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# Frame on the Wall: The Making of 'The Door in the Floor'

By Unknown

Dead means they're broken?  
Well, their bodies  
are broken, yes.  
And they're under the ground?  
Their bodies are, yes.  
Tell me what dead is.  
Mmm. When you--  
When you look at the photographs  
of Thomas and Timothy,  
do you remember the stories  
of what they're doing?  
Yes.  
Hmm, well,  
Tom and Timmy are alive  
in your imagination.  
It makes me sad  
to think about them.  
Makes me sad too, Ruthie.  
But Mommy's sadder.  
Well, yes.  
[ Rhythmic Clicking ]  
[ Clicking Continues ]  
[ No Audible Dialogue ]  
Uh-huh.  
Does your son have a driver's license?  
Huh! Ooh!  
Jesus.  
Heh!  
You don't have to yell, Minty.  
Yeah?  
Well, let me consider it, will ya?  
Yeah.  
All right.  
I'll call you back. Bye.  
Eh, it still gets cold  
in the evening, huh?  
Thanks.  
Jesus. Look at this yard.  
We should clear out some of these  
straggly looking flower beds.  
I want to put in a swimming pool.  
Why?  
Oh, for Ruth when she gets older.  
Something like the one we had

in Providence. They loved it.

And the lawn--

It ought to be more like an athletic field.

No.

[ Turning Pages ]

Look at this picture.

Who is he?

That's Minty O'Hare's son-- the boys' English teacher from Exeter.

He wants a summer job.

He wants to be a writer.

What would he do for you?

It's mainly for the experience,  
I suppose.

I mean, if he's thinking about becoming a writer,  
he should see how one works, see what it takes.

What would he actually do for you?

Mmm, well--

I've been thinking.

I want to try separating...

for the summer.

Just temporarily.

[ Man On TV ]

So you began your career writing novels?

Yes, but they were terrible novels. Uh,  
unfortunately I had to write three of them...

before I realized

I am not a writer of adult fiction.

I am simply an entertainer of children,  
and I like to draw.

[ Man ] Edward, don't be nervous because

he's famous. [ Continues, Indistinct ]

He's an Exonian.

His sons were charming boys...

but... mediocre students.

Why do cautionary tales for children come so  
naturally to you? They were both in my class.

Well, I think I can imagine  
their fears and express them.

Um, in my stories,

Anyway,

uh, you can see what's coming, but you don't see  
everything that's coming. just pick up what you can.

Note his work habits.

[ Continues ]

See if there's a method  
to his madness.

And... above all...

throw yourself in headlong and just  
do whatever it is he wants you to do.

In my opinion, there is no better opening to any story  
than the opening of *The Mouse Crawling Between the Walls*.

I mean, the first lines--

'Tom woke up, but Tim did not.'

Daddy, I had a dream.

I heard a sound.

Uh, what sort of sound, Ruth?

It's in the house,

but it's trying to be quiet.

[ Exhales ]

Hmm.

Well, let's go look for it then.

It's a sound that's trying to be quiet?

What did it sound like?

It was a sound like someone  
trying not to make a sound.

Your penis looks funny.

My penis is funny.

Come out sound.

Come out sound.

I'll tell you a story  
about a different sound.

One night when Thomas  
was just your age,  
and Timothy was still in diapers,  
Tommy heard a sound.

Did they both wake up?

Oh, Tom woke up,

but Tim did not.

And Tom woke up his father...

and asked him,

'Did you hear that sound?'

[ Rubbing ]

There's the sound again,''

Tom whispered to his Father.

'It's a monster!' he cried.

'It's just a mouse...

crawling between the walls,''

his father said,  
and thumped the wall hard  
with his hand.  
And the mouse...  
[ Fingers Scuffling ]  
scurried away.  
'It's just a mouse.  
That's all,' Tom said.  
And he quickly fell asleep.  
But Tim,  
he stayed awake all night long.  
And every time that thing crawling  
between the walls came crawling back,  
he'd hit the wall,  
and he'd listen to the monster...  
scurry away,  
dragging his thick, wet fur,  
and no arms and no legs with it.  
- And that--  
- Is the end of the story.  
Where's Mommy?  
Mommy, uh-- It's her turn  
at the other house, remember?  
It's my turn tomorrow night.  
But she'll be here in the morning, okay?  
- [ Smacks Kiss ] Okay.  
- Are there any mice in this house?  
Hmm. Everyone has mice.  
Mice are everywhere.  
See you in the morning, Ruthie.  
[ Electric Typewriter Clacking ]  
[ Typewriter Motor Shuts Off ]  
[ Turn Signal Clicking ]  
[ Ship's Horn Blowing ]  
[ Children Laughing ]  
Eddie? Eddie?  
Mrs. Cole?  
Marion.  
Come.  
You can drive, can't you?  
Oh, yeah. Yes I can.  
I know boys your age. They love  
to drive every chance they get.  
Yes, ma'am. But I don't

