

Conversation Over Lunch

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Teresa: So, Sam, why weren't you at the concert last night? Couldn't get away from work or something?

Sam: Oh, I got away all right. Waters, my peon, was covering the rest of the afternoon and I was on my way up there when I got a call from Bond.

Teresa: Barmy Bond? What'd he want?

Sam: Well, a few years ago my store was going under and I thought I was out of a job. Bond mentioned that he was a junior manager in a chain of sweets sellers and thought if I went in with them I could get the capital to float along. I did, and he was right, but they have the loopest requirements. Anyway, he called me as I was driving up there and told me that there was a secret inspection from the regional overseer and I ought to get the store looking less like a dog house, for he was pretty sure this snoop was going to drop by my place before the evening was up.

Teresa: Yes? And you didn't just tell Ocean or whatever his name is to do it?

Sam: Waters? Not on your life! Can't trust that man to sweep the floor without oversight. No, but I'll tell you what I did do; I called up my brother to cover the first bit until I could get back into town.

Teresa: I didn't know you had a brother.

Sam: No, but you know him alright. He's my identical twin and sometimes we would trade roles for a day. Remember that big rafting trip last spring year?

Teresa: Yes...

Sam: Well, I don't. I didn't go. Leumas did instead.

Teresa: Leoomahs? What kind of a name is that?

Sam: Samuel backwards. My parents are... creative. Anyway, I told Mr. Leumas Myers to dress up as me and—

Teresa: Wait a minute! Limey Myers?

Sam: Yes, that's right.

Teresa: Isn't he that amazing actor who plays lead in "Face of Face?" That guy's amazing!

Sam: You've actually seen that bilge? You couldn't get me near it with a ten-foot pole!

Anyway, I sent my brother down there and high-tailed back to London to catch up before his thespianity could ruin my position with the pattercomp. But when I got here I realized I had made a blooper—I didn't know what he was wearing. It's easier to trade places when the rags are the same, so I gave him a ring.

Teresa: You have Limey's phone number?

Sam: Uh... I called him on the store line. Why, do you want his phone number?

Teresa: Well... I guess it would be a little wierd if I called him, wouldn't it?

Sam: Do you like him or something?

Teresa: Are you kidding! The guy's a hunk! I'm, like, crazy about him! Every girl within a hundred miles drools over him!

Sam: ... He and I are identical twins. You've never called me a 'hunk.'

Teresa: You don't act like a hunk. You stand wrong and drag your hand through your hair—and your garb! Ghastly.

Sam: What's wrong with my clothes? They're perfectly good in every way!

Teresa: Except they're all wrong. That cut of trousers hasn't been in in at least a decade, and your shirts are all wrong—color, cut, you name it, they stink.

Sam: Why did you never mention this before? We've been dating for how long and only now you think to tell me I'm ugly?

Teresa: Look, this isn't the place to talk about it. We also need to go over this two-missed-dates-in-a-row-and-didn't-think-to-call-me thing and, oh, a few other items. But why not tell me the rest of your excuse for not going to the concert and we can finish lunch in peace?

Sam: Look, if you want to talk about it, we can—

Teresa: So, you called your twin on the shop line to ask what he was wearing?

Sam: Look, you don't have a cell phone. How was I supposed to call you?

Teresa: I said I don't want to talk about it right now. What was your brother wearing?

Sam: *(sigh)*

Well, I didn't rightly find out right then. See, I picked up the phone and said "What's the outfit?" and he said, in a really weird voice, "Police? I think you have the wrong number," or words to that effect.

Teresa: Police?

Sam: Sure, it was his way of telling me that the overseer was there and I needed to dress up as a cop so we could change clothes when I got there.

Teresa: Wow. You got all that from just those few words?

Sam: We are twins, you know. We can communicate easier than other folk.

Anyway, I swung by his apartment and rummaged through his costume closet and found a complete officer outfit, which I got into and went down to the store. It was a little odd walking around as a police officer, but then I guess they get used to it since they do it every day.

Well, I walk in and the very first thing that happens, before I even have a chance to incline my head to my brother, is this guy in a suit, turns out to be the overseer, right? anyway, this guy grabs me and says "Ah, officer. Could I have a word with you?" and leads me back into my own office.

Well, I can deal with the oddities as well as the next man, so I said, in a gruff police-like voice, "What seems to be the trouble?" You'll never guess what he said next.

Teresa: What?

Sam: Try and guess.

Teresa: You just told me I couldn't.

Sam: Give it a try.

Teresa: I give up. Just tell me.

Sam: Come on, just one guess.

Teresa: Ok, he said that there was someone in the store with a bomb. Now tell me what he really said.

Sam: How did you know? That's exactly what he said.

Teresa: Yes yes, very funny. What did he really say?

Sam: He said there was someone with a bomb in the store; a customer he watched come in who had a bomb strapped underneath his clothing.

Teresa: You'd better not be making this up as we go along just to placate me about the concert.

Sam: I'm not! Honest, that is exactly what he told me; Mr. Rendleoffer himself, the regional overseer, told me there was a guy with a bomb in my store.

Teresa: And what did he expect you do do about it?

Sam: He didn't ask me to do anything. As soon as he told me that he suggested we leave the office.

Teresa: No.

Sam: Yes indeed. I was tickled, to tell the truth, because the less time I had to spend being a cop, the better.

