

## Rooftop Conversation

*Hi there. How you doing up here?*

*Stay back! Don't come any closer. Stay baaack!*

*Fine. That's fine. Everything's OK. I'm staying right here. I'm just here to talk with you.*

*Nooo. No you're not. You're going to try to stop me. I'll jump. I will.*

*Yes, I know. I'm staying where I am. Let's just have a conversation. Would that be OK with you?*

*No. You're one of them. You'll try to trick me.*

*Just going to talk. I won't touch you. I promise.*

*You won't move?*

*I'll be right here. Not a step closer.*

Not a step? Just talk?

*That's right. Just maybe tell me what's going on.*

Well, just a little. But you can't move. You can't touch me!

Can't touch.

*That's right. What's going on?*

I've done bad. Bad things. It's not good if I'm still here anymore.

*C'mon now. You seem like a nice guy. That's a pretty harsh reaction.*

No. No it's not. You have no idea how bad it is.

*Really?*

Really. I've hurt people. And..

*You have? You seem so gentle.*

Gentle? Gentle yes. Part of me anyway. But there's another part...

*So you're saying you're like most people. Sometimes you get...tempted...to do something you regret later?*

Well...yes. But not all yes. I'm not like most people. Different. Worse.

*What is it you think you did?*

Not think! Not think. I know!

*Ok. OK. What do you know you did?*

You won't hurt me if I tell you?

*Hurt you? No. I want to help you.*

Help me? Why would you want to help me?

*Well, that's what I do. I help people.*

What are you? A fireman or something?

*Ha. Not a fireman.*

Not a fireman. No. Couldn't be. You couldn't get here that fast.

*Not a fireman.*

Hmmm. A policeman! You're a cop! Stay over there! I'll jump! I told you I would.

*I'm right here. Not moving. Not a policeman either. I'm a sort of a counselor.*

A counselor? You mean like a, like a... psychiatrist?

*Well, yes. But some people don't like that word. They'd rather I say counselor.*

Well, not me doc. You can say psychiatrist. 'cause I definitely am feeling a little psycho.

*I can.*

You can. Plus, I studied psychology and stuff in school too.

*You did! I guess we have something in common then.*

I guess.

*You said something was bothering you.*

It is! It is.

*And?*

Well, like I said. I hurt somebody.

*Like forget their birthday or something?*

Don't make fun of me. It's worse than that. A lot worse.

*Really. What'd you do? Kill somebody?*

Yes, well no. Yes.

*Which one is it?*

It's yes, but...

*But?*

Well, it's more like I helped somebody.

*You didn't do the killing yourself?*

I, I did. I mean I kind of did. But he did most of it, and I helped. And that's just as bad.

*I'm a little confused.*

Well, it was me, but it wasn't me, and I could have stopped it, and I tried, but I didn't.

*Oh.*

I don't know how to explain. It was a part of me. I did the killing. But it wasn't me. You see?

*Why don't you explain it to me? Who did you kill?*

It's more than one.

*Really? How many?*

I'm, ...I'm not sure.

*That's interesting.*

Yeah. Interesting.

*Why don't you start by telling me about the first one you remember.*

The first one?

*Yes. Where was it?*

At school.

*GlenMorrow?*

Yeah. Do you know it?

*Some. I was there for a while before I had to leave.*

No kidding.

*Frisbee on the quad. Overcooked hash browns from the café. Fifty cent beers at the Goat's Head Pub.*

You do know it.

*I do. But it's not about me. You were about to tell me about the first one.*

Oh yeah.

*Hard?*

It is, but I can do it. He was another student at school. A friend, at least at the beginning.

*You killed your friend?*

Like I said, it wasn't really me.

*I'm having a hard time understanding. Maybe you can explain a little better.*

Are you making fun of me again?



*I'm asking for an explanation. Most killers start with their enemies, not their friends.*

You're kind of sarcastic you know.

*I know. But I honestly would like to hear the story.*

You should be a little nicer then.

*OK. Please?*

OK. Where was I?

*It started at school.*

Yes. At school.

*Who was he?*

Another psych student. Charles D'Agostino. Dagger. We used to study with him.

*We?*

Me and the guy that killed him. My roommate.

*Your roommate? Sounds like you were close.*

You could say that. He taught me a lot.

*Dagger?*

No, my roommate.

*Oh. OK. Go on.*

He helped me study. We studied together all the time. For quizzes, exams, finals. We even did some lab work together.

*And I take it something went wrong?*

It went right. But too much.

*Now I'm getting confused again.*

We, like, worked really well together on stuff. If I forgot something from class, he'd remember it. If I couldn't figure out a lab procedure, he would. Same the other way 'round.

*Sounds like you two complemented each other.*

Sure, I gave him compliments all the time. He was really smart.

Say, what are you laughing at?

*Just grammar. Different kind of complement. I mean that you helped each other out.*

Oh. Yeah. Like that. I stunk at English, but he was good at it.

I mean, how important is it to be able to know some word nobody ever uses?

*Well, it can be very important. Helps you decide what somebody means.*

He used to say that too. But you know what? He knew books inside out. Freud and Pavlov and Skinner and Piaget. But he was lousy at reading people. Especially for somebody who wanted to be a psychologist.

*Lousy?*

Yeah. I mean, he could do the techniques, like repeat back what somebody says, or use one or two words to keep them talking.

*Sounds pretty good.*

That part was. But you should have seen him try to play Texas Hold 'Em.

*Try to play. Pretty bad, huh?*

Bad? Horrible is more like it.

