

I've Got a Secret

by Kyle Hemmings

There's a man sitting in my room holding a jar of my ashes. That's what he claims. He's been sitting in that same corner for 30 years. He says he wants me to confess my secret then he will leave. When I asked him what secret, he laughed and said if I told you it would no longer be a secret.

Over the years we've become good friends. I would never call the police. I am just too curious for my own good.

Once I asked him if my ashes, assuming they're mine were worth anything. He said he could get thousands, even more.

"Your ashes look like anyone else's, " he said, "they don't have fingerprints. I .could easily convince someone that this will be his or her remains. These days, everyone wants to get intimate with their ashes."

"Would you split the profits?" I asked him.

He laughed like a child. I could tell he was in pain. He allows me to go out and grocery shop. I feed him and bring him all kinds of medicine. He's been getting sick lately, coughing and coming down with the chills.

Yet, he won't leave until I tell him the secret.

And I've been getting so thin I can hardly see myself anymore.

Perhaps because I'm getting tired of this game, perhaps because I feel sorry for the both of us, I make up a secret that might be true. I tell him that I never knew my real mother and father.

He nods his head and coughs.

"Good. Now, I can tell you one," he says.

"I never knew mine."

I think the both of us are crazy. I wonder if he Fathered everyone.

I offer to call him a cab or maybe an ambulance because he is so feeble, but he is already out the door.

I hear the jar smash against pavement.

And perhaps because of the sound startling me or because my legs are so thin, I fall to the floor.

