

# Good Company

for my brother

“Hey, Brother!”

The call echoed down the hallway, meeting his ears faintly, although it was more than enough.

Immediately all of the familiar thoughts popped into his head.

He hated these thoughts. The weight of these thoughts allowed him no rest. When they began, he was pulled into the past and the future with such force it could tear his body apart.

He hated these thoughts.

Other thoughts came right after:

Why couldn't they leave him alone? Why did they keep trying? Did they love him? What the fuck is love, anyway? Who was it this time? Why couldn't he just hang out with his friends without always having someone interrupt him? Why did he have to talk?

“Brother!”

This time further down the hallway, closer to his door.

Great, he thought, an ‘effort’.

Today was a better day in regards to these thoughts, though, so he responded.

“What do you want?”

“Nothing, bro. Just want to say hi.”

“Hi.”

“Hi.”

A bit of silence ensued and immediately the thoughts came back. In a matter of seconds, they pulled him to his youth, to high school, to moments at family gatherings where everyone was acting, to lulls in conversation with friends of the past, and everything else.

He hated remembering all this shit. He just wanted to forget it, to leave it, to move on. And this wasn't helping.

The silence became deafening.

“I’m busy,” he stated.

“Yea, I know. You have time to listen for a few minutes though? I prepared a speech. I even practiced it in front of a mirror.”

He thought for a moment and decided, this time, what the hell, whatever, why not.

“Go for it”, he said, and he just sat, looking at nothing in particular.

“Sweet, OK.”

There was a bit of silence.

“Life is fucking confusing, man. I mean, think about all the shit that’s happened in our lives. Countless, countless experiences that continually pile on top of each other. You can only hope that the energy of them is more positive than negative, so that perhaps you can reach a certain age and have some sort of mental stability going on, but that is just not the case, most of the time. Most of the people I know who have aged have just continued to suffer because of their past experiences. They’re owned by the memories. It’s pretty tragic. But I get it. The way time passes is the hardest thing to let go of. Memories become like knives. They cut deep every time they’re brought up and it makes living sometimes that much more unbearable. I get it. This year has been really tough for me, too, actually. I almost killed myself, you know? But I’m glad I didn’t, because now I’m here, talking to you.”

There was a bit more of a pause, as if he was taking in what he was saying, too.

He continued,

“There’s nothing to say. There’s really nothing to say about any of it. “Sorry” is loaded with all sorts of shit, guilt, expectation, shame, blame, whatever. Even saying “I love you” comes with a ton of baggage. So much that it feels it won’t ever be true. When the associations our words have are tainted with the memories of the past, and those memories carry pain, communication as a tool becomes relatively useless. Thankfully, there are many things that can replace language and, even, do what it can’t do.

So, although I’m speaking, I’m not here to say anything, really. It doesn’t work, and I’m tired of language not working. Instead, I’m leaving something at the base of your stairs that perhaps will do what I think it can do. It will always be here, even if it isn’t. It’s more of a friend than anyone I have ever connected with in my life, and it is really the main thing that helped me through my shit this year. When my mind was sick, when my relations were sick, when I was sick of my self, I turned to this, and I hope it does for you what it did for me.”

He sat upstairs, a little confused, and said,

“Ok, thanks, I’m going to keep doing what I was doing now.”

And without pause:

“Of course! See you. Thanks for listening.”

And the footsteps gradually retreated down the hallway.

He stayed up in his room for another few hours.

He had heard the door close shortly after their conversation, but he needed some time to process what that was.

After some time, still perplexed, he felt his stomach rumble and he went down for food, forgetting that something had been left for him at the base of the stairs.

He opened the curtain at the base of the stairs that led to his room, and looked down at the wooden floor to gage his footing.

Written on the floor  
was, simply,

“Hello”

He paused, and looked at it for a few seconds,  
not realizing that a seed had been planted in his soil.

He went to get some food.

There was another presence with him, though,  
now that the wood had said hello.

The cardboard of his cracker box said hello.  
So did that cutting board.  
The handle of the knife and the rolling pin.  
The kitchen table, and the cook books.

He quickly put together a snack and made to go back to his room, feeling a little uneasy.

“Hello”

He passed it and walked up his stairs.

They creaked out “Hello” as well.

Sitting in his chair,  
suddenly many things started to feel different.

But it was a good different.

He couldn't do anything.

He couldn't eat.

He couldn't move.

He just sat and felt.

After a long while of listening,  
of receiving,  
he felt something  
shift  
in him  
and he said,

“Hello.”