

## entry level biologist position

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## entry level biologist position

by Anonymous

### Summary

roshambo has a normal day at work

### Notes

set in the same universe as [a study in anatomy](#)

consider: what if roshambo was put in a situation that they were not in control of.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

The mornings are cold.

Roshambo doesn't know of a different kind. They wake up, and it's cold, and every instinct is telling them to close their eyes again. Turn their back on the new day, return to the peaceful oblivion of sleep. But their alarm is about to go off, and Ro hates that sound more than morning, so they get up, turn it off before it can ring, and start their day.

It's still dark as they navigate their apartment in the early morning, blindly grasping for a clean shirt and yesterday's pants. They don't have to look pretty, they just have to get to work. They'll care

about their appearance when they're having a better week. (It's Monday.) (They've been saying this for a month.)

Their coffee machine is broken - thanks, Spoke - so they make due with instant coffee and a few sugars. '*There's no milk in the fridge,*' they realize belatedly. Ro really needs to go grocery shopping, but they never seem to find the time. Between work and work and work-

Things have been busy, to say the least.

They finish their coffee, shove their mug into the dishwasher, grab their coat and bag and head off to work.

Dawn arrived pale and unwelcome, and Ro turned their back on it. They get on the bus and tuck themselves into a corner, closing their eyes for a few more blessed moments of rest. But the bus hit a pothole, and the bus hit a pothole, and the bus was driving through their hometown at seven in the morning, and there was no time or place that hated Roshambo more, so they didn't get any rest as the bus trotted on through the city, on its way to the closest stop to Ro's workplace.

Which was all fine and well, since Ro hated this place too.

The breaks on the bus needed changing, they noticed as they squeaked to a stop. They were more high pitched than usual, and it took the bus a few moments longer to stop. They got up slowly, the door almost closing in on them as they squeezed past and out. The door closed shut with a bang, and the bus left them there, cold and uncaring.

With a sigh they entered the building. They were tired, they were bored, they were *not* looking forward to all the paperwork they had to sift through that day. It was technically a laboratory - that's what they told them when they recruited them - they needed a biologist to work on their project. It had been a year, and that promised project they'd talked about was still nowhere to be seen. Instead Roshambo was stuck doing paperwork, registry, and archive. The promised grandeur of a research project had turned out to be nothing more than work on a glorified herbarium.

They sighed another time for good measure - one could never be sure. There were always reasons to be exasperated at this place. They could maneuver through the lab building with their eyes closed - they've had to do it in the dark once, guided only by the faint red of emergency lights in the other rooms and the lights for their card scanners - so their tread to their office is on autopilot. Eyes almost fully closed, vision obscured by hair they couldn't be bothered to brush. Some would call it a bad case of the Mondays, Roshambo would call it a regular day at work. Their key card met their key door and the door to their office - their own, thank no one in particular, they had to fight tooth and nail with admin to get that space - swung open.

Ro stopped.

They brushed the hair out of their face, blinking twice for good measure. The lights in the office were automatic, and they worked as crappy stage lights to give the envelope sitting squarely in the middle of their desk an even more dramatic presence.

It was thick, brown, and non-descript besides the one corner stained a rusty ochre. It reminded Roshambo of a bloodstain, but it could've been anything. *Any* variety of substances, *none* of which Roshambo wanted to deal with that morning. They took a step back, and closed the door.

They took out their phone and dialed admin who - with a tone that was unnecessarily rude considering the matter at hand - confirmed that *yes*, they knew about the envelope and *yes*, it was Roshambo's job to deal with it.

Ro thanked them without calling them assholes out loud, and they recommended Ro use gloves when dealing with it without calling them a bitch out loud, and that was that.

This is what that preemptive sigh was for.

Ro walked back into their office, hanging up their coat on the coat rack and leaving their bag in the corner far away from the likely hazardous material in the envelope. They tied back their hair and washed their hands before putting on gloves. Their office space functioned as a lab on its own - although most of the larger equipment was still in the main area - Ro had enough in this space to conduct smaller experiments. An analysis or two, a dissection even.

Not like they really wanted to do one regardless. Animals never particularly interested them - if they wanted to cut something open it would be tender stem of the *Platanthera peramoena*, or even *Papaver rhoeas*. Ro would even settle for a common dandelion. Drag a scalpel across the stem, watch the white latex seep out of the wound.

