

“The Lord of the O-Rings”

Deep in the depths of the dark x-ray cave, the sterile dentists, with their pointy white gym shoes, convened around a massive enchanted mortar, resting on top of an open flame. With the aid of their sharp silver pestles, the “Elven”-dentists whipped the fine powder into a thick potent paste, which was then peeled away into eight floss-like strands, forming the o-rings of power. The Dark Lord, Underbite, put a crown on one of the o-rings, filling it with gold so that he could rule all the others. However, the o-ring was stolen from him, and although he searched all of Park Ridge looking for it, the o-ring remained missing.

Years passed, and the great Arai found the o-ring and passed its power onto his young partner, Gartner-odo. Gartner-odo must give up football and make the dangerous journey from Norland, to Park Ridge, to the Cracks of Washington Street in order to save children’s smiles from the evil practices of the Dark Lord. Young children hear of this great news and sneak across town to visit with Gartner-odo, whose front entrance is guarded by the magical powers of Marci-dalf the Grey.

One cold morning, little Sam, with his crooked incisors and underbite comes to seek the power of the o-ring. Gartner-odo takes one glance at Sam’s mouth, and summons June-adriel, the Lady of Assistance, to fetch the mirror and the o-ring from the roots of the basement. Just then Marci-dalf runs in, exclaiming that she has gotten word that the Dark Lord’s allied dentist wraiths were on their way, but she promises not to allow them to write their names on the sign in sheet. Despite her efforts, the wraiths throw yearbooks at the glass door, and advance. June-adriel pumps up her sneakers and races up the basement stairs. She runs towards Sam’s reclining chair, but is unjustly tripped by one of the Dark Lord’s dentists, and the o-ring is launched into the air. The grins on the wraiths’ faces fade, as Gartner-odo bravely intercepts the o-ring and gently inserts it onto Sam’s braces. The evil dentists miraculously disappear, as the power of the o-ring causes the wires in Sam’s mouth to pull his top teeth forward, locking them perfectly into place. Lord Underbite is defeated.

With a mouth full of the most precious metals in all of Park Ridge, Sam flashes a broad smile across his face and exclaims, “Gartner-odo is definitely the Lord of the O-Rings!”

The Lord of the O-Rings

In junior high, colored o-rings were pretty much a part of the dress code. Everyone had braces, and the only thing that justified them as somewhat “cool” was our ability to choose new o-rings every month. We all had orange and black for Halloween, pink and red for Valentines Day...there was a color scheme for every holiday.

But one day, the unthinkable occurred. I was sitting in a chair at Gartner Orthodontics, waiting to get my o-rings changed for Christmas, when Dr. Gartner approached me.

“I’m sorry, but we don’t have colors today. I must have made a mistake in the order, because that’s all the factory sent us,” he said.

“Ugkay, I gos thots fon far now,” I said, open-mouthed.

Why would the factory stop producing colored o-rings? Without colors we would have to wear geeky metallic looking braces. I let Dr. Gartner put the gray rubber bands on my braces and sulked out of his office with a good excuse not to smile.

Meanwhile, Dr. Gartner was busy making some calls to the factory. “Hello? Yes, this is Dr. Gartner and I’m calling to ask why we only received gray o-rings in our latest shipment. I was sure I had ordered colors and...”

“I’m sorry Dr. Gartner, but we’ve stopped making colored o-rings. All the factories have. Is just too expensive to dye all the o-rings, so we’ve gone back to plain and simple gray. Goodbye.”

“Wait!” Click. Dr. Gartner sighed. Without colored o-rings, the kids would hate their braces. They would dread going to the orthodontist almost as much as going to the dentist.

While Dr. Gartner contemplated what he should do about the gray o-rings, metal-mouthed teenagers everywhere were in an apparent state of depression. Christmas was coming and they were all upset because they couldn’t wear red and green o-rings. The girls’ basketball team was starting their season and couldn’t match their o-rings to their jerseys. But what was worst of all, worse than crooked teeth, was that no one would smile. No kid wanted to flash a mouth full of gray, so everyone just avoided smiling altogether.

All across the country, kids were sulking and unenthusiastic. Their personalities were becoming as gray and boring as the o-rings on their braces, but the factory owners didn’t care. But Dr. Gartner was very concerned with the state of mind of his patients, and he couldn’t let the o-ring depression continue any longer. He knew that the only way to get colored o-rings was to color them himself.

Sitting in his office late one night, Dr. Gartner came up with a plan, a recipe to make o-rings better than ever before. He spent all night mixing food coloring in different combinations to create bright, vivid colors, even more colors than before. In addition to neon green and lavender, there were zebra and cheetah patterns, stripes and polka dots. But Dr. Gartner was not done. In each pot he mixed different flavorings-chocolate, strawberry, cotton candy, pineapple-every flavor one could imagine. Finally, he poured the o-rings into the liquids.

The next day, I sulked into Dr. Gartner's office. I sat down on a chair and Dr. Gartner smiled. I didn't.

"How are you?" he asked.

"Nt vry gd," I responded. I had gotten so used to speaking without opening my mouth.

Knowing what was bothering me, he winked as he opened a drawer. I closed my eyes, not willing to look at the gray o-rings I thought were inside. Suddenly, the smell of mangoes reached my nose and I opened my eyes.

"What flavor do you want?" said Dr. Gartner.

It was then that I discovered the magical abilities of Dr. Gartner. Within hours, lines were forming outside, just to *see* Dr. Gartner's colorful, flavorful o-rings. People were calling from out of state to make appointments. And that is how, to all metal-mouthed teenagers around, Dr. Gartner became the Lord of the O-Rings.