

BROTHERS

Based on a story by Carson Ames
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Several years ago, in a large city on the eastern shore of the country, two boys were born. Twin brothers named Walton and Filmore.

Walton was born first without any complications, but for Filmore it was a different story. It took a long time for him to come into the world, and because of this, he had learning disabilities. The biggest problem was that he was unable to speak normally. He had a bad stutter, and it was very difficult for him to say what he needed to say, especially when he was nervous or afraid. He knew some simple sign language, but only his family understood him.

Communicating with his family was not a problem since they knew about his inability to speak. He had not gone to school yet, so he didn't know how to read or write.

The brothers were identical twins, so it was difficult to tell them apart. It wasn't until they were asked to speak that one would know which one was which.

Walton and Filmore loved to play hide and seek around the house. Usually Filmore would hide and then Walton would look for him. Filmore was a good hider. Sometimes it took Walton a long time to find him, and then they would laugh and laugh.

One day, the boy's parents took them to the park to play.

"We'll be back in a little while. We're going to go shopping for your birthday presents, and we want to make it a secret. Have fun playing. We'll be back soon," their parents told them.

The boys had fun playing on the swing sets and in the sandbox.

While they were playing, some boys came up to them and asked if they wanted to play hide and seek with them. They had a new rule. If someone found a boy, they were tagged, and then that person would look to find the other boys who were hiding. This

would make the game last longer because the boy who had been the seeker would go and hide.

This sounded like a fun game, so the twins joined in.

The first boy counted to one hundred while the others ran in different directions. Walton and Filmore ran together until Walton found a spot to hide. Filmore continued to run looking for the perfect hiding place. It was on the far end of the park behind a large tree under a bench.

The boy finished counting and then went looking for the hiding boys. There was laughter when one of the boys was discovered, and then the one who was found began to search. This went on for a long time, but no one found Filmore. He had the best hiding place of all.

Filmore listened for the boys, and soon it was very quiet. Filmore looked out from where he was hiding and got scared. Where had they all gone?

He crawled out and began to search for his brother. He looked everywhere in the park, but could not find him.

He thought they were playing a joke on him, so he laughed as he searched.

Looking all over the park, he could not find anyone, so he decided to look across the street. Maybe they had gone into one of the stores. He searched up and down the streets looking for Walton.

“Wow, Walton has found the best hiding place ever. I can’t find him anywhere,” thought Filmore.

Soon it was getting dark and Filmore had become completely lost. He had no idea where he was or how to get home. Exhausted from walking so far, he sat down on the steps of a building and began to cry.

The door of the building opened behind him, and then a large woman in a grey dress and yellow apron almost tripped over him.

“Where did you come from?” she asked.

Filmore was unable to answer.

“I asked you, where did you come from?” this time she wasn’t so kind.

He still could not answer.

The big woman looked up and down the street and then took Filmore by the arm, dragging him screaming inside of the building. She sat him down in a chair near the entrance and looked at him carefully. Filmore just stared back at her, saying nothing.

He began to move his hands in sign language trying to tell her something, but she didn’t understand.

“Why don’t you talk to me? You’re able to speak, aren’t you?” she asked.

He tried to speak, but since he was so afraid, “Ah.. Ah.. I.. Ah,” was all he could mutter.

Realizing she couldn’t understand him, he just shook his head no.

“Wilson, come here, we have new boy. Take him upstairs and show him where he is going to sleep!” the woman yelled over to a skinny boy who was cleaning the floor with a brush.

Filmore looked over at him.

“Yes, ma’am,” he responded as he stood up.

The boy walked over to where Filmore was sitting and took his arm, trying to take him up the stairs, but Filmore fought him, refusing to go with him.

“Ms. Moulton, the boy won’t go with me,” the tall boy cried out. “How am I supposed to get him to go upstairs?”

Ms. Moulton walked over and gave Filmore a threatening look.

“Go up those stairs NOW, or I’ll beat your bottom with a stick,” the woman said in a stern voice. “Do you understand me?”

Filmore shook his head yes and then followed the skinny boy up the stairs to the second floor, then the third floor and then finally the fourth floor.

Looking down at Filmore, he said. “My name is Gordon, what is yours?”

Filmore did not answer.

“Has the cat got your tongue?” Gordon insisted. “I asked you, what’s your name?”

There was no response.

“Have it your way. Just follow me,” Gordon directed Filmore.

As he shook his head at Filmore, they entered a room at the top of the stairs.