They picked up the envelope with tongs, careful to keep it in a balanced hold as to not disturb its contents. Ro took care to move it to the smaller table on the side of the room just under where a window used to be. They took a box cutter and slowly and methodically cut open the envelope seal. The moment it was open the smell hit them. Ro took a bit of pride in not falling to their knees immediately - they'd always had a strong stomach - but the smell was absolutely nauseating. *Rot* wouldn't have even begun to describe it. They did their best to try and not let the anger get to them, but they couldn't stop their hands from shaking.

The contents of the envelope were light - no more than 300 grams - and smelled like decay. They cut two more lines across the edges of the envelope, and peeled it open like a page of a book.

Roshambo didn't know what they'd expected. Realistically it was many things. Dried plants - that was a common thing they got delivered to their office. Flora with weird and unusual mutations that they had to document and archive. *Dirty* dried plants - that would explain the stain. *Soil samples?* they thought, hands shaking as they backed away from the table. *A rock. A fucking rock I could bash in my skull with.* they didn't say, as they ran out of their office for the second time that day, and emptied the contents of their stomach in the bathroom.

Ro was a *plant* guy, they were a *flora* guy. They were never interested in the fucking fauna. Their knowledge of human anatomy barely passed more than what they learned in high school. Who in the world had thought it would be a good idea to let *them* be the one to analyse and archive the suspiciously human sized heart in the lab.

There was a ping from their phone as they finished rinsing their mouth. Hand still shaking they opened up the notification, and groaned.

*Prof. Dr. Grey wrote:*

*Hey we're really gonna need a report on that sample from this morning by the end of the day.*

In a fit of anger they kicked the trashcan standing next to the bathroom sink. *This fucking job. This fucking professor.* They'd never even met the elusive Professor Grey face to face - nothing more than a few calls and Teams meetings. They didn't even have a profile picture Roshambo could print out and tape to a dart board that they could occasionally torture. No. Professor Grey wasn't here, and Roshambo was left doing dirty work in an unregistered lab at an entry level biologist's position. Fuck.

They picked up the bathroom trashcan because the janitor really wasn't at fault that they were in

this situation.

Ro washed their hands again, splashing some water on their face and sighing again for good measure, and made their way back into their office.

The heart was still there. Covered in foul yellow blood.

First things first. They grabbed their laptop, a report form and a pen, and a recorder. If the professor wanted a report Ro would give them enough data to sift through for days.

"Alright," they said, pulling on their gloves and pressing the record button. "October fourteenth, twenty sixteen. A report on the organ delivered to Teal Eye Laboratory, done by Roshambo Spiel. Report begins," they didn't pause the recording as they typed away the same words into a form. "The organ closely resembles a human heart. The weight is close to three hundred grams, the shape and form of the muscle along with the connecting blood vessels are the same. I'll be so bold as to assume that the rotting smell emanating from the organ matches that of a rotting human heart - except that the dried blood surrounding it is yellow. The muscle itself also seems to have the same discoloration - although whether or not that is due to decay and oxidation I won't know until I start dissecting."

Once again, they didn't pause the recording. The professor could enjoy listening to them type away at their keyboard as they filled out the same information, while having to guess if there was anything that Ro included in the recordings that wasn't already in the written report.

Oh, and of course, they were going to add plenty of supplemental notes too. Once could never be thorough enough.

They continued like that, saying out loud the information they omitted from the report and vice versa. Sipping their water loudly into the microphone of the recorder. Pretending their hands didn't shake as they put scalpel to organ and *pushed*.

It was all wrong. Structurally, at least, the heart was sound. Right atrium, right ventricle. Left atrium, left ventricle. The pulmonary artery wrapped up with the aorta in a lover's embrace, even if the aorta showed signs of coarctation. The blood didn't make sense though - it was old and dry even though the organ still looked and acted as if freshly removed.

*'The heart doesn't seem to have decayed at the same rate as the blood,'* they wrote in the report.

"Either the old blood was pumped into the organ post removal - oh, my coffee is done." They walked out of their laboratory to grab a coffee from the break room they never even started making. Once they returned, they typed away at their laptop, purposefully omitting what they just said into the recorder. Then, they paused it, and turned to scribble something in their "supplemental" notes.

