

BRIEF ENCOUNTER

by

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Young woman(between 20 and 30) seated on a park bench. Casually dressed, only props required are a backpack and a cell phone. She is on the phone as the play begins.

Young Woman: Well, like he didn't call when he said he would, and I like told him, I said if I can't depend on you to call when you say you'll call, then, like I don't wanta--- What? No, this is a different guy. I like met him at Mulroy's on Thursday. He said "what would you think about Christmas in the Bahamas? Yeah, I know, it's been only a week but the Bahamas! So, like, should I get something for him? Even if we don't go to the Bahamas?

While the young woman has been talking, a man sits at the other end of the bench. He can be anywhere from 40 to 80 years old. Nicely dressed, not elegant, but respectable. He looks straight ahead, but appears to lean, just slightly, toward the young woman. She speeds up the conversation a bit.

Young woman: No, I can't listen to your stuff right now. I gotta go. No, not now! Like, call me tonight. *She starts to fold up the cell phone, and reaches for her backpack*

Cellenius: I hope I didn't frighten you. I just wanted to introduce myself.

Young woman: Excuse me! *(rudely)* I don't talk to strangers, and I really have to go!

Cellenius: But we're really not strangers. Or at least we shouldn't be. I have been assigned to you.

Young woman: What's the matter with you? There are cops all over this park, and I've got a whistle! *(She starts to reach in her back pack)* And what do you mean "I've been assigned to you?" Just what does that mean?

Cellenius: Please---just give me a second to get out my ID.*(He removes a chain from inside his shirt. An ID card is attached.)* Here you are...please have a look.

The woman takes the card...looks at it—compares the photo to the man in front of her.

Young Woman: Saint? Cellenius? Saint...Cellenius. Celestial Technology Division? You're trying to pass yourself off as a Saint? You're a nut case!

Cellenius: No, really, I am Saint Cellenius. I'm the patron Saint of cell phone users—for this area at least. I'm new to the post, and I've been assigned to look after you, along with a few others.

Young Woman: (*looks around*) This is really incredible! Why would anybody need a patron Saint to look after them?
(*with considerable sarcasm*) Can you get me a cheaper plan? Better quality phone? Wider range? What exactly can the patron Saint of cell phone users do for me?

Cellenius: Ah, no! I don't deal with the technical stuff. In fact I really don't know much about cell phones. There was some confusion about my status as a Saint, and I've been waiting about four hundred years for an assignment. I really wanted messengers. Or maybe diplomats, but this came along, and like they say, "somebody has to do it".

Young Woman: OK..lemme get this straight. You're the patron Saint of cell phones, but you don't know anything about them, and you can't get me a better plan? So, why am I listening to you?

Cellenius: Because I can offer you something even better than a new plan,...I can help you keep your balance.

Young Woman: Huh?

Cellenius: I am assigned to you to make sure that you don't lose your sense of proportion. I sometimes tell my phone users that their sense of the sacred is getting thin; but "sacred" scares some people off, so I usually say proportion or balance. Sometimes, if it feels right, even "holy".

Young Woman: Their sense of what?! My sense of the sacred?! The holy?!

Cellenius: Righto...the sense of the sacred. You young people take too much for granted. Have you ever finished up a telephone conversation with a sense of gratitude? Do you ever look at your phone and compliment it for doing a good job? You all spend so much time talking, babbling, really, that you have no time for reflection, for nurturing personal relationships, for asking the "why" questions about things that are really important.

You have no time for creating sacred places in your life--- special places that bring comfort and fulfillment to your too fast life. You need to "wonder" more, and talk less. You need to stop, just stop every so often. And this is the perfect time of the year to do it. This is the time of endings, beginnings, wonderment.

Young woman: This is heavy, I mean waay heavy. You mean I should like “stop and smell the roses?” “Get in touch with my “inner self?” That sort of stuff? You mean like meditation? Like yoga? You mean like I should go out caroling with a bunch of office workers and stop for hot cocoa?

I tried some of that stuff once, but I couldn’t get into it. I tried a couple of churches once and I couldn’t get into that either. Maybe I’m just not a “sacred” person.

Cellenius: Well, the sacred is sort of like some of those things, but much more profound and it’s much simpler. It’s more than meditation, and it’s more than churches. In fact, it’s more a matter of ... (*her phone rings*)

Young Woman: Excuse me. I really have to take this. Hello...oh, hi, it’s you...yeah you said you’d call, but then I didn’t hear from you and like...just a sec (*to Cellenius*) I’m sorry, this could be a while. I kind of enjoyed talking about the “sacred” thing... maybe I’ll see you again some time. (*back to the phone*) Yeah, so like, when did you try to call? Maybe I turned the phone off, although I don’t do that often. (*Cellenius just shakes his head as she keeps on going, with this kind of conversation until the lights are out, signaling the end of the play*)