

Infection
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The man lay in bed, unaware of the dark presence lurking next to him. It was only half an inch wide, with a brown abdomen and head. Black lines streaked its back and crept towards its spindly legs. The man, commonly known as Brad, stirred in his sleep. Lucid dreams filled with turmoil clogged his brain. Brad was a sound sleeper. It helped for when during the night, the neighbor's dog Gus, went on a rampage tearing through the yard and howling at the squirrels. This time, Brad will have wished to be a light sleeper.

The arachnid couldn't get very far on its first try. Brad's ear wax was thick- as well as scrumptious. The spider gnawed on it, but it held together. Perhaps this would be a good nest for its babies. The spider managed to create a small hole, in which it carefully climbed through. It was now heading toward the middle ear. After squeezing through tight nooks and crannies, the creature came upon Brad's eardrum. The steady thump vibrated the ear's walls. Brad cringed in his sleep. His eyelids fluttered. Something tickled. It was seemingly impossible to wake up from. His vision was clogged with dark swirls of color and faint silhouettes. His dream was too thick to escape from.

The next morning Brad woke up to a terrible throbbing in his ear. The spider had miraculously been able to get past the eardrum, shrinking as much as possible. Brad stuck the knuckles of his fingers in his nose and exhaled. There was a loud "pop" and a terrible pain afterwards. A shrill ringing occurred. Inside the ear, the spider had been splashed with mucus as the pressure released. Bubbles of green goo remained still, sputtering and popping every few seconds. The ear's walls glistened to a shine with its much needed bath. The spider traveled further into the ear, passed the opening of the Eustachian tube, which was slowly getting clogged. Brad cocked his head, tilting it so that mucus could drain. Nothing but pain occurred. He sighed, coughing up mucus.

"Must be an infection," He assumed. "My bronchitis has been getting infuriatingly worst." Brad left the house to go to the doctors.

Meanwhile, the spider was creating a racket. Brad's ear itched like crazy. It scurried around, traveling to the inner ear. The drive to the doctors got increasingly painful. Someone honked at him, but it was only a faint beep to Brad. Brad was relieved when he finally stumbled through the office door.

"Help," He croaked, his outstretched hands grazing the secretary's desk.

The secretary stepped back. "Sir, is everything all right?"

“MY EAR!” Brad touched his lobe faintly.

“Ok, sir. Sit down. I’ll get immediate help.”

The secretary left, stumbling over the swirly chair. Brad sat down in one of the cushiony couches and tried to ignore the pain. By now the spider was burrowed deep inside his ear. She was busy taking wax, hair, and other nasty treasures to build her nest.

A doctor entered the room. “Brad, is it? An ear infect-“

“Help me! Please, I can’t take the p-pain!” Brad lunged at the doctor, who nimbly sidestepped. Brad sailed to the floor, just as the doctor’s hand grabbed Brad’s arm.

“Sir, I didn’t realize it was that bad. Come with me.” He guided Brad swiftly into a small room. The walls were a bright blue and paintings of seashells lined the walls.

“I’m Dr. Cowell,” the doctor said. “I specialize in ear infections. Let’s take a look.” Dr. Cowell grabbed an otoscope and gently stuck the tip in Brad’s ear. He winced.

“Sorry,” Dr. Cowell apologized. “Brad, can you hear anything from this ear?”

“Nope. Sometimes there’s a scratching noise, but anything outside my right ear has no effect.” Brad sighed.

“I see.” Dr. Cowell looked in Brad’s ear a little longer. “Well, you have an internal ear infection, which explains why your equilibrium, or center of balance was off.” The doctor chuckled, remembering Brad tripping. He swallowed and immediately felt ashamed. “Your Eustachian tube is clogged, so no liquid can drain. You have a wax blockage from what looks like to be behind the eardrum. I’m going to put some ear drops in, so lie down.” He grabbed a little white tube and unscrewed the cap. “Tilt your head to the side please.” He instructed.

Three drops spilled in, creating a miniature stream that ran deep into his ear. At first, nothing happened. A feeling of fullness occurred. Then, he felt something scrambling to get out. The spider saw the flood of liquid and panicked. Covering her eggs with wax, she scurried past the ear drum and scuttled past the ear drops, exiting Brad’s ear. The doctor jumped back.

“Yuck,” he said. “Er- quite the specimen, I mean.” The spider disappeared into the bed sheets. Doctor Cowell made a mental note to check them before the next patient. Brad

sat up- a little too fast. Brownish yellow pus escaped his ear, cascading down his shoulder like golden locks of greasy hair. The doctor grabbed a plastic bowl and held it under his ear. It stopped coming out shortly. Dr. Cowell cleaned up Brad's ear, gave him a prescription of antibiotics and eardrops, and off he was.

The drive home was much more tolerable. The throbbing in his ear had lessened to a temporary soreness. Brad entered his home, but jumped when he heard Gus's excited bark. He laughed. "Oh, Gus! I can hear you!" He closed the door and plopped on the living room couch. "Finally, some peace and quiet."

He closed his eyes to sleep. He thought he heard the scuttling of tiny bodies in his ear. Brad shook the thought out of his head. There had only been one spider...