know how to drive a stick.  
It's an automatic.  
Okay.  
Yes, ma'am.  
Sorry about before. I was--  
I was expecting Mr. Cole.  
Ted lost his license  
three months ago.  
You're not at Exeter anymore.  
You can call us by our first names.  
Okay.

[ Door Opening ]

[ Doors Shut ]

[ Thumping ]

Aren't you coming in?

Not tonight.

[ Door Shuts, Engine Starts ]

[ Man Chuckles ] Did it

hurt? Does it hurt much?

No, I'm all right. I'm all right.

Don't worry about me. Eddie!

It is an honor to meet you, sir.

Ah.

I want to thank you in advance for this  
experience. Ah, well, I hope you find it worthwhile.

Ed, this is Doctor Loomis.

Eddie's my new assistant. Hi.

Hi.

Yeah. Exeter, '05.

I was class of '61.

Good stuff.

So, Tuesday, yeah? Right.

See you then. Tuesday, yeah.

Nice to meet you, Eddie. Ciao.

I've read all your novels and  
all your children's books-- 3:30?

**Yeah, 3:**

Got it.

I've-- I read all your novels  
and all your children's books,  
and my favorite is The  
Door in the Floor. Ahh.

Well, you're probably one of the few

people on earth who have read all my novels.  
So, uh, what makes you think  
you want to be a writer, Eddie?  
Oh, I wrote something,  
and I brought it with me.  
I'd be extremely honored if you might read  
it, whenever you're not busy, of course.  
Well, writing is rigorous work.  
I keep myself incredibly busy.  
Yeah. Many of my books contain  
every word must be examined and  
re-examined thoroughly. Okay.  
You're going to be spending the whole summer  
looking for le mot juste, as Flaubert says. Oh.  
- The right word. The true word.  
- Okay. Well,  
I'm prepared to throw myself in headlong  
and do whatever you need me to do.  
Yeah, because I'm sure there'll be  
many different tasks that will come up.  
Oh, all right.  
For example, I need squid.  
I'm, uh, using squid ink for my new book,  
and for all my drawings now.  
There's a, uh--  
a woman in Montauk,  
she's a fishmonger.  
She collects the squid ink for me.  
Should I go today?  
Ah, you can go tomorrow. You see her  
husband over there, don't mention my name.  
Also, I have to tell you--  
because it's a little complicated--  
you've arrived here during what is  
a sad time in a long, happy marriage.  
Uh, Marion and I, we're separating--  
temporarily, on a trial basis.  
And I've, uh--  
I've rented a small apartment in town,  
and every other night one of us  
will be spending the night there.  
Uh, during the day, you'll work there  
at the apartment while I'm working here,  
but you'll sleep here.

I know it seems  
unnecessarily complicated, but...  
it's hard to know what's--  
what's best for my daughter.  
Anyway, your bedroom is in the main  
house, upstairs, second door on the left.  
Uh, you want to take your stuff up  
there, relax? Or you wanna take a shower?  
Unpack.  
Okay, well,  
make yourself comfortable, Eddie.  
Thank you, sir.  
And... I'm sorry about your marriage.  
Me too, Eddie.  
Anyway,  
I'm sure you're gonna do great here.  
It's gonna be a good summer for ya.  
I'm glad to have ya.  
- [ Screaming ]  
- [ Door Slams ]  
## [ Ruth Humming ]

**#[ Stereo:**

Did you see the shrine?  
Mm-hmm.  
It's kinda creepy, huh?  
It's sad.  
You go to Exeter, right?  
Yeah, I'm an upper.  
An 'upper'?'  
Yeah, like, an upperclassman--  
like, kind of like a junior. Your  
father's a teacher there, right?  
So you get to go for free?  
Yeah.  
He was their teacher, right?  
So that's why you're here?  
I guess.  
- Did you know them before they died?  
- Uh, no, but I heard a lot about them.  
When I was in eighth grade  
I used to date a senior from Exeter.  
Really? Yeah. He was older  
than you, of course. [ Laughs ]



