

Fat Bear Number 8

By Simon Fox

Dave's teeth were fine, but I drilled him three cavities anyway. It was messy, my hands shaking with a long contained rage. Dave might have forgotten his heartless assault sustained across my school years, but I hadn't. I had him come back for unnecessary root-canal surgery the next week.

At night I surfed in dark corners of the Internet, far from the wreckage of my youth. That evening after Dave's visit I made a purchase from some Russians via a chain of PayPal accounts.

The device showed up a week later concealed inside an iPhone, a wafer of high technology from the black-market of Russian spy toys. The instructions came via an iPhone application which also made the thing work. I formed awful plans. A load-bearing wall in my mind started to crumble.

Dave came back to the clinic each week to receive root-canal surgery. On his final visit I drilled a small cavity in his back-grinder, dropped the device in and sealed it up forever.

The next day I drove to his address on file and waited. Eventually he surfaced for the mail with his cocky strut.

Trembling, I started the iPhone app and spoke into the microphone, "Dave".

His head jerked at once, searching for the voice. He looked around in confusion. It had worked! It even came with a voice disguise setting to avoid recognition.

After sunset I drove a few blocks from Dave's place, within broadcasting range. I fired up the iPhone app and spoke those words, transmitting through the walls of Dave's mansion, into his tooth, jaw-bone, cochlea and finally his brain.

"Fat Bear Number 8"

I waited ten minutes.

"Fat Bear Number 8"

A pause, then a report of three.

"Fat Bear Number 8, Fat Bear Number 9. Fat Bear Number 13"

The next day I drove back again and did it with variations.

"Fat Bear Number 8"

"Fat Bears 23 through 36, excluding 28"

"Fat Bear Number 28 is excluded"

Every day I obsessed over the next inventory. Which bears to include? I was exiting normality at a pace matched only by Dave.

At lunch I would drive near his house and watch him check the mail through binoculars. The device was clearly functional. He looked edgy and unkempt. Eventually he stopped coming out.

I kept a steady broadcast each night, presenting bear listings of paralysing banality. But where was Dave? His lights were on but there was no sign of him. And then one night I heard from Dave. Everyone did.

During an intricate broadcast I lost track and started repeating a single item.

"Fat Bear Number 8"

I said it over seven thousand times, entranced by the beautiful fricatives. At 3am the night was ripped in half by the savage scream of a man diving headlong into the abyss. I fought to maintain the broadcast. Finally Dave lost his voice and the night fell quiet again. I had a lovely glass of red wine before bed.

The broadcasts continued but I sensed that Dave wasn't listening anymore. I stopped and went back to normal life,

polishing, drilling, and watching Dave. Gradually, he recovered. The vagrant beard receded and the cocky strut returned. He was entertaining women again.

I left him alone for six months before returning.

"Fat Bear Number 28 is excluded"

It felt good to be back.

But a week later I noticed the voice disguise setting had somehow been switched off. Anxiety blindsided me. How long had I been broadcasting like this? Would Dave recognize my voice? I halted transmissions and fretted for weeks.

Nothing happened though and I resumed with a sturdy broadcast. Near its conclusion there was a tapping on the car window. Fear flooded my system. He looked through me with that icy, animal instinct from school. I wound down the window, shaking.

"You have a very distinctive voice" said Dave.

I spent three months in Dave's basement listening to a recording of him saying "eggplant" on continual loop. Every morning he administered chiropractic misalignments. Eventually he got bored and dumped my shattered frame into a quarry.

Dave lives in a mental hospital now after successfully pleading insanity. I type into a huge keyboard using a proboscis extending from a helmet that I manipulate with my few remaining neck muscles. Every morning I see myself in the mirror, "Fat Bear Number 8" tattooed across my forehead in coarse black letters. I love my fat bears. They are all I have now.