

Wrong Number

by Erin Zulkoski

Mike stands with his back to mine and he's sweating profusely. I can feel the heat radiating off him. He is nervously tapping his foot in rapid bursts and anxiously looking to the left, then right, then to the left again. His arms are folded across his chest in an effort to appear "casual," but he isn't pulling it off.

"Hurry up, man!" he says through clenched teeth. "We're gonna get caught!"

Like this thought hasn't crossed my mind, but I continue working at the same pace, which was diligent and precise. There is no room for error here. A mistake now would cost us the entire operation, and I'm not about to let that happen. We waited far too long, and worked far too hard on this project to see it dissipate in smoke before our eyes.

I breathe in slowly, and exhale a controlled stream through my nostrils.

"Mike. Relax. Everything is going to be fine," I say calmly. I'm not sure I believed this myself...

With shaking hands, I picked up the receiver to the telephone and punched in the numbers, careful not to misdial. I didn't want to get a wrong number.

The phone rang on the other end. Once. Twice. Three times. On the fourth ring, it was answered. My breath caught in my throat as a female voice said, "Hello?"

Just like you rehearsed, I said to myself, just like you practiced...

“Yes, hello. Do you have Prince Albert in a can?”