Anyway, we leave the office and what do I see but a real policeman walk into the shop! I really didn't want to be seen by him; he'd blow my cover for sure, so I dodged behind some of the taller displays and waited.

Teresa: For what?

Sam: Um... well, for the other cop to leave, of course. But I didn't end up waiting that long because shortly thereafter Waters, my employee, asked my brother into the back room. Seeing this as a wonderful opportunity, I nipped in after them.

When Waters saw me he said "Oh! Sorry, I was just about to tell the manager about the bomb." How he found out I have no idea, but I said, and mark my fiendish cleverness here, I said to him "Waters," (only I didn't call him Waters because I wasn't supposed to know him), "Mister," I said, "I'll tell the manager. You go let the other policeman I just saw walk in know."

Teresa: Are you kidding? How out-of-character could you get?

Sam: Hey, it worked, didn't it? Besides, I was just about done anyway.

Teresa: So you blow your cover and then give Leumas the role instead?

Sam: He's an actor. He lives for that kind of thing. I mean, immediately we had changed and walked out of the office Who should walk into it, brushing past us, but the other copper and the overseer! Well, the brother was so sanguine as to brush past the officer with nary a bob of the head.

Teresa: Well, of course. I mean, he *is* Limey Myers.

Sam: Look, do you want to talk about him or me?

Teresa: What do you mean? I'm just listening to the story.

Sam: Alright, alright, whatever.

So, anyway, I watch my brother leave the store and then immediately return to the office; I figure, whatever the overseer and the policeman are talking about, it's better for me to be there. Not everyday a regional overseer borrows my office to brief an officer of the law.

As I'm about to open the door, though, I hear through it "you get the drill?" Now, my mind had been spinning at top gear ever since I got the phone call from Bond, and

even more so since I heard about the bomb. It sounded really far-fetched to me. Now I hear it with my own ears: it's just a drill. There is no bomb. But it *is* a drill, and I'm not supposed to know it isn't, so as I walk in I say "Officer, I assume this gentleman has told you there is a customer with a bomb in the store?"

Well, I guess I was wrong. Both of them acted quite shocked, and the overseer more than a little embarrassed. However, before they can recover there is a knock at the door of the office.

Well, now I was having fun with this so I said "It's him!" in a tense but restrained voice and motioned the officer to open the door. I must say, the policeman seemed to take this big; he was positively petrified as he opened the door to reveal... guess who.

Teresa: I don't know. What's-his-name, the employee?

Sam: Well, yes, actually, it was Waters. How did you know?

Teresa: He's the only person you've told me is in the shop that isn't in the office.

Sam: Oh. Well, it was Waters indeed, and as soon as the door was open he sort of jerked himself into our midst and said, in a breathless voice, "The terrorist tried to make a phone call, but I cut the line." This was addressed to the cop, who looked baffled and turned to the overseer for help. The overseer stated "This doesn't seem like a two-man job. Why don't you go get reinforcements?"

Teresa: 'Two man'?

Sam: Of course. The overseer didn't know that the Myers-officer was no longer in the house. Anyway, the policeman shot out of that office like a bullet.

There was another little pause and then the overseer suggested we go out and look for the customer.

Teresa: He suggested what?

Sam: That we go look for the customer. At least, that's what I think he said. Anyway, we did need someone out there to help any customers who might want to make a purchase, so out we went. And the store was completely empty. The overseer, though, said "I think I see him!" and left the store in haste to keep an eye on him.

Teresa: Wait a minute. Do you mean that this overseer character actually believed there was a customer with a bomb?

Sam: I don't think so. I think he realized that he had sent one officer for some of his brothers in arms, but had nothing for them to do, and got scared. Anyway, he was gone and I was glad of that, so I began splicing the phone line (which Waters really had cut).

I'm busy with this task when in walk four policeman. The policeman was fast on his feet, I guess, though he was not in this group at all. Anyway, I ask if I can help them and one says

"Is Mr. Rendleoffer here?"

"No," I replied, "he just left."

Teresa: Rendleoffer was the overseer, right?

Sam: Right you are.

Anyway, the next statement really caught me by surprise. The officer stated "We have reason to believe there have been impersonators here. Are you Mr. Myers?"

I mean, Ghah! They were after me for impersonating an officer of the law! The officer must have recognized my brother was a fake and only waited a chance to apprehend him.

Still, I stayed outwardly calm. "Yes, I'm the store manager, Mr. Myers."

"Is there another policeman here?"

You see, I was right. They were after the impersonator. "Not right now, sir, but there was one a moment ago."

Now mark this: "Do you know where either of them went?" I mean, either? I knew what they meant, of course; they knew that two policeman had been here and wanted to track down the phony.

Still, I played it safe and begged clarity.

"Do you know where Mr. Rendleoffer or the policeman went?"

Ah, so they were looking for Rendleoffer about the bomb; maybe they weren't after my brother after all. Still, just to be safe, I said I thought they had gone the opposite direction to where my brother had gone. They all left, and I was just going to attend to the customer who had walked in behind them when he left too. I can only guess he was scared off by all the policemen.

Teresa: Doesn't sound like the overseer was such an effective guy.

Sam: You said it.

So, how was the concert?

Teresa: Well... Look at the time! I've got to get back to work. Bye!