

Bad Connection

When his cell phone buzzed, William flipped it open and said Hello. No one spoke, but he recognized the breathing. What a strange thing. He knew the caller was a man, but why did he recognize his breathing?

He thought about it all morning at work in the natural water bottling plant. That night at home when the phone sounded, he had a sense it was the man again before he pulled the phone from his pocket.

“Fidoo,” said the caller.

“I can’t,” said William, automatically.

The caller hung up. William didn’t know what “fidoo” meant, but he knew “I can’t” was the right answer, even if he didn’t know what it was he couldn’t do.

But that was the only strange aspect of the call, because William had now figured out what was happening. He knew it occurred all the time with cell phones. During a call, you sometimes heard yourself speaking, but distorted. William was certain he had heard his own breathing when he answered the phone and he guessed the telephone system distorted and delayed his “hello” to sound like “fidoo.”

An hour later the phone rang again and

this time the voice said, “You don’t remember me.”

“You sound just like me,” said William, now completely surprised, fear beginning to well up from his stomach.

“I’m your twin. We’ve been separated a long time.”

William laughed. “I think Dad would have told me about you.”

“You don’t remember everything,” said the voice.

“Oh?” said William. “Was Dad in on the joke?”

“That’s right,” said the voice.

“Well, friend,” said William, “I guess you’re going to give me some proof of this.”

“Belin gusa,” said the voice.

“No, it’s mine!” William all but shouted.

The voice laughed.

William began to remember. Someone was trying to take away his ... what was it? His mind was instantly transported back in time. He tried to think of where he was but no words would come. None that he recognized.

“Watel ara fin tick au trig,” William said. Although he barely understood himself, he knew he was telling the man to back off.

“Our language,” said the voice. “You remember it well, my brother.”

“How could I forget I had a twin?” William wondered aloud.

“He made us forget,” said the man.

“I mean ... forget my own brother, like you never existed.”

“He made us forget, William.”

“Arthur? Is that you?” said William in the private language that twins concoct in their cradle.

“He didn’t want us to grow up together,” said Arthur.

“Why?” said William.

“He didn’t want us to remember each other,” Arthur persisted.

“Who did this to us?” William cried.

“He wanted us to forget,” said Arthur.

“Who could be so cruel?” said

William. “Why would anyone separate us?”

“He had the tools, the skills, the need,” said Arthur. “But he didn’t know about our secret language. He erased everything but that.”

“Who did this to us?” cried William again.

“Our father, Jack,” said Arthur, “when he realized we saw him kill Mother.”

“Now, I remember,” said William. “In the bedroom. The knife. All that blood.”

“When I remembered our language, then I remembered everything,” said Arthur. “And then I came looking for you.”

“I wouldn’t have remembered anything ...” said William

“... if I hadn’t called.” said Arthur. “I just need your address.”

“My address? Why?” said William.

“It’s been almost thirty years,” said Arthur.

“But there’s really no need” began William, now wary, but unsure why.

“But of course we *must* get together. And soon,” said Arthur.

“But Dad is ...” said William.

“You have to kill him, William. I can’t. You must kill him.”

“Oh, no, I could never do that,” said William.

“You must!” said Arthur, “before he finds out we know. He’ll kill us for sure.”

“Oh, Arthur, what is going on?” said William, now very worried that he was not keeping up with something that might hurt him.

“Forget it. Spell the key, William,” Arthur said.

“I can’t,” said William. “Oh Arthur, don’t leave me again. I can’t do this.”

“Shut it down,” shouted Arthur over the phone. “Spell, it, William!”

“S-O-P-L-M-O-M,” spelled William.

“Dah pah,” said Arthur. “Maybe next time.”

William hung up the phone. He thought he must have dozed, and he’d had the strangest dream. Someone had wanted him to do something, but he couldn’t for the life of him remember what.

William’s father toddled out of the bedroom, down the hall and into the living room.

“Who was on the phone?” the old man asked.

“I don’t know,” said William. “I’m not sure it was anyone.”

“What do you mean?” said Jack.

“Could I possibly have a twin?” said William.

The old man’s eyebrows lifted and then settled down heavily. He turned toward the kitchen.

“I’ll be right back,” he said. “I need to get a knife.”

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