

Mother, Where In The World Are You?

Jack is blind. That makes him different. He's in his late twenties and lives in a small apartment with his Mother. The other thing that makes Jack different is his pet named Fred. Fred is one of the larger snakes alive on the planet. He is a Reticulated Python and he is from Indonesia. Fred is over a hundred years old and he weighs six hundred pounds. He spends most of his time under Jack's bed which is good because he takes up a lot of room.

Fred was a family inheritance that started with Jack's grandfather. He served in the Philippines during the War. He acquired Fred there and shipped him home illegally. That was World War Two. Fred moves around very little and his diet consists of five whole fresh chickens a week. Jack's mother goes to a popular butcher shop a few blocks away in Brooklyn to get the chickens. She leaves them out for Fred usually when Jack is away at class.

Jack is taking classes in elocution training. It's an incredible procedure where blind people make a clicking noise with their tongue and learn how to detect objects when they hear the returning echo. It is like the sonar that dolphins use. The school for the blinds picks him up and delivers him home five times a week. Jack hasn't done as well with the program as he would have liked to.

The biggest reason is Jack's Mother. You have to have absolute quiet to practice elocution. Jack's Mother can't quit talking. His Father, when he was living, almost never spoke because there wasn't an opportunity. She's ninety-eight pounds of high energy talking. His substantially older brothers and sisters have normal sight and lives. Jack, his Mother, and Fred share the three bedroom Brooklyn apartment and a good life together.

However, Jack's Mother is slipping mentally Jack and his siblings believe. Jack has noticed her problems with remembering simple things. She has always repeated herself but because of her non-stop talking there no noticeable change. Jack is sure that his Mother has been forgetting to buy the fresh chickens weekly for Fred and feeding him. He's asked her about it and she dodges his questions. Jack's siblings are concerned about their Mother's safety with her memory issues. They are pleased that Jack is there, although of course, he can't keep "an eye on her" literally.

The first thing Jack noticed as he got home today was how quiet the apartment was. His Mother didn't talk to herself but if Jack wasn't there for her to talk to she was often on the phone talking to anyone and everyone. He let himself in and lay down on the sofa. One of the problems many blind people have is that their inability to sense daylight and dark causes a condition where their sleep rhythms are confused. The afternoon was warm and the sunlight hitting him as he lay on the sofa made Jack fall asleep.

Jack woke later and knew what time it was because of the several chiming clocks in the apartment. Also, the warmth of the sun was gone. He could always sense Fred's presence and he wasn't under the bed or the sofa like he usually was. Fred has been a little restless lately for a creature that actually moved so very little. Jack thought it was because of his Mother forgetting to buy the chickens and feed him. Fred was probably poking around for food or something.

Later Jack sensed Fred under the kitchen table which was an odd place to him to be. Jack was getting worried about his Mother so he called several of his siblings. They were going to contact her friends and see where she was. If they couldn't locate her they were going to come to the apartment later. Jack sat back down on the sofa and said out loud, "Mother, where in the world are you?" In the quiet of the apartment this evening, he could hear the echo of his voice off several walls and objects.

Meanwhile, Fred continued to lie under the kitchen table. He would have been satisfied to stay there without moving for days had not the screams of Jack's sister roused him later before the police came to get him. You see Fred isn't going to be hungry for a month or more and Jack's Mother is home. Her memory problem was dangerous.

PS The world's largest photographed snake (a Reticulated Python) was reputed to be one hundred forty years old, nine hundred eighty-three pounds and fifty-five feet long.

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