There were a total of twelve beds in the room. All of them were neat and tidy. At the foot of each bed was a pair of shoes. On the mattresses were grey blankets and on top of those were pillows in white covers. Over each bed, he saw a sign. He had not learned to read yet, so he had no idea what they said.

“Here, this is your bed. This is where you are going to sleep,” Gordon told Filmore as he pointed to one of the beds along the wall.

Sitting down on the bed, Filmore began to look around the room.

Not knowing what to do, he just sat and waited to be told what to do next.

Suddenly the room filled with boys running to their beds. They took books out from under their beds and then ran out just as fast as they had arrived. No one noticed Filmore sitting alone on his bed. The room was silent once again.

About an hour later, the boys returned. This time they were a lot quieter. One of the boys noticed Filmore sitting alone.

“Hey, there’s a new kid,” he shouted out.

Another boy walked up to Filmore.

“So, what’s your story? What did you do to deserve to be sent here?” the boy asked almost laughing.

Filmore just sat looking at the boy.

“What’s your name?” the boy asked.

Once again, Filmore didn’t respond. He just looked at the boy.

“I think he’s deaf!” the boy said laughing while looking over at the others in the room.

Turning to Filmore again, he yelled in his face, “DO YOU HEAR ME?”

Filmore nodded his head.

“SO, WHAT IS YOUR NAME!” the boy screamed, thinking that Filmore must be

hard of hearing.

Filmore just looked around the room at the other boys, saying nothing. He was too scared to say anything.

Another one of the boys walked over to Filmore and pushed him back onto his bed.

“We asked you a question. Who are you?” he demanded.

Still Filmore did not respond. He lay back on his bed with tears in his eyes. He was so scared he wet his pants.

“Look at the sissy. He wet his pants!” the second boy began to laugh along with the other boys.

Just then, a loud booming voice came from the doorway.

“What are you boys doing? You’re supposed to be getting ready for dinner! You have your chores to do. Get moving!” Ms. Moulton yelled in a strong authoritative voice.

The boys jumped at the sound of her voice and scrambled to their beds to put their books away.

Ms. Moulton walked over to Filmore’s bed. She noticed that he had wet his pants.

“You’re going to have to clean up this mess, young man. Get the mop from the corner of the room and wipe it up. Under your bed, you find some clean sheets and some clothes to wear. You had better not make a habit of wetting your pants. We have ways to convince you not to do that again,” she threatened him.

“After you finish cleaning the floor and making your bed, you’ll come down for dinner. Make it quick young man. I don’t like lazy boys.”

Filmore ran to get the mop. There was a bucket with water in it so he put the mop into the water and brought it to where he had made a mess.

“Now you’re going to have to mop the entire room. You dripped water all over the floor from the bucket. Now you must clean it up before you can have dinner!” Ms. Moulton ordered Filmore.

The boys laughed at him as they walked out of the room. They had to do their own chores before they could get their supper.

It took quite a while for Filmore to finish cleaning the floor and to make his bed. It didn't look as nice as the other beds. He would find out that very quickly that it was not a good thing for him not to make his bed correctly.

When he was finished, he found some clothes under the bed in a box. They were too big for him, but at least they were dry. Not knowing what to do with his wet clothes or the bedding, he looked around the room. He saw a doorway close to the entrance. When he opened the door, he saw that it was a bathroom. He placed his wet clothes into the sink and ran some water onto them to clean them. Then he hung them on a hook next to the sink. He did the same thing with the bedding, hanging them from another hook.

There were six toilets and six sinks in the room. At the far end was the shower. The room was very clean. He found out later that if a boy misbehaved, he would have to clean the entire bathroom and then afterward, Ms. Moulton would inspect. If it wasn't good enough, the boy would have to start all over.

After hanging up his clothes, he left the room and looked for the dining hall.

He went slowly down the steps, watching for any surprises. When he got to the bottom of the staircase, he saw the exit. He ran to the door, but when he tried to turn the knob, he found out it was locked. He pulled and pulled on the door handle, but it would not open.

He turned around to see Ms. Moulton standing behind him and looking at him. She was not happy.

"Come here young man. It's time to eat. If you try to leave here, you'll be punished. Do you understand?" she inquired.

Filmore shook his head yes. Then he followed her down the hallway toward the dining hall.

When they walked into the room, he saw that the boys were sitting in two rows of tables. There were around fifty boys sitting quietly eating their supper. They all looked a lot older than he did, which made him feel very uncomfortable. At the far end was a longer table. Each of the boys had a bowl in front of them and they were eating as fast as

they could.

