

THE OTHER, THE SAME  
by Camila Segura, for Radio Ambulante

All of us have someone out there who has our exact same name –

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Argentinean): My name is Eduardo Bechara.**

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Colombian): My name is Eduardo Bechara.**

But in this case, the Eduardos share much more than first and last name. They are united by a series of coincidences that seem almost impossible.

Camila Segura, a producer with Radio Ambulante, tells us the story.

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This story is about a pair of Eduardos Bechara – one Colombian and the other Argentinean. However, the story begins not with them, but with a woman – the Argentinean's sister.

**ASTRID BECHARA: My name is Astrid Bechara. I am 47 years old, I was born in Dean Funes, in the Córdoba province of Argentina.**

One day, Astrid got online and Googled her brother. He was known mostly for his music, even though he had always dreamt of becoming a writer.

**ASTRID BECHARA: and I found a blog belonging to a novelist named Eduardo Bechara, with a photo of my brother on it. I thought, "Wow, how organized of him, he's created a blog." I started reading about him, and it was actually written by a Colombian writer, from Bogotá, with the same name.**

Two writers with the same name – an interesting coincidence, yes, but what was really strange was that they had various physical traits

in common.

**ASTRID BECHARA:** The same mole on the left cheek, the attached earlobes, neither have a free earlobe, well, details like that, and above all the style of their beards.

Astrid told her brother, of course. But at the time, he didn't give it much importance. Here's how Eduardo tells it, Astrid's brother:

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Argentinean):** I'm used to my family exaggerating a lot, we really go over the top. It's one of our main characteristics.

**ASTRID BECHARA:** And so four or five months passed before I decided I'd write Eduardo myself.

**ASTRID BECHARA [reading]:**

**May 8, 2008**

**Dear Eduardo,**

**My name is Astrid Bechara, I am Argentinean, and it's probable that we're connected somewhere in our family tree. The reason I'm writing is that I have a 32-year-old brother named Eduardo Bechara, like you...**

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Colombian) [reading]:** Eduardo Bechara, like you. It's incredible how similar you look, and also the similar lives you've each had. He is also a writer and a musician...

This is the Eduardo from Colombia. When he received this email he was in Philadelphia studying creative writing.

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Colombian):** I would say that to me it seemed...curious. So I wrote her back with a simple message saying, "Tell him to write to me."

After a short while and a lot of insisting, Astrid was able to convince

her brother to contact the other Eduardo.

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Colombian) [reading]:**

**May 30, 2008**

**Eduardo,**

**I definitely feel privileged. That is to say, not everyone has the opportunity to begin an email correspondence with his alter ego. I hope it will relieve you to know that it hasn't bothered me, to know that as I'm going on carelessly about my life down here in Argentina, that you're using the exquisite phonetics that my name produces, to find love, money, etc...**

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Argentinean) [reading]: Yes, unfair but true: it's much easier to be successful when calling yourself "Eduardo Bechara." It might sound crazy, but I have come to believe that everyone should be named as such, including women...**

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Colombian) [reading]: ...If you think so too, let's join forces and conquer the universe, but only if you agree. I await your response, or mine. Whatever.**

**Best,**

**Eduardo Bechara**

**P.S. Sometimes, it feels like the alter ego is me.**

After this first email came many more, and then long telephone conversations. They became friends. Until one day, they decided to see each other face to face. It was June 2009.

The Argentinean was living in Brazil and the Colombian took four planes to go meet him.

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Colombian):** So when we arrived at Itacaré, I was parked in front of the inn, Eduardo was there at the table. Then he stood in front of me and I said to him, "This is crazy, but here I am!"

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Argentinean):** and I said to him, "I can't believe it, it's great that you've come!"

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Colombian):** ...And I told him, "Well, as it happens I always do what I say I'm going to do," and he told me, "Hey, in Argentina, just that would make you a celebrity!"

Now, face to face, they realized their incredible likeness.

