

Savannah

“Mom’s in the hospital. She started coughing last week, and it didn’t get better.” That’s what his sister told him during the call on Sunday evening, after he arrived and unpacked and found dinner—the first of several wonderful meals in this city of food. “Nothing to worry about,” she continued. “But I know that you call her every Sunday evening and you’d be wondering where she is.”

He was scheduled to work in Savannah through Thursday, and in this rare instance, he planned to stay over an extra night to enjoy the city rather than rushing home. But this call from his sister made him wonder if plans were going to change.

He, along with Ben and Rohan, started work on Monday morning. He checked e-mail at lunchtime: nothing. He did not want to call yet. If his sister said there was nothing to worry about, then he wanted to believe her.

The three of them were staying right in the middle of the city, and that evening they walked to a place on the harbor for great seafood. Then they walked around more, being good tourists as they stopped and gawked at the monuments of local heroes of the Revolutionary War and the War Between the States, those heroes looking down at them in nearby squares.

His phone rang that evening during the elevator ride back to his room. His sister said, “Doctor says she’s not recovering as he expected. ‘She’s at that age,’ the doctor said, when everything takes a bit longer.”

More medical talk about antibiotics and second level tests. Their call ended, and this time she left out the part about not to worry.

Tuesday work came as a relief. Until the text from his sister came late morning. "Let's talk this afternoon," was all it said.

The client brought in lunch for them and the whole office. He, Rohan, and Ben ate like kings. There was enough food to last them till the following week. "Save room for dessert."

He turned to Rohan as the ricotta pie passed in front of them. "Life is good," Rohan said. He smiled back at Rohan and nodded.

"Mom is sleeping most of the time," his sister told him as he stood in the smoking patio behind the office that afternoon. "Doctor thought she could go back to the apartment tomorrow, but now he wants to keep her until she's stable." *Stable*: there was a new issue. That meant that there was something not stable.

He had assigned Ben, the junior guy among the three of them, the job of concierge: picking out the dinner place, along with any extracurricular activities for each evening. "Just make sure it looks legit on our expense reports" was the only condition he imposed on Ben. Ben directed them to a Four Star restaurant on Tuesday that included local singer-songwriters: this city's Bluebird Café.

The phone buzzed in the middle of the third song. His sister said that the doctor—a different doctor—wanted to talk first thing the next morning.

"Do you know what he's going to say?"

“They did more tests this afternoon,” she said. “He’ll tell us the results.”

“And then?” He asked.

7 a.m. Wednesday morning. “Let me be honest with you” were the doctor’s first words on the phone call.

He didn’t remember many details after that. He stayed in town through Thursday after one more evening out with Rohan and Ben. This was Ben’s first business trip. He fit in well. Ben asked if once upon a time he used to have the job of concierge. “Never did it as well as you have,” he replied to Ben.

He also told the other two that he wasn’t returning home with them. *Some personal matters* was as much as he said. They didn’t care to pursue it further: they were guys. So he headed to see his sister and, for one last time, his mother.

Savannah: it’s a wonderful place. He has always thought about going back. There’s so much more to see and taste. But he can’t. It will always remind him of the first time.

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