They finished up the report before their lunch break, now left with a cut open heart in their office they didn't really have much of an appetite.

Ro peeled off their gloves methodically, taking care not to get any of the yellow-brown blood on their skin, before slumping, boneless, in their office chair. The smell had barely gotten any better, what with the air conditioning barely working, but they were done. With one hand they saved the files and opened up Teams, slowly maneuvering to professor Grey's chat and typing in:

*Rport done. Tell me how you want me to dleiver the files. :)*

They didn't wait for a reply, they just slammed their laptop closed and sighed. They couldn't wait

until their project started and they could get out of the legal loophole and quit. They were about to close their eyes to rest for a few seconds before a glint in the envelope caught their eye. Their eyebrows furrowed in confusion - was there something else in the envelope?

Ro stood up, putting on a pair of gloves before grabbing the tongs again. They'd been so focused on the heart and the report that their vision had tunneled, and they never noticed the foil beneath the organ. They wiped some of the blood off the plastic to reveal that it was a medical report, although Roshambo didn't recognize the hospital name. They pulled it out in its full gorey plastic glory, and stopped.

Frozen in time as the wind howled outside and their eyes frantically rushed over the words. They breathed- they tried to breathe- but suddenly the room was out of air. The ink on paper dancing its way into Ro's mind and settling like a boulder on their chest.

"Hey, wanna get lunch?"

The voice broke them out of their thoughts and dragged them kicking and screaming back into reality.

"Hey Mapicc," they said, casually putting away the bloody report back on the table. Mapicc looked at them, looked at the bloody report and gore on their dissection table with a raised eyebrow.

"It stinks in here. Let's get lunch," he said.

Without questioning how Mapicc got this far into the building without being an employee, Ro took off their gloves and threw them in the bio waste can before putting on a coat and grabbing their keys and phone. Mapicc didn't say a word as they left the office and Ro locked the door behind them, instead he just looked around. To anyone else he'd look dangerous, strategic - and maybe he was - but Roshambo was used to his best friend's nervous habits, and just shrugged it off.

They could spend some time with Mapicc, after all. It'd been a few years since they'd last seen Mapicc in person, ever since he got his weird job in Canada and left Ro in the dust of their little desert town in Nevada. But Ro had left Mapicc alone first when they'd gone off to college.

Both of them were stuck. If Ro thought about it too long they'd start believing it was some kind of curse that kept them from escaping the clutches of their hometown, but that was ridiculous. It was just low rent, decent pay, and a shitty contract for an entry level biologist's position.

They didn't know what brought Mapicc back though.

It's not like they didn't want to know. It's just that something was weird no matter how glad they were to have their best friend back in town, and it never seemed like the right time to ask.

It never seemed like the right time to ask anything, if they were being honest.

For example, Mapicc asked: "How's work going?"

And Ro had to sit in silence for a moment and pretend they didn't recognize the dirt beneath his nails that Mapicc was picking at.

"It's fine," they ended up saying. "Something interesting after a while," they added, at which Mapicc scoffed.

Another example, Ro asked: "What?"

Because they wanted to know. Mapicc was keeping secrets, and Ro didn't appreciate it. They'd always been honest so far, hadn't they?

"I wish my job was boring," Mapicc answered, and Ro wanted to grab onto the words and pull on them, make the rest of the truth come out by force, or by begging, or by pleading. They just wanted to *know*.

But they didn't. Instead they ate their lunch until the awkward silence finally passed. They'd ended up walking back to the lab together, Mapicc claiming he had a day off, which Ro didn't really care to question further for the day.

"I'd kill for a coffee right about now," Mapicc said as Ro scanned their keycard to open the front door.

"Come on in, there's a nice coffee machine in the break room," Ro said casually.

"In the laboratory break room? Are you sure they don't put some kind of weird chemicals in there?" Mapicc joked, that ever familiar smile dancing across his teeth.

"Yes Mapicc, we put *all* the drugs in the coffee. How else do you think we get work done?" Ro answered dryly, which only made Mapicc smile more. They climbed the stairs instead of taking the elevator, all the while Mapicc guessed what kind of drugs they put in their coffee that made biologists work in a lab so late. It was all so... *normal*, that Ro is not even surprised by what followed.