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Colombian):** So then we sat at the table and I began to think, "Well, I guess this is how people see me, this is what I look like to other people..."

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Argentinean):** Yes, I thought he looked like me. He had this crazy look just like me, when I get angry. Not really crazy, but more like an evil look, that's what I mean.

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Colombian):** I saw him use mannerisms and gestures just like my uncle Omar. So I felt very close to him, as if he shared my Syrian-Lebanese heritage.

They even both had brothers named Daniel. But perhaps the strangest moment was when they realized that they were already connected, from long before they met each other.

It was through a French woman named Valerie. The Argentinean Eduardo had met her in a taxi, years before, when he lived in Cairo with his first wife. In Cairo, people commonly share taxis, but this was not just any encounter.

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Argentinean):** It was like love at first

**sight, because she was such a beautiful woman and it was as if she defied the environment of prohibition that existed in this very religious country we were in. So we agreed that something had happened between the two of us in those 20 minutes in transit, and we exchanged emails.**

After meeting in the taxi, a correspondence began between Valerie and the Argentinean Eduardo Bechara. They wrote emails to each other, many emails.

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Argentinean): Until one day she sent me an email with the title, "The Bullfighter's Girlfriend," and it practically contained an essay on love and the craziness that comes with the loss of love, and she told me that she was also a writer. So when I saw "the bullfighter's girlfriend" I didn't understand completely what it was about, but I also imagined that this was just part of flirting and trying to impress one another, when they say the craziest things just to bare their souls to one another. So I responded, yes, that I would be her bullfighter, that I would fill her with epic stories of bullfighting, of love and this and that, but in reality I had no idea what I was talking about, just that I knew I wanted to be with her!**

This correspondence – only correspondence, because they never saw one another again in person – cost the Argentinean Eduardo his marriage. Years later, when he was in Itacaré, he looked the Colombian up online and he realized that the message Valerie had sent him about the bullfighter's girlfriend was referencing the first novel by the other Eduardo, the Colombian.

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Colombian): "The Bullfighter's Girlfriend" was the name of my first novel. So he told me, "Look, our story is connected from before..."**

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Argentinean): When this dawned on me, as we say in Argentina, the story began to take on a new dimension.**

The Colombian Eduardo stayed in Itacaré for two weeks, and that

was when they really began to share their interest in literature. They exchanged texts, and they even co-wrote a novel. In 2011, an Argentinean publishing company published both of their novels. They planned a tour, each one with his book, first through Argentina and then in May of 2011 through Colombia. That was when the Argentinean Eduardo finally met Alvaro, the Colombian Eduardo's father. This would affect him deeply. His sister, Astrid, explains why.

**ASTRID BECHARA: Yes, my father died 20 years ago when my brother was 14 or 15 years old. He was angry throughout his adolescence, which he spent in a military school, far from his family, in a very difficult situation.**

One weekend, Eduardo came home from his military boarding school and he had a big fight with his dad. He furiously stormed out of his house. Then, when he returned...

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Argentinean): Something weird was going on because there was an ambulance in front of my house. So I opened the door, and, when I opened it, I looked, and well, I saw my father dead. That's what happened. No one deserves having their father die on them before you can make your peace with him.**

**ASTRID BECHARA: But in his heart, my brother always held this guilt, why did I fight with my dad? Why wasn't I more calm? Why couldn't I have had the chance to say goodbye?**

Maybe that's why the Argentinean Eduardo got so close to Alvaro. It was mutual and completely natural. They talked a lot by phone. For the Argentinean Eduardo, it was like a chance to get closer to his own father. And for Alvaro, it was like having another son. For Alvaro, the destinies of both Eduardos were connected...

