

After the accident I stopped carrying things around with me—the pocket knife with the plastic toothpick, the imitation Mont Blanc fountain pen, the raw sugar packets from Starbucks, the cell phone, the Palm Pilot. But even then, I clung to these words: “You sure you know how to ride this thing, kid,” which the salesman asked incredulously before I sped off the lot and headed home. My body bent the way children draw lightning bolts, pressed against the motorcycle, I accelerated down El Camino, the top of my helmet like the nose of those planes that break the sound barrier, Chuck Yeager style. When I was in elementary school we used to have planes like that, models of course—the scale like one thousandth the size of the real ones—and we would run around at recess with the planes held in our outstretched right hands saying “Wooosh! Wooosh!” passing the other children not dexterous enough to pilot their own planes. Now I no longer had to add the sound effects, my Kawasaki Ninja 660 Sportbike was a sound effects machine, a veritable sample station of speed. Goddamn I’m fast. I’m Neil P.

The adventures on the Ninja 660 were only a manifestation of my childhood interest in “wooshing” and “whizzing” noises. Perhaps it stemmed from when I was seven and saw my pet guinea pig, Sparkle, get fed through the tree mulcher. A “whoosh” and then a “whiz” and then some profanity when the gardener realized what he had done, and Sparkle was gone. So naturally, the idea of drilling into a patient’s teeth—whizzzzzz—removing the cavity just like Sparkle was removed from my life that fateful, sunny, yet slightly cold October morning, *and* getting paid to do it seemed like an idea worth looking into. That is essentially why I want to be a dentist. That, and the fact that I have always been fascinated with inserting my hands into the orifices of those around me—of which the mouth is the most accessible and met with the least objection. Actually, there were those French girls at that club in the south of France that one time—French girls! French club! I kid you not—but that was an exception....

Out of my way, fuckers. Come on, come on, you slow ass piece of shit BMW. You wanna race? Yeah, that’s what I thought, you don’t want none of this. I blow smoke from the muzzle of my gun as the distance between us widens. Why does this thing—this Ninja—not have a radio? I need a radio. *If you wanna go and take a ride wit me.* I don’t need a radio. I’m a fantastic singer. It’s like singing in the shower inside this helmet, but better—the amplification more intense, the echoes more sustained. *Oh why do I feel this way? In the club on a late night* It’s one of those summers that can be evoked by a single song, every bass thump yours and it feels like yours alone. I need backup singers. Has anyone ever noticed the phonic similarity between Nelly and Neil P.? I could be next, the multi-tasking dentist/rap star or rap star/dentist. Dentist/rap star? Or rap star/dentist? There’s that one guy DMX; I could be DDS. Who knew how sweaty it would be in a racing suit? There should be ventilation in here, air conditioning, some heat fucking dissipation.



But I think I would need the /dentist to be a popular rap star because, let's face it, I'm just straight up *not as cool* as those beacons of thug lifestyle. I am short, and my voice is neither menacing nor suave. My only tattoo is just a nebulous blob of color under my left arm pit that resembles the letter G, and is actually just a birthmark. Be that as it may, one does not hear about very many dentists by day, rappers by night. I would be like Bo Jackson. I would be like Deion muthafuckin' Sanders. Furthermore, I would use each avenue of my expression to further my pursuit of excellence in the complimentary skill set. I would incorporate my dental work into my lyricization, and, conversely, my thug flavor into my practice. The pain of a root canal is something to which more of rap music-purchasing WASP America could relate than losing one's homie to a drive-by shooting. And who wouldn't be inclined to patronize the rapping dentist: N to the izz-E, I to the izz-L. It's all coming together. Get up off me, dogg!--Dr. P. will be with you shortly.

Moment of truth. I would be not representing an accurate account of myself—Neil P., dental school applicant—if I circumvented the issue of women. Anywhere from 15 to 55 percent of the reason why I want to be a dentist (depending on my mood and level of intoxication) is to increase my chances of being carnal with a woman. And I stand by the legitimacy of that reason. The high level of bling that I would achieve, as well as the letters after my name, are certain to woo some of the ladies. I don't care if they are they're a little trashy as long they're reasonably attractive. I'm not talking trophy or anything, but at least a 6. OK, more like a 7. My prestige outside of the ~~office~~ (sorry) office does not even take into account the constant stream of female patients that would be flocking to my dentist's chair like the salmon of Capistrano.

One topic that I have only briefly touched on was the patients themselves. I'm sure every other essay goes on and on about "deep concerns for the others" and "love of children," and all that jibber jabber. Sure I got those feelings. I want help people and shit, but I gotta break the mold, baby. I gotta be true to myself. When I think about being a dentist, I think about bling and bitches. Besides, what do you readers really want? Another dentist trying to rid the world of gum disease one mouth at time? Or one bad-ass mutha, keeping it real to the streets and blazing a whole new direction for the entire field? Ruminant on this, my friends. I trust you will make the right decision. For my sake. For Sparkle's sake. I trust you will make the right decision.

I don't need backup singers. I sing the backup myself. After you pass the golf course in Los Altos, the road rises and it looks for a moment as if you will ride over the houses, over the mountains, and into the sky—blue like the checks my patients will be disseminating at my office. But then the road curves right, then left, and I handle the turns with heartbreaking skill, each time bringing the bike within inches of the ground, while a concert hall, a Greek amphitheatre pulses in my helmet. Women with perfect teeth walking their dogs stop and stare. To them I am not Jay-Z, not Nelly, not 50 Cent—oh no!—I am Neil P., DDS. And suddenly I am dodging a black school bus—Black? Who knew? Reform school?—and then I am lying on my back. A PA speaker in my helmet blows out, the others give feedback, the concert is over. There are those little Indians—the Indians that we read about in that book in fourth grade, the ones who lived in that cupboard—inside my knee. There are a thousand of these Indians inside my knee, and they all fire their arrows at once. *Okay, guys. Three. Two. One. Fire!* Owwww. Then I see it, my right incisor is sitting on the road just out of reach. I should probably grab it, but oh fuck my knee. What's this? A squirrel? A squirrel is hovering over my tooth, looking straight at me. I am at eye level with the squirrel. I have never been at eye level with a squirrel before. And then it's gone; he brings my tooth to his mouth and dashes over the fence and onto the golf course. Things are not good.



I should be able to remember the surgery. I should meticulously recount the rebuilding of my tooth. I should have been taking notes. I should draw diagrams. I had no tooth and then I had a tooth, not my tooth, but who would know? Who would believe the story anyway? I should have learned some things about my dentist, where he went to school, what his wife does, how long he's been practicing. I should have asked, What's that thing your using? What's that spinning at the end of it? Oh, ha ha, I knew that. But no, I went straight for the nitrous oxide, ha ha ha, and I was out because damn free nitrous *and* perfect teeth—Does it get any better?