

The Doctor's Oath

by

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The doctor's senses were on high alert. The chilled night air stung his unshaven chin. He'd been awakened in his bed, shoved into a sedan, and then soldier-marched through these trees. The footsteps of his abductors hammered across the shadowy forest floor, but the physician stepped softly, focusing on the distant lights.

Why had they chosen him, of all doctors?

The muffled sounds grew closer. Flashlights exploded in his face, blinding him. When the lights lowered and his eyes adjusted, he saw the craft half buried in the earth.

"The doctor is here," his escorts hollered. They gave him a shove, causing him to stumble. He turned with disdain toward his captors.

"What do you want from me?"

A hulking beast of a man stepped forward. "So, you are the doctor." He paused and wagged his sagging jowls. "None of this exists. Understand? You see nothing. In fact, you are merely dreaming." He stepped forward with each sentence until the doctor could smell tobacco on the large man's breath.

"Clear?"

"Yes, but what do you want with me? Does someone need a doctor?"

The beast shuffled to the other side of the crash, shining his narrow flashlight beam along a trail in the dry leaves—a trail that led to a creature.

The doctor's acute senses intensified. The gray-skinned being had fallen face-down, as though fleeing, but the head was turned, looking back at the guilty party. Dark shadows under the alien indicated blood.

The men parted for the doctor, allowing him to approach. His training flooded back to him: *There are no excuses. There are no coincidences.*

"What have you done?" he called to the men.

He gazed down at his patient, determined to do what he could.

He smelled the blood, sensed the pain. If life still existed within this creature, then the doctor would honor his oath. He would do the job he was trained for, but after this, he would stop being a doctor.

His patient's eyes were glass marvels, pools of black against gray skin. The doctor touched the hand, so much like his own he wanted to cry.

There was no pulse in the wrist, however a connection was made when the doctor ran his hand along the neck.

I hurt. The weak voice spoke in his head.

Are you alone? the doctor asked.

No, he ran into the woods. Please find him.

I am a doctor.

Save us then.

I took an oath.

He had been lost for the moment, but then the butt of a gun jolted his shoulder.

"Is it dead?"

He removed his hand from the alien's neck.

“He’s dead,” the doctor lied.

The image of the alien’s weapon appeared in his mind before the connection broke. He’d never used such a thing before, but he saw what it could do, and he knew how to protect himself.

There was no time to think about his decision. They had chosen him.

There are no coincidences.

He would act.

There are no excuses.

After this, he would stop being a doctor.

He slid the weapon from its hiding place along the alien’s thigh and turned off his senses.

He simply didn’t see, hear, taste, or smell, and he didn’t connect with any other being.

When the weapon discharged, the men were instantly blind and deaf. They couldn’t feel their guns, so they didn’t discharge them. Their senses had been cut, leaving them helpless.

The doctor collected the injured creature in his arms and headed into the trees. The numbness would wear off the men by daylight. They would search for the alien and the doctor, but they wouldn’t find them.

He would use his physician’s skills, even here in the forest, to save this life, but he had already stopped being a doctor. His gray skin now matched that of the fallen comrade in his arms. Together, they would find the missing navigator, and the three of them would wait for rescue.

Unfolding his heightened senses, he picked his way through the trees, following the scent of the survivor. No, there were no coincidences. He was their doctor, and he was grateful to serve and protect.

He had taken an oath.