The break room was empty, which wasn't unusual at all for this time of day. Ro took out two mugs while Mapicc fiddled around with the machine, before Ro playfully shoved him away and took over. "It's old and slow as fuck but it makes real good coffee," they said, but when they turned to look at Mapicc he was staring at his phone with an unreadable expression. A sense of unease overtook them, not just worry that something was wrong, but also the fact that they couldn't recognize the expression on the face of their best friend of almost twenty years.

Mapicc glanced up at them and put his phone away, expression changing to something familiar, almost relieving. Almost.

"Hey something turned up at work, I gotta run, but we'll get that coffee next time yeah?" he didn't even finish talking before he was out the room, leaving Roshambo alone.

They'd lost count of how often they'd sighed that day. They put away one of the mugs and stayed in the break room. Some would call it superstition, but Ro knew that leaving the coffee machine to brew by itself in the break room would lead to something inevitably breaking, and they would rather not have to wait for it to get fixed again. So they waited the fifteen minutes needed for it to finish brewing, poured themselves a cup, and headed to their office to finish reading that weird report.

Roshambo couldn't shake off how weird the day had been. The heart, and Mapicc. Mapicc and the heart. Correlation and causation. Ro dismissed the thought. It was a possibility, but not a likely one. Mapicc wasn't one for organic sciences. There was no way-

They stopped.

Their office door was open.

Ro gripped their mug harder, the hot liquid and porcelain now a weapon in their hand, and approached slowly. They had no time to message admin - if someone had broken into their office

they had to act quickly. They weren't sure of the nature of their work, but there was no way an intruder in their office was better than Roshambo handling it. Whatever the heart was tied to, it was now their responsibility. They had to take care of it.

Quietly, they pushed open their door.

To nothing.

Their office was empty, quiet. Nothing but the humming of the air conditioning and occasional flicker of ceiling lights. It was empty. Their laptop still in the middle of their desk, closed shut just as they'd left it.

They turned to where their dissection table was only to find their worst nightmare come true.

The heart was gone.

Ro's own heart kicked into overdrive, they put away their coffee on their desk and rushed to their table - but it was *clean*. No blood stains or dirty scalpels - and *no heart*. They crouched to their waste bin but someone had taken that too. There was no sign the heart was ever there. They ran to their desk then, noticing their notebook and audio recorder were also gone, and opened up their laptop.

Even the files they'd saved were missing. The only evidence any of this morning's events happened was the chat logs with professor Grey, which now blinked with a new message notification.

*Prof. Dr. Grey wrote:*

*No worries! We'll send someone to pick it up.*

Alarm bells went off in their head but there was nothing Ro could do. They could ask Mapicc - but what good would that bring other than put him in danger. Ro didn't even have the slightest idea what this was about, but they remembered seeing Spoke's name on that report, and knew immediately it couldn't have been good. Instead they kept their head down for the rest of the day, doing work that didn't really needed doing until it was time to go home. They packed up their bag and grabbed their coat.

It was too hot to put it on. It was even hotter as they waited at the bus stop, asphalt and exhaust a bad combination for Ro's growing headache. The eyes staring at him from the missing person's poster didn't help either. They were familiar too - carried in the face of what was once a friend, and now just a memory. Ro just wanted to be home already.

The bus ride passed uneventful, and they all but scrambled inside their apartment, locking the doors behind them.

They fell into their chair, defeated. Ro sighed, and reached into their coat pocket. They pressed the play button, listening to their own voice, listing the date and hour and subject matter. Listening to themselves type away at their laptop, to the sickening sound of a knife entering the heart. It was real. They knew it was real. They'd made their own copy. Someone had left them a heart in the lab and ordered them to dissect it and document it. They listened to their voice as they'd worked that morning, as they talked about coffee, as they walked past the break room and entered the bathroom. They listened to every sink turn on and the door slam shut as a haggard Roshambo whispered into the recorder.

"The heart does not rot."

## End Notes

yeah uh remember that heart the scientist cut out and that other scientist wanted to eat because they're all kinda weird guys. yeah. i think it's pretty clear who stole it but. it ended up on roshambo's desk

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