getting over 3 lanes of traffic to make an unprotected left into the bus lane, which is the most sketchy but also somewhat exhilarating part of my ride to shut up and write.

When I got there, I realized I'd also left my headphones which was a bummer because they often play loud Yemeni music at this café, which for the most part is less distracting than music in English because I can't understand the lyrics, but sometimes more distracting because the music can get kind of hectic and chant-like and fall into unpredictable patterns that are not conducive to writing. The café barista guy will also turn it off completely, then turn it back on at high volume, then low volume, then switch in the middle of a song. Then today there was a talking in English segment, a podcast or an ad, but very low so I couldn't tell what they were saying.

After shut up and write, I went back to my bike and the first thing I saw were the two forks of the front tire sticking up in the air. I had the sinking oh no oh no feeling and walked closer to see the full damage – bike flipped over, front tire gone, back tire out of its socket but held in place by the 1 u-bar that I'd used to lock the back wheel to the frame (they'd tried). I was happy I'd brought my lights and helmet in with me, because I'd even considered leaving them with the bike that night, since I'd started leaving them at the place where I swim in the mornings (in a totally different and safer neighborhood at 6 am).

I was so sad especially since I had just gotten my bike serviced and my handlebar gears switched out for thumb gears. I took a picture and drew a sad crying face on it and sent it to Logan, the neighbor who I'd hiked with and was still texting in the wake of the hike.



Then I got to work trying to get my bike tire back in the socket. I thought about how I'd have to take it to Valencia Cyclery the next day. And how I'd have to fix the flat tire on my other bike which I'd been putting off doing for a while. I thought about how, once I got the back tire back on, I'd lock it back up to the rack, get a lyft bike home. Then come back with my car to pick up my bike amputee. It was taking me a while to get the back

wheel back in between the gears. For someone that once spent 3-months riding her bike cross-country and sometimes changing up to 4 flat tires a day, I've never really mastered the back tire insertion. I feel like every time I do it, it just somehow sinks into place after some fiddling but I'm never sure exactly what I do that makes it go in. I have never developed a protocol like, step 1 do this, step 2 this. I just start fumbling around with the chain and pulling that lever thing and getting my hands covered in grease. That's the protocol. I stick to that one very closely every time.

Eventually I got my tire in. Then I got my water bottle out of my backpack and tried to rinse some of the grease off my hands and wiped my wet, greasy hands on my backpack. Then I looked at my phone and read Logan's message that said, "how are you going to get home?"

Then these 2 guys on bikes came riding down the little alley behind the SFMOMA where I was, one guy on either side of me. The guy on the left had a reusable shopping bag filled with stuff and a hybrid trek bike. The other guy had on a white helmet with a little brim, on top of a baseball cap, on top of a gaiter thing that fit snugly over his head. He was on an e-bike with the cushion-bench in the back for kids. The guy on the left said, 'how you doing?' to me as he biked by and I said really sad. My front tire is gone. Then I said, somewhat in a joking accusatory voice, did you guys take my tire? You're my number 1 and 2 suspects.

Then they stopped. And they said, we didn't take your tire, but we saw the guy who did. That's our buddy. We'll get it back for you. It's just down the street.

I had not even considered that possibility. One that I could get it back and two that I could just have a normal conversation with these 2 people that are bike thieves. I have even thought about how I hate bike thieves, because I love biking so much. The one guy with the face mask said, we're poor, that's why we steal bikes. But we don't take them from people like you. I don't know what made me different from every other person they steal bikes from. I'm a 30-year white female who works in tech. Whoopdeedo.

They introduced themselves as Bobby and Shiloh. Shiloh was having a lot of tooth pain. He kept jumping around cuz his tooth hurt so bad. He said he's getting it pulled tomorrow. He had beautiful golden, brown skin smoothed over a truly amazing bone structure. I wanted to tell him that he had good bones, so it's too bad his teeth weren't working out for him, but it was too complicated of a way to compliment and console him at the same time, so I just admired and sympathized as he took out this little tube with the tiny tip like that Neosporin comes in and put it in his mouth. I don't know what was in that tube but he started hopping around and looking all high in his eyes and then kicked his bike pedal with his shin then had to walk off that pain and said, I always do that. Kick the pedal.

That's the worst when that happens, I said.