When Ms. Moulton walked past the boys, they stopped eating and greeted her.

“Hello Ms. Moulton,” they said one by one, as she passed.

She just nodded at them and led Filmore to where he would sit.

When Filmore sat down, his bowl was empty. He looked around the room waiting for someone to put food into it, but it never happened.

Then one of the boys leaned over the table and spoke up, “If you’re late for a meal, your food will be eaten by someone else. You’re just going to have to wait until breakfast.”

The boys at the table laughed.

Filmore looked around the room. He picked up his bowl, got out of his chair and walked up to Ms. Moulton. He took the bowl and showed it to her. He could only manage to say one word, “Pa... pa... please?”

Ms. Moulton knocked the bowl out of his hands and yelled, “Get back to your seat young man before I punish you!”

The room went silent.

Filmore just stood in front of her. He did not move.

Looking down at him in anger, she slapped him in the face. He fell to the ground. He looked up at her, wondering why she was so mean. With tears in his eyes, he got up and stood in front of her once again.

She slapped him again, only harder, and once again, he fell to the floor.

As he slowly got up off the floor, he picked up the bowl and stood holding the bowl in front of himself begging for food.

Ms. Moulton didn’t know what to do. No one had ever stood up to her before. The room was silent while the boys waited to see what was going to happen next.

“GET BACK TO YOUR SEAT!” Ms. Moulton yelled into Filmore’s face.

He didn’t move, in fact he didn’t even flinch. He held out the bowl toward her insisting that he get some food.

Ms. Moulton was frustrated with him. The boys were looking at her, waiting to see how badly she was going to beat Filmore for being so stubborn.

Ms. Moulton looked down at Filmore. She had confused look on her face. After staring at him for a long time, she finally looked at the back of the room.

“Cook, bring this boy some food,” she yelled across the room.

Then she looked at Filmore and said, “You, young man, sit down. I’ll deal with you later.”

Filmore returned to his seat. The other boys stared at him in silence. When he sat down the cook poured two ladles of soup into his bowl.

When Filmore first began to eat the food, his face showed how bad it tasted, but he drank it anyway since he was so hungry.

The boys sat quietly while Filmore ate his food. Before he had finished, a loud bell began to ring. The children jumped off their stools, ran out of the room, and up the stairs to their bedrooms. Filmore drank the remaining soup and then followed them. He didn’t want to get into any more trouble.

As he passed Ms. Moulton, who was standing in the doorway, he didn’t look up at her. He was too afraid.

He watched the others to see what they were doing and followed their example.

The boys pulled a box out from under their beds and inside were small bags. Filmore found his and opened it. Inside he found a toothbrush, toothpaste, some soap, and a small rag. He got in line at the bathroom door and waited for his turn. He watched as best as he could to see what he was supposed to do. Since he was so short, he had to jump to see past the bigger kids.

After cleaning up, he returned to his bed and took out the pajamas from the box, just like the others had, and changed his clothes. The clothes were too big for him. The sleeves hung down past his fingers and he walked on the bottoms of the pants. He rolled up his sleeves as best as he could and then did the same thing to his pajama bottoms.

The boys looked over at him and laughed. He looked silly. Filmore looked down at

himself and laughed too.

Under the window, there was a long desk where the boys took their seats. They opened their lesson books and began to do their homework. Since Filmore didn't have anything to do, he sat and looked out the window. He didn't see anything familiar. Everything here was different and very strange.

He daydreamed of going home and sleeping in his own bed. He began to cry silently. His hands were under his chin and his elbows were on the windowsill as he looked out across the rooftops of the other buildings. He was very homesick.

He wondered what this place was and why they wouldn't let him go home.

While he was watching the traffic below, he saw a car drive by that looked just like the one his parents owned. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't see the people inside. He tried to yell out of the window, but the car sped past.

Ms. Moulton walked in to check on the boys. She noticed Filmore crying.

She walked up to him and said, "You had better stop crying. No one likes a crybaby around here."

Filmore looked up at her with his teary eyes and nodded. He turned and looked out the window again. How was he going to get home?

A few minutes later, Ms. Moulton yelled from the other end of the room, "Young man, get in here. This is totally unacceptable!"

Filmore looked up and saw that she was holding the bed sheets and his clothes. He knew he was in trouble again.

"Come here, we are going to deal with this problem right now. You are going to learn what is expected here!"