His name was, like,  
Chickie or Chuckie or something.  
It was probably a nickname.  
You know, it-- it's quite common  
to have a nickname there.  
It is.  
[ Door Opens, Slams ]  
[ Chopping ]  
[ Bell Rings ]  
Oh, great, you got it.  
Just in time.  
Yes, sir.  
Uh, here, wait.  
Just a second.  
[ Sniffs ]  
Here. I want you to, uh,  
put it in here  
and then freeze it.  
What should I do next?  
I'm sketching a model.  
Why don't you go to the beach, take a swim?  
I-- I could straighten up  
the work room or something else.  
No, no. Go ahead.  
Anything really. I just want  
to help. No, that's all right.  
Contemplating the waves...  
will be a hell of a lot more useful to you  
as a young writer than watching me draw.  
Okay.  
There'll be, uh,  
plenty more rigorous work to do...  
at some point in the near future.  
Don't spill that stuff.  
#[ Opera ]  
[ Clears Throat ]  
Take your dress off, please.  
#[ Woman Singing Aria ]  
And your bra.  
[ Exhales ]  
[ Muttering ]  
[ Marion ]  
Morning, Eddie.  
Morning, ma'am.

[ Car Door Opens, Shuts ]  
[ Sniffing ]  
[ Sniffing ]  
[ People Chattering ]  
- [ People Whooping ]  
- [ Woman ] Bright, yeah.! Colors.!  
[ Men Speaking Spanish ]  
[ Gunshots ]

Hi.

Hi.

Did you just see that movie?

Yes.

Me too.

- Is that your dinner?

- Sort of, yeah.

I... got kind of tired of burgers.

I've had one every night since I got here.

Ted doesn't get you anything?

Not really.

I mean, he would.

It's just, I don't think Ruth likes to eat with me.

I don't think your parents would like it if they thought we weren't taking care of you.

They wouldn't mind, really, I don't think.

Eddie, would you like to go to dinner one night?

I'll make sure you get something... decent.

Okay.

Okay?

Yeah.

Good.

Thanks. Good night.

See you.

Bye.

[ Knocking ] [ Ted ] Eddie?

Just one second.!

Uh,

Ruth wanted to be sure that one of the photographs was still here.

She gets anxious if she can't see them or if they get moved.

Which one was it, sweetie?

There it is.

Ahh.

He's just a little broken,  
but he won't die, right? Right.

Not yet.

No. Ruthie had a dream.

- Where's feet?

- Hmm? What are you talking about?

Where are the feet?

[ Laughs ]

- [ Clears Throat ]

- Sorry, Eddie.

We've gotten in the habit of showing Ruth these  
pictures, and if we don't she gets very worked up.

That's okay.

You can see them anytime.

Ahh, see?

See you in the morning, Eddie.

- [ Ruth ] What did he do?

- [ Door Opens, Shuts ]

[ Blows ]

[ Alarm Chirping ]

That's Mrs. Vaughn.

Came over to discuss some sketches.

Had some questions about them.

Uh, guess she's an early riser.

Do you want me to drive

you home now, or-- Uh, no.

I'm gonna-- I'm gonna walk.

I left the revisions on my desk. Hmm?

Um, after I finish, what should

I do next? I'll let you know.

[ Sniffing ]

[ Gasps ]

[ Door Closes ]

Eddie, I should have knocked.

It's my fault.

I- I'm not angry. I--

I'm just-- I'm just embarrassed.

[ Drawer Slides Open ]

Eddie?

Come here, please.

It's funny.

Let's just call it funny and leave it at that.

Eddie?

Look at me.

Sit.

I know boys your age.

I know it's what boys your age do,  
isn't it?

Look, Eddie, I am flattered.

It felt good to know that someone  
was at least thinking about me.

Oh, not to assume that you  
were thinking about me, um--

Maybe about my clothes. And I know you  
probably have so many girls you think about.

- I didn't-- - I think about what  
you were wearing when I first met you.

It was a pink sweater,  
buttons up the front.

Oh!

That sweater, it's so old.  
Because of how it must feel  
against your skin.

Oh.

Would you do me a favor?

Take this down with you.

Please?

All right.

Thank you.

I'll probably be about an hour.

Here. Why don't you go over the revisions?

- Hey, do you want your supplies?

- Oh, yeah.

[ Approaching Footsteps ]