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Colombian): ...connected inextricably. My dad would get really emotional about it, and his eyes would get bright when he'd sit to tell our story to his friends. He would just get really into the story! And he really wanted to meet Eduardo, except...It's just amazing**

**how life...**

Days before Eduardo was to arrive in Colombia, Alvaro got gravely ill and he was hospitalized. From there, Alvaro told his son:

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Colombian):** "Look, I need you to send Eduardo an email to tell him I can't wait for him, and to call me, because I want to talk to him."

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Argentinean):** He said, "I won't" – He said, "Edu, I won't be able to wait for you, but I send you all of my love, all the love a father can give, through Eduardo and my family."

**ASTRID BECHARA:** "I want to say goodbye to you. I want you to know that you are my son and I'm really proud of you. Well, that I feel like you're my son," obviously. "Stay close to Eduardo, love each other," you know, a message kind of like the goodbye he didn't get to share with our father.

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Argentinean):** It was a very dramatic moment because honestly all of the memories of losing of my father rushed back, something that was very traumatic.

**ASTRID BECHARA:** And then my brother, after saying goodbye, he called me sobbing, and I asked him, "What's wrong?" and he couldn't talk, he couldn't talk from the emotion, so he was very affected, very emotional.

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Colombian):** Yes, it was very dramatic, and the next day he died.

**ASTRID BECHARA:** And that unified them even more.

Despite all of this, the tour around Argentina and Colombia was very successful.

**NEWS ANCHORWOMAN #1:** Who hasn't fantasized about having a double somewhere in the world?

**NEWS ANCHORWOMAN #2: They don't only share their love for literature, they also have something else in common – their physical appearance and their name: Eduardo Bechara...**

**NEWS ANCHORWOMAN #3: The story of two writers, who not only share the same name, they look very much alike.**

In April of this year, they went on tour again, which they called "The Other, The Same," like the great poem by Jorge Luis Borges, and the media gave them another name.

**NEWS ANCHORMAN #1: Now we are going to get inside the unbelievable, unusual and disturbing story of the two cosmic brothers...**

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Argentinean): We sounded more like acrobats than like writers. The problem is that the press was trying to box us into the title we chose, and that resulted harmful in the long term because by the end, no one remembers the writers, they just think of the "cosmic brothers," like from a circus.**

But eventually, it was going to come up. At some point, someone was going to ask whether there really was a genetic connection between them. In one of these interviews, on a program from Argentina called "Chiche en vivo," they proposed the Eduardos take a DNA test to see if the "cosmic brothers" were in fact, biological brothers.

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Argentinean): "Tomorrow," he said, "Look for the Dr. Penachino because tomorrow the guys are going to take a DNA test," and it was too late because we had already said yes.**

**NARRATOR OF "CHICHE EN VIVO": Accompanied by the cameras from 70-20-13, Eduardo Bechara Baracat and Eduardo Bechara Navratilova, are minutes from seeing their DNA tests to see if their families are indeed connected...**

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Colombian):** They asked us to go up to the room, and they arrived saying, that we were "the brothers, here are the brothers!" and I said, "Look, what brothers are you talking about? No." And they said, "OK, cut, cut." He left with the cameraman, and he returned with microphone in hand, saying again, "The brothers, here they are!"

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Argentinean):** "The brothers! The brothers who want to know if they are brothers!"

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Colombian):** And so Eduardo looks at him and says, "No! No, no, no! No! We are NOT brothers! How do you want us to explain this?"

Let's explain it this way – for many people, the bonds we choose between us and other people are the strongest. Except in this case, this bond is between two men who have the same name, the same face, the same interests, even what one could consider the same girlfriend. And without being biological brothers, you could even say they have the same father.

**EDUARDO BECHARA (Argentinean):** So this metaphor, that we are but we aren't, helped us realize that you don't need a genetic coincidence to consider someone else your brother. You get to decide who can be your brother.

And there is no DNA test that can explain that.

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*The most recent book by the Colombian Eduardo is "Mendigo por un día," and the latest by the Argentinean Eduardo is "Patria del viento." According to the DNA test, they are not biologically related.*