

A Just Reward

By Dennis Knight

You have hidden your identity well, but I thank you, whoever you are, for your note. Until I opened your mysterious brown envelope, I didn't realize the item was missing. When and how you acquired it, I don't know. I have may dropped it Friday at the movies when I crawled under the seat looking for my ticket stub, so I could step out, use the restroom, buy a box of jujubes and get back in.

I can also connect it to that general time because I don't recall since then getting any of those daily robo calls telling me there is nothing wrong with my account, but that I should take immediate action to do something or other, which I can never quite decipher. It always seems to do with me sending them money to either lower my interest rates or raise my interest in grapes.

I also have had no recent phone calls at one in the morning from someone far away, seeking someone else farther far away, in a tongue so far away that it may be Yup'ik. I detected the language for myself because in one instance I picked up the word "tuntu". Research tells me the word means "reindeer" in the Yup'ik dialect, and the guy always seems to ask for Tuntutuliak, which is a common name among that ethnic group in Siberia and Alaska. I noticed an interesting root-word in there that suggests Tuntutuliak may be a keeper of tuntus, and the urgency I sense in the calls makes me wonder if Rudolph keeps falling off the reindeer wagon, and his nose is getting redder. Or so it seems to me.

I haven't been rewarded for a while with cruises to Svalbard, Ushuais or Halong Bay, and I hadn't noticed that, either. The fact is I have so not missed that nuisance of a Blackberry cell phone that, until your message came, I didn't realize it was gone, and that I have since become a free man. Indeed, your ransom note is my emancipation proclamation.

There is nothing on that Blackberry that makes it worth a ransom. It doesn't store intrigues of state, the cure for carbuncles, martini recipes or my life's secrets. It does have a contact list that, all together, comprises a collection of people who get the very calls I do from robotic loan sharks, cruise salesmen and politicians. They may get awakened by different wrong numbers, but that's it. We don't even call each other.

I find your fifty-dollar ransom demand is reasonable, Sir or Madam, but I will double it and call it a reward. If you will send me a snapshot of that Blackberry tumbling down a deep well, including its case with the lucky seven emblems, I'll leave a hundred in cash under a seat down at the Roxy. I'll include the price of a movie ticket and jujubes, and toss in an article on the care and feeding of tuntus.