

I Have to Lay Here

By Richard Baldwin Cook

This is the third time tonight you or someone has come in and waked me up.

I have to lay here and try to sleep on my back. That's bad enough, but then getting waked up? If I'm already asleep, why do I need a pain pill?

Well . . . I guess I don't mind talking about it. If you got a minute.

It's been a ride, having a twin. Identical. Not so much the bonding thing that everybody thinks is *the* thing.

Kevin and I liked to mess with people. Confuse people. Watch the expression on their face. Couple times we switched up on dates. Back in high school. Couple times we changed places on finals. All back in the day. Just goofing around. Nothing serious or mean about it. Girls figured it out pretty quick, actually, and we always told the teacher afterwards. No big deal, really, since we pretty much got the same grades anyway.

Then Kevin signed up. Army Ranger. Joined up and blew up. Two deployments without a scratch. But not the third. That third time is the charm, they say.

Shit. Came back gimped up. Right leg just below the knee. Kevin hardly even talked about it. Already had the metal leg when he got home. Pretty good on it already.

I felt good that he wanted to move in with me. Just took my stuff out the second bedroom. No problem at all. Condo was fine, not even crowded. He just seemed to fit into how I arranged everything. Not a word of complaint.

They made him a recruiter, right here in town. I guess somebody thought the metal leg was actually a plus. Lots of times, he had to roll up his pants leg and show these goofy kids.

I got him onto my gym membership. Family discount. He went two or three times a week, mostly to swim.

Once in a while, I'd bump into him there. Doing laps. I saw his metal leg in the corner by the pool. He said it was too much trouble to put it in a locker and then how would he get over to the pool?

I couldn't resist. I found out when he was gonna be at the gym and I slipped in. I waited til he was at the far end and I just took it. No big deal. I thought I would give it right back. Get a laugh out of it.

He was really upset when he got home. Said some bastard had stolen his leg. Never seen him that angry. Had to hop out to the parking lot, drive home using just his left leg, he said.

Afraid to tell him I took it. Still in the trunk of my car.

I told him, the gym called. They found your leg.

That did not make sense to Kevin, he said, because they looked all around for it while he was there, he said. I said I don't know anything about that except now they found it.

I told Kevin I'd drive over an' get it.

He said, "Bull shit! I'll get my own goddamn leg."

I drove anyway. Mad as he was, he could still see the point of that.

I figured since it was still in the trunk, I would drop Kevin at the front door, go around to the side, slip in and put it somewhere.

Damned thing rattled around in the trunk. He knew what it was. He knew that sound.

He screamed at me. Went for me! Didn't care that I was driving.

Well, Kevin's gone.

I won't be giving it back. Doc says it ought to fit just fine. The twin thing worked out again.

People will confuse me'n Kevin even more, now.