

Thanks for the Memories

by

Mike Murphy

Kenneth live-parked the limousine in front of the soup kitchen. Dryer, in the seat behind him, looked out through the tinted window. The extreme heat of the day was rising in the air like waves. The men in line looked shabby and dirty—people he would *never* associate with if his need wasn't so vital.

"Here we are, sir," the hulking, uniformed chauffeur said.

"Very good, Kenneth," Dryer answered.

"Need I remind you, Mr. Dryer," Kenneth continued, "that this is *not* the best area of town?"

"No," his boss answered him, "you don't have to remind me." He looked at the men in line again and wondered if he could *really* do this. "If you consider it," he went on, "what better place to find someone who needs the money and might agree to my proposal."

"Logical, sir. As always."

"Sad, isn't it?" Dryer continued after a sigh.

"Sir?"

"Such poverty."

His chauffeur paused and said, "You're *certain* you want to go through with this?"

"Absolutely."

"Even with the possible repercussions?" Kenneth asked.

"Yes." Dryer pinched the bridge of his nose and took a deep breath of the air conditioning. "I've thought about this long and hard," he told Kenneth.

"If you say so, sir," Kenneth answered.

"You understand my instructions?"

"Yes."

"You are *not* to enter the library until I call you or until dawn, whichever comes first."

"I understand," Kenneth confirmed. "This could be *very* dangerous."

Dryer replied, "I understand that. I don't think *anyone* knows the possible danger of this more than I. Your concern is appreciated."

"You've always been very good to me, sir," Kenneth spoke through the lump forming in his throat, "and I consider you a friend."

"You're talking as though we'll never see each other again!"

"Neither of us knows what might happen."

“Must we assume the worst?” Dryer asked.

There was a long, uneasy pause. “Now, sir?” Kenneth asked.

“Yes,” his employer answered from behind him. “Now.”

Kenneth turned off the ignition. The lack of air conditioning immediately became apparent. Both men began to sweat, partly from the heat of the day and the rest from fear. The chauffeur lumbered out of the driver’s-side door and swung it closed behind him. Then, with some fanfare, he opened the passenger door to allow his employer to exit.

Dryer instantly felt many eyes upon him. “We certainly are attracting a lot of attention, aren’t we?” he observed.

Kenneth chuckled under his breath and offered, “I suppose it’s not every day that you see a limousine parked outside of a soup kitchen.”

Like a coach about to deliver a pep talk, Dryer approached the men waiting in line. Kenneth followed behind him, ready to pounce at the merest threat.

“Is there anyone here who is forty-three years old?” Dryer called out. The men in the queue looked at him oddly. “Forty-three?” Dryer continued. “I have a business proposition for anyone who is *forty-three* years old.”

As the men began to mumble among themselves, one stepped forward. He was shorter than Dryer and was sporting several days’ growth of beard. His clothes were dirty and ill fitting.

“What are you doing here, mister?” he asked.

Dryer felt Kenneth stir behind him. “Not to worry,” he said. He faced his new acquaintance. “As I mentioned,” he continued, “I have a business proposition.”

“What kind of proposition?”

“A proposition where the other person needs to be forty-three years old.”

“I’m forty-three,” the man replied. “What’s it to ya?”

Dryer smiled an ear-to-ear smile. “So *good* to meet you!” he said. “Allow me to introduce myself: William P. Dryer.” He thought briefly of holding out his hand for the man to shake, but then reconsidered it.

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A short bio: Mike has had over 150 audio plays produced in the U.S. and overseas. He’s won a Columbine Award and a dozen Moondance International Film Festival awards in their TV pilot, audio play, short screenplay, and short story categories.

His prose work has appeared in several magazines and anthologies. In 2015, his script “The Candy Man” was produced as a short film under the title DARK CHOCOLATE. In 2013, he won the inaugural Marion Thauer Brown Audio Drama Scriptwriting Competition. Mike keeps a blog at audioauthor.blogspot.com.