Meanwhile Bobby was asking me if I worked in tech and was surprised I'd never heard of a clipper 0 tag. He said they cost 250 and you can basically steal anything with them. I could get your credit card number right now with one he said. He had a daughter who was 11 months, whose name is also Bobby. I said I loved that name for a girl. He'd been in combat in Panama and was shot so he said he got money from that, but not much. He said what did I know about criminal AI? And, was it good to create your own AI bot? I said, I didn't even know we had troops in Panama. He said, oh yeah, ever hear of Noriega? I said, no, but it rang a bell. But later I realized that it's because there's a street in the Outer Sunset called Noriega.

Shiloh said he was from Oakland. His parents were crackheads. They were in and out of penitentiary. He doubled over in agony from the pain in his tooth.

I told Bobby I worked in tech, but had actually just gotten laid off on Monday so now I didn't work anywhere. He said, why'd you get laid off? And I said, because the company got acquired and they laid off thousands of people and I was one of them. Then he said, can I ask what company that is? And I said VMware.

Then Shiloh who was still hopping around from the excruciation of his tooth and also from the effect of whatever was in the little tube, was all, Oh I know. They're the ones that make the uh, the virtual desktop.

Yup, I said in a way that did not reveal how utterly astonished I was that a bike thief living on the streets knew what a VMware virtual desktop was. I guess that's San Francisco for you.

Shiloh and Bobby had known each other for 7 years. Shiloh went off to get the bike wheel. He came back without it and said he couldn't find it, then Bobby said he (the thief) went to the other side of the building. T-Bone's got it on 5<sup>th</sup> he said.

Then Shiloh left again.

Bobby asked me if I thought AI was dangerous. I said, I don't know much, but if even the engineers who work at Open AI think we should pump the brakes, then it's probably a sign we should pump the brakes. Shiloh came back with the tire. I was so happy I threw both my hands up in the air and said Yyyyyyy!!!

I said what do I owe you? Can I get you guys some food? I only had 3 dollars cash on me so I asked if he took venmo. But Shiloh wouldn't take anything. He said, if I could make your night, that's all that counts for me. Then he was lost in a fit of agony again and was down on his hands and knees moaning. He got a gallon carton of orange guava juice out of his bag and a 1-liter bottle of listerine and was chugging one and chasing with the other. He pulled out a bottle of pills and asked, how many milligrams is this?

I would've been surprised that a guy who seemed high out of his mind on fentanyl or something of the sort would care about the dosage of generic ibuprofen, but after the virtual desktop comment I knew not to doubt Shiloh. I read it and said 500mg. He said ok that's good and then took out 2 and swallowed it with more juice and listerine.

Bobby said let's go to mcdonald's, so we biked there. I felt like my brake wasn't working. Bobby said we'll fix it when we get to mcdonald's. He said, that fentanyl stuff is killing everyone. I said, yeah don't go near it. He said, I don't touch it. I said, yeah well I guess if you were shot at in combat you know life is precious. He said, it is.

He had 2 stick and poke style tear drop tattoos and some other markings on his face. He had a nice face and something childish about his nose.

He said, you know they're making AI soldiers that can run a 3-minute mile and hop 30 foot walls? I said, I hadn't heard about those but that's terrifying.

He said, a regular soldier is going to lose against one of those. He said, but at the end of the day they're just programmed. You just have to trick them. The liars are going to come to the front and win the war, he said. You just have to trick them.

We got to mcdonald's and I realized I hadn't closed the little latch that clamps the brake pads shut, so that's why the brake wasn't working.

I said, I'll buy you some food. He said, are you hungry? And I said no, are you? And he said yes, but if you're not hungry then I don't want you to buy me anything. You just got laid off, you got to save your money.

When I was biking home, I thought about how I maybe should've pretended I was hungry and gotten food with him so he could eat something. But I didn't feel like Bobby was the let's pretend type.

Although, it already felt pretend.

Pretend there's no difference between me and you.

Pretend my sadness at losing my bike tire could even be in the same category of emotion as the one that made you stick and poke tear tattoos under your right eye.

Let's pretend I know consequence. That I've truly suffered from them.

Let's pretend that when things go badly for me, I don't have a series of tightly woven safety nets to fall back on.

Let's pretend I know anything about what it's like to be in combat.

Pretend that despite you being raised by crackheads and me by parents who attended all my swim meets and dance recitals, our lives are not that different.

Let's pretend.