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## Consent to Orchidectomy

*P. W. Bridgman*

Just as a razor blade can be concealed  
in some poor kid's Hallowe'en apple,  
just as a darning needle can lurk  
in a Hallowe'en pear,  
so, too, something unpleasant hangs back today  
in M.D., F.R.C.P.C., F.R.C.S.C.'s mealy mouth.

Something unpleasant hangs back  
in the surgeon's mouth today,  
like a fatty morsel of yesterday's braised lamb special at  
Hawksworth's  
that has become trapped between two molars  
and is beginning to stink.

The masked medic's word-pistol has,  
through culpable inadvertence,  
remained securely holstered until the last minute.

The patient is laid out on a gurney, parked and idling  
outside the O.R. He is prone, gowned, shaved, shorn,  
partially informed and scared.

And now, he feels the word-pistol (a word-*pistil*), cold  
against his temple.

“Here, you need to sign this,” says the surgeon,  
his face concealed by his surgical outlaw’s mask.

*What is it?*

“A consent form.”

*I’ve already signed a consent form.*

“That was for the exploratory.”

*Yes...*

“This is in case we find something  
during the exploratory.”

*There are three pages here.*

“It’s mostly boilerplate. You sign on the last page.”

*What’s an orchidectomy?*

“We need your permission to take one  
or both of them if the growth is obviously malignant.”

*You’re telling me this now?*

“Come on. You’d prefer we leave them in?”

*I just didn’t ... I thought maybe there were other ...*

“Look...”

*Why is it called an orchidectomy?*

“For God’s ... I haven’t got time for this.”

Orchidectomy.

The annealed, reusable, slender  
stainless handle of the scalpel,  
sheathed and innocuous in the  
shiny green plant casing of the  
word stem.

Orchidectomy.

The disposable, high-carbon scalpel blade  
of the pretty word nestles, barely seen,  
within the soft, purple cluster of its  
benign petals.

Orchidectomy.

*Would you please give me just a couple of minutes  
With the form? I just need to ...*

“Alright, alright.”

The surgeon retreats. A long minute passes.

Then another.

He keeps his distance. For now.

Huddles with the nurses.

They speak softly together.

The patient tries to think.

Finally the surgeon’s exasperation gets the better of him.  
Looking over at the gurney, still idling outside the O.R.,  
he sees nothing happening,  
nothing, and exclaims softly:

“Jesus H. Christ on a bicycle!”

The patient hears him.

He finds the signature line

on page three and signs

in a clear, confident and legible hand:

“Jesus H. Christ”

Then he calls out:

*Okay, I’ve signed it.*

M.D., F.R.C.P.C., F.R.C.S.C. returns to the  
side of the gurney, whisks the form out of the  
patient’s hand and tosses it onto a nearby counter.

“Alright. We’re good to go.”

Someone pushes a button and, with a quiet whine,  
the stainless double doors to the O.R. slowly begin to  
open outward.

“It’s show time,” says the surgeon.

All scrubbed now, he gives his patient a big, friendly wink,  
just so it’s clear that he’s over it—that he has moved on.

The surgeon gives his patient a forgiving wink,  
just so it’s clear that he bears no hard feelings toward him,  
even though it took him so goddamned long to sign the form.

Just so it’s perfectly clear that he bears no hard feelings  
toward him  
for holding up the show.

**P.W. Bridgman’s**  
fiction and poetry  
have appeared (or are  
forthcoming) in,  
among others, *The*  
*Moth Magazine*,  
*Glasgow Review of*  
*Books*, *Grain*,  
*Antigonish Review*,  
*Poetry Salzburg*  
*Review*, *Litro UK*, and  
*Litro NY*. Email: [info@pwbridgman.ca](mailto:info@pwbridgman.ca). Web:  
[www.pwbridgman.ca](http://www.pwbridgman.ca)