Filmore walked over to her very slowly. When he got to her, she grabbed his arm and led him out of the room. She dragged him down the stairs, down a hallway, and then down another set of stairs. They were now in the basement of the house.

"See that tub over there?" Ms. Moulton yelled, "That is where the dirty laundry goes. You will wash all of the clothes in there and then hang them on the line. Before

that, you will take the clean clothes that are on the line and fold them neatly. Do you understand?”

Filmore looked up at the line above his head. He didn't know how he was going to take the clothes down because they were so high above his head.

Ms. Moulton left him alone.

Looking around the room, he saw a wooden box in the corner. It was just high enough for him to take the laundry down. He went very slowly because he knew if the clothes got dirty Ms. Moulton would get angry and then she would make him wash them again. He took the clean laundry to the table along the wall and began to fold them. He had helped his mother a couple of times when she did the folding, so he did his best to remember how she did it. They didn't look the same as when his mother folded the laundry at home.

When that was done, he put his clothes in the washtub with the clothes that were already there. He looked around and saw a bottle on the table. He opened it and smelled it. The odor was similar to the soap his mother used. He poured it into the washtub and pushed the button to clean the clothes. Soon there were soap bubbles everywhere. He was laughing as the suds grew and grew. He blew them into the air and covered himself with the suds.

Then he heard the footsteps of someone coming down the stairs. It was Ms. Moulton coming to check up on him. When she reached the bottom of the steps, she realized what had happened.

“What are you doing!?” she asked sternly.

Even though she wanted to look angry, she began to laugh which surprised Filmore.

“Young man, you are going to make life around here very interesting. Get upstairs and into bed. I will talk with you about this in the morning,” she could hardly speak because of her laughing.

He ran past her as fast as he could and then headed up the stairs to the room. Even

though his clothes were damp, he jumped into his bed. Then Filmore pulled the blanket to his chin and cried himself to sleep.

The next day as the boys went down for breakfast, Ms. Moulton stopped him.

“What is your name?” she asked.

He could not answer her question, so she said to him, “I guess we will call you John. Yeah that’s good, we’ll call you John Doe.”

From then on, he was called John.

As the years went by John, as he was now called, tried his best to fit in, but he was still a loner. No one wanted to be the friend of a boy with a stutter. Even when a new boy came to the house, they didn’t want to be his friend either.

Whenever the inspectors came to check on the school, John was hidden in the basement, since they didn’t have any papers about how he came to the school. They kept him a secret.

Half of the day, the boys sat at tables and assembled parts. By doing this, they earned enough money to pay the bills of the orphanage.

The work area was in the basement in a room that was always locked. A man would come by once a month to bring new materials and take away the finished products. It was boring work, but it was better than the other jobs some of the boys had to do when they were bad.

The other half of the day, he went to classes where he learned to read and write. The classes were in the same building, so he rarely left the building.

When he first started school, he tried to tell his teachers his real name was Filmore but they just laughed at him. He also tried to tell them about his family and his brother, but they didn’t care. They told him that he would have to stay in the home until he was old enough to do his own work.

John was trapped, and there was no way out.

After John had been there for eleven years, they told him he had to leave. He was too old to stay any longer.

The door opened and Ms. Moulton told him to go. No one said good-bye. He was on his own now.

“I hope you have a good life John,” was all she had to say to him, and then she closed the door.

As he walked out of the building with only a small suitcase and a few dollars in his pocket, he had no idea where to go or what to do. Although he had learned to read and write, he had no skills and no training. The entire time at the home, he did what they had told him to do while trying to stay out of trouble, although it was not easy. Ms. Moulton never forgot the day when he demanded his food.

John wandered around the town looking for work. He would write on a piece of paper that he needed a job, but when they asked him to speak, he would get nervous and he wasn't be able to say a word.

Finally, he found a job at a convenience store as the night stockman. During the evening and into the night he filled the shelves with new merchandise. The owner of the store liked John and let him sleep in a small room at the back of the store.

Reading books and magazines from the store helped John pass the time. He didn't go out very much. He was afraid he would get lost again and then he would have to start all over again.

One day, as John was walking to the grocery store, he noticed an old poster on a pole near the store. It had a picture of a boy on it. He looked at it closely and realized the picture was him. He pulled it down, ran back to the store, and showed it to the owner.

John got excited. He pointed to the phone number at the bottom. The owner didn't understand what John was doing until he wrote on a piece of paper next to the cash register, ‘This is me. Please call the number at the bottom. Find out if they are still looking for me.’

