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about 400 words

## The Them and The They

By Samuel Roen

A phone was ringing. Mine. With a fair amount of unease, I checked who was calling. It was a number I didn't recognize. There was a tinge of anxiety there. On the one hand, I wouldn't have to answer. My day could go on without the unwanted stress of having gone over each and every incorrect, incoherent, or just downright stupid thing I'd said. On the other, I realized just about anyone in the world could be calling. This meant *they* could be coming for me. In fact, *they'd* probably been planning on doing so for quite a while now. But, much in the way *they* are, *they* just now got around to doing it. I briefly pondered who *they* actually were. This seemed like a reasonable thing to wonder about until I realized just how many people there actually were in the world (though I could subtract the children, couldn't I?), so I stopped and hoped for the best. Really though, the person calling probably wouldn't even leave a message, so there wouldn't be anything to worry about at all. Unless if there was. Why were they

calling in the first place? Did they simply have the wrong number - only realizing this as they listened to my voice telling them to leave a message at the beep and not the person they'd been expecting? Or was it something much more sinister?

The ringtone stopped playing and the waiting began. It wasn't a long wait. An alert popped up telling me a voice message had been left. The wait had been so short, in fact, I thought it probably had been the wrong number and the person had meant to hang up, but hadn't done so in time, so I'd be forced to listen to two seconds of silence, which upon further reflection I'd come to the conclusion this was in fact *them* attempting to make me sweat before their eventual grand and terror-filled entrance.

Deciding it was best to get it all over with, as there was no reason to avoid the impending doom...it was coming eventually, which was really the only thing I was certain of...I unlocked my phone and listened.

It was a message of static and silence. I nodded gravely, put my phone back into my pocket and continued on with my day.