*Can't have been that bad.*

Are you kidding? It took two seconds to read him, and he couldn't tell a bluff from a knock-knock joke.

*Not at all?*

Nah. It frustrated me so much I wouldn't play with him.

*Sounds like you're angrier with him than Charles.*

I am. And I wasn't angry with Charles.

*The guy you killed?*

You're getting sarcastic again.

*A little.*

A lot.

*OK. I'll try to watch it. What happened with Charles?*

Well, Dagger hosted this game every Friday night.

*Hold 'Em?*

Yeah. And my roomie wasn't supposed to be there.

*Because you didn't want to be there at the same time?*

Right, but he showed up.

*And?*

Charles kicked his butt. Nothing big at first, just lots of small hands. But every time he won, he'd make fun, in a Yoda voice?

*What?*

You know, Yoda. "Your face like a book I am reading. What is in your head I am seeing. Low cards you have. Scared of me you are."

*And that sent your roommate over the edge?*

Got under his skin all night, a little bit at a time. Plus, every time Dagger talked, the other guys laughed like it was the best joke they ever heard.

*Must have really bothered your roommate.*

He got redder and redder. Madder and madder. Couldn't hide anything after that. And the madder he got, the more he lost, and the more they laughed.

*Ouch.*

Finally, Dags took him for one last massive pot.

*Let me guess. Yoda got out of control.*

For everything he had he took him.

*You're kind of sarcastic too.*

A little.

*A lot.*

Yeah. But not like Charles.

*I'll bite. What did he say?*

Loser you are. Broke loser with no money. Use the door, Luke.

*Your roommate's name was Luke?*

No. That was just Charles' way of picking on him.

*He had it in for your roommate?*

No. He just talked that way with everybody.

*Hmmm. How'd your roommate react?*

Stood there for a second staring. Never said a word. Got up and walked out, and I went with him.

*Doesn't sound very threatening.*

It wasn't right there and then. But when we got back to the room he started asking me questions.

*Like what?*

Like how to talk with people without giving everything away. Said he wanted to be able to talk with Charles without him knowing he was bluffing.

*And you helped?*

Like I said, we helped each other all the time.

*So how'd you help him?*



Taught him not to answer any questions. Just give one word responses or say "Hmmm" or ask the other person questions or make a short statement. That way the other guy never knew what he was thinking.

*And he used that?*

Yeah. When he pulled the gun on Charles?

*A gun? Sounds serious.*

I showed up one Friday night for a game, and he was there again.

*With Charles?*

Charles and all the other guys too. At least at the beginning.

*The others left?*

They did. My roommate used what I taught him and held in there pretty good. The others all left one at a time and in the end it was just me, my roomie, and Dagger.

*And your roommate pulled the gun and shot Charles?*

Well, not just like that. He made a bet.

*A bet?*

Told Charles he had a special game for him. Said "Let's see if I'm any better at bluffing."

*High stakes?*

The highest. They played for one hand. If Dagger won, then my roomie said he'd kill himself. If Dagger lost, then he'd shoot Dagger.

*Why didn't Charles back out?*

Because if he did then he'd have gotten shot anyway.

*Oh. I guess Charles lost.*

No. He won!

*He won?*

Then my roommate said "Just bluffing Charles" and shot him anyway.

*Oh.*

I told him he had to turn himself in. We argued for hours.

*And did he?*

No. He disappeared.

*Did you ever find him again?*

Well I found out what he did. Went back and killed every other guy that was at the original game laughing at him.

*That's why you said more than one.*

Yeah. And a few other people have been killed around town and I think it might be him too.

*So that's why you don't know how many.*

Yeah.

*And he's still at large?*

Well, I finally figured out a way to find him.

*You did?*

I told you we used to help each other.

*You did.*

So how do you think I used that to find him?

*I don't know.*

Don't you?

*Well, you talked about working together on a lot of things, and complementing each other.*

Yep. When I needed help, he'd come.

*So you asked him for help. What kind of help could have gotten him out of hiding?*

Would have to be pretty big.

*Would have to be. Couldn't be help with homework, or a lob.*

Bigger.

*Major test? No not big enough. Maybe you getting in trouble with police yourself?*

Nope. Bigger.

*Well, the only thing bigger than that would be life and death. Somebody close to you must have been dying.*

Close.

*Close? What's close to someone near you dying?*

Don't you see it?

*Well, let's think through it. You don't have any brothers or sisters, or mom or dad left. Who's closer to you than that?*

You know a lot about me.

*I do. I guess roommates know each other well.*

We do.

*And the closest person to you other than a relative is me?*

Well, yes. And no.

*Yes, and no?*

It's me.

*You're about to die?*

I am. I'm about to jump. And when I do, I'm taking you with me.

*How can you do that? I'm way over here.*

Are you?

*I thought I was. How could I not be? Not unless you and I are..*

The same person?

*The same person.*

Yup. You killed all those people, and I'm not going to let you do it any more.

*No, wait! You can't jump.*

But I can. And here I go!

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**Hey. How you doing down there?**

Good doc, the couch is comfortable.

**That's a long story you told.**

It is. Do you think he's really gone for good?

**I do. When you jumped, he got scared and left you. That part of your psyche is gone. You're not a split personality any more.**

So he won't kill again?

No. I think you're OK.

Really?

Yes. That was a nasty fall. You were six months in recovery from all those broken bones. If he was going to come out, he would have done it under stress. And there's not much more stress than recovering from a near-death set of injuries.

I guess you're right. It was lucky the tree was there to break the fall.

You didn't know? You really were willing to kill yourself?

I had to be. I taught him to read a bluff.