The storeowner got his phone and dialed the number. After a few seconds the owner looked over at Filmore and told him the number was no longer in service.

A look of dismay crossed John's face. He slumped to the floor in confusion. For

the first time in many years, he thought about his family.

Over time, John took on more responsibility at the store. He was more comfortable and learned to say some of the phrases he needed to work at the counter.

Things like, “How are you today?” “That will be five dollars,” or “How may I help you?”

The owner was always nearby if someone needed to ask a question that John was unable to answer. He was proud of John and of how hard he was working. Mostly he liked how honest he was.

One day, while John was working the counter, he looked up to see a customer.

He said, “How are you today?” and then to his surprise, the man looked just like him, only his hair was different, he had on nice clothes, and he was wearing glasses, but his face was the same.

John jumped back. The man looked at him, surprised at his reaction and then he noticed the same thing. They were both shocked.

The man in front of the counter asked John, “What is your name?”

“Ja... Ja... John,” he stuttered.

A look of sadness filled the man’s face.

“I’m sorry. You look so much like me I thought your name was Filmore?” the man stated to him. “It was my brother’s name. He went missing fifteen years ago. I guess I made a mistake.”

John reached under the counter and took out the poster he had found a couple of years before. He showed it to Walton.

“Fa... Fa.. FILMORE” he yelled. Then he pointed to himself. It was the first time in a long time that he had used his real name.

Realizing that it was Filmore, Walton exclaimed, “I’m Walton! I’m your brother!”

The storeowner overheard the conversation and stood beside John. He looked at the man across the counter and then at Filmore.

“John, is he your twin?” the owner asked, not realizing the situation.

Filmore shook his head yes.

The man on the other side of the counter said very quickly, “His name is Filmore and he’s my brother. He’s been missing for fifteen years, and now I’ve found him in your store!”

Now the storeowner was shocked.

Filmore ran from behind the counter and hugged Walton, who hugged him back.

Then they just stared at each other in amazement, tears running down their cheeks.

“Where have you been all of these years?” Walton asked.

They went and sat at a small table next to the window. Filmore got a pen and paper and began to write as fast as he could about his life at the orphanage. The more he wrote, the more Walton cried. He couldn’t believe what had happened to his brother.

“Before I stopped here, I was on my way to see mom and dad. Do you want to come with me? I’m sure they would be surprised to see you,” Walton suggested already knowing what the answer was going to be.

Filmore looked over at the storeowner, who said smiling, “Go ahead. I’ll watch over the store. Go see your family.”

The two brothers left the store and got into Walton’s car. They had a lot to talk about. Walton was one of the few people that Filmore could actually have a conversation with, since Walton understood him so well.

At first, Walton sat quietly while driving. Then he spoke up.

“This is the most amazing that has ever happened to me,” he began. “All these years I blamed myself because the boys and I went to get some ice cream cones, forgetting about you. When we came back we searched the whole park, but we couldn’t find you.

“The police came and searched as well. They thought that someone had grabbed you and took you away,” Walton explained to Filmore. “I hope you can forgive me.”

Filmore looked over at his brother. He was just happy to be with him.

The house was not very far from the store.

When they arrived at the house, they walked up to the door together. Filmore looked around. Nothing was familiar. This was a different house from where they had lived as boys.

Walton explained to Filmore as they approached the front door, “Mom and dad moved here about three years ago. They needed a smaller house. It was really hard for them to move. They always watched for you and hoped you would one day find your way home.”

Pausing, and then he continued, “You know what? Today is that day!”

When their father met them at the door, he nearly fell over. He saw both of his boys together for the first time in fifteen years.

He screamed, “Marge, come here, there’s a surprise for you!”

When Filmore’s mother came to the door, she almost fainted. She was shocked.

When she finally could speak, she asked, “Filmore, is that really you?”

Filmore nodded yes.

They stood motionless for several seconds. Then they hugged each other. They stood at the entrance of the house for a long time, crying and not saying a word.

Then they went inside and sat in the living room. Walton shared with them what Filmore had written on the paper. They were listening to every word. They realized why the police had not found Filmore. He had been a prisoner of the orphanage for all those years.

There was short pause, and then Roger said, “Excuse me a moment, I have something for you.”

He stood up and left the room.

A few minutes later, he returned with a package wrapped in colorful paper. He handed it to Filmore.

“This the present we bought for you on your seventh birthday. We saved it for you in case you ever came home.”

Filmore began to cry again as he opened his gift.