

The Phone Call

by Elizabeth Trach

Gerry loved to read stories before bed. He was a good reader and had plenty of books that he could read to himself. Reading on his own was fun, but Gerry also liked listening to his parents read books aloud. That way he could hear the stories in the thick books that he wasn't yet able to read on his own.

If you asked him who was a better reader, Gerry would say that he liked both his parents equally. That was true. He loved Mom and Dad both very much. But deep down, Gerry felt that Dad was just a little bit better at reading stories because he always made different voices for each character. Gerry thought that this made the books more exciting.

But Dad wasn't always home to read to Gerry before bedtime. Gerry's dad worked for a big company that had offices all around the world, so Dad had to travel a lot. When he was gone, Gerry felt very sad. Mom still read books at night, but it wasn't quite the same. Sometimes Gerry went to bed without a story at all, just to get to sleep faster and get that much closer to the day they would pick Dad up at the airport.

One night, Gerry felt sad because Dad was in Japan and would be gone for two weeks. That was longer than any trips that came before.

Just as Gerry was about to flip the light switch off and pull the covers up to his chin, Mom knocked on the door. "I have a surprise for you," she said.

Mom came into the room and handed Gerry her phone. Gerry was surprised. Normally Mom's phone was off limits, and there was no screen time after supper. "Take a look," Mom said.

Gerry flipped over the phone to see the screen. There was Dad! "Hi, Gerry!" Dad said. "Can you hear me all the way from Japan?"

"Yes!" said Gerry. This was so exciting!

Dad held up a thick book with a dark blue cover. "Mom packed this book in my suitcase so I could still read you a story before bed. Would you like to hear it?"

"Oh, yes!" said Gerry. With the phone propped up on the pillow, Gerry could hear Dad make all the different voices for the story's characters. It was almost just as good as having Dad there in person.

"Can we do this every night?" asked Gerry.

"Of course!" Dad said. And he turned the page to begin the next chapter of the story.

Questions

1. Why does Gerry prefer when Dad reads stories aloud?
2. Gerry talks about loving both parents equally. Why do you think Gerry avoids saying out loud that Dad is a better reader?
3. How does Dad make Gerry feel better?
4. In your opinion, whose idea was the special phone call? Why do you think so?