

A FEW HOURS EARLIER.

MIRA AND MINESH SAW SOMETHING IN ME. A CONFUSION, THEY CALLED IT.

FEARFUL THAT THE TUMOR KID WOULD TAKE ONE OF MY FAMILY IF I DIDN'T KILL FOR HIM. BUT TOO MUCH OF A COWARD OR A LIBERAL OR WHATEVER TO DO THE DEED.

MAYBE I SHOULD THANK THEM.

MAYBE I SHOULD BE GLAD THEY WERE WILLING TO GET THEIR HANDS DIRTY.

OR MAYBE...MAYBE I SHOULD SIMPLY FOLLOW MIRA'S ADVICE--



--AND JOIN THEM.

I KNOW YOU'RE THERE.

COME ON, YOU NEVER STOP WATCHING ME. YOU'RE ALWAYS THERE, ON THE LOOK OUT FOR A WEAKNESS...

I WANT TO TALK. I WANT TO REACH SOME KIND OF AGREEMENT.

ONE WHERE WE CAN BOTH GET WHAT WE WANT.

MY NAME IS RORY FLETCHER.

RECENTLY I WAS DIAGNOSED WITH BRAIN CANCER.

A GRADE FOUR SERIAL KILLER WITH NO REMORSE.

AND THERE IT IS.

AN AGREEMENT?

AT LEAST, THERE'S A PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION OF IT.

HE CALLS HIMSELF THE TUMOR KID.

I WAS LYING.

WHAT I MEANT WAS, I'M GOING TO KILL YOU.

I [REDACTED] HATE HIM.



WHAT I REALLY MEANT WAS--

WE'RE GOING TO KILL YOU.



OH, YOUR NEW FRIENDS.

IT DOESN'T WORK THAT WAY, RORY. I'M **CANCER**. THE BIG **██████████** C. I CAN'T BE JUMPED AND KILLED.

I'VE OUTWITTED MODERN SCIENCE, OUTMODDED QUACKERY, GOOD OLD FASHIONED SELF-DELUSION, AND ALL KINDS OF ANCIENT VOODOO--



MAYBE.

BUT HAVE YOU EVER HAD THIS?



UGHH!



TH-THIS IS THE KNIFE... MADE FROM ALL MY PAIN AND HURT.

I USED IT TO TRACE S.O.S. MESSAGES ON MY BODY. M-MESSAGES... THAT SCREAMED AND... AND SCREAMED--



--HELP!

AAGHH!



TUMOR. NESTLED IN THE HUMBOLDT'S REGION OF MY RIGHT PARIETAL. GRADE FOUR. INOPERABLE. TERMINAL.

I EXORCISE YOU! BEGONE. **BEGONE!**



THE SMELL.

HOW CAN I DESCRIBE THE SMELL? I THOUGHT IT WOULD STINK LIKE POISON, OR █████ OR DEATH.

WH-WHERE IS HE?

HE'S GONE, RORY. WE GOT RID OF THE NASTY █████

BUT NO.

IT'S A STRANGE SMELL. ONE I HARDLY RECOGNIZE.

I...I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO DIE. I...I FACED MY TOTAL OBLIVION. A-AND THEN...I FELL IN LOVE. AND TOOK ON TWO BEAUTIFUL CHILDREN...

AND...TH-THEN I THOUGHT *THEY* WERE GOING TO DIE...

A-AND...THAT WAS... SO MUCH WORSE. UGHHH...KN-KNOWING THAT *THING*...HAD ITS EYES ON THE CHILDREN...GNN...

OR EVEN *RELIEF*?

YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT, RORY.

I THINK YOU COULD DO WITH SOME CHEERING UP.

OH GOD, OH GOD...

IS IT TOO MUCH TO SUGGEST THAT WHAT I'M SMELLING COULD BE THE SMELL OF *HOPE*?