

An excerpt from

Shadow Call

by John E. Miller

Days passed. Robert and Brent quickly fell into the rhythm of things. It didn't take long to see how the calls were distributed as they came in. Robert watched the different groups get their calls, watched the phones to see who would be next to get the shadow call. It was something to do while waiting for his next call. One day, the buzz of his next call came through. Robert looked down at the screen of his phone and it was blank.

"You finally got the shadow call," Brent said with a laugh.

"Welcome to phone support, my name is Robert. How can I help you?"

Robert could hear the crackling in his headset, then something that sounded like a frog. He sat and stared at the blank screen.

"Robert just do the spiel and get off. If they're monitoring you, they'll get you for call avoidance if you just sit there," Maggie said.

"Caller, are you there?" Robert asked.

"Yes, help me" a very weak voice said over the crackling and popping.

Robert's eyes widened. He muted his microphone and whispered, "No, guys, I really think someone is there."

"No, Robert, they're not," Joanie said. "It's like when you double-jacked with me."

"Hey, Robert, if you think someone is there, try to help them," Brent said with a laugh.

"Caller, are you there?" Robert asked in a wary voice.

"Yes, I'm here," the female voice was a little louder.

Robert could swear she croaked at him. "May I get your name and phone number?"

"I don't have a phone where I am. My friends call me Katie," the woman said clearly.

"How can I help you if you don't have a cell phone?"

"We don't have any phones here," she answered.

"How can you even talk to me then?" Robert was getting impatient. He hated prank calls.

"The master *Croak* says that he's been waiting for you."

"Did you just croak at me?"

"No I was saying the master's name."

"Well that a very unusual name, Katie."

"Robert, who are you talking to?" Joanie asked, giving Robert a weird look.

Robert muted his microphone, "There is someone on the shadow call and her name is Katie."

“Robert I must go now. I’m very weak, but thanks to you, I will get stronger.”

Robert turned his microphone back on, “What was that, Katie?”

Robert heard the buzz that lets him know a new call is coming in. He looked down at his Aspect box and the screen listed a caller. “Crap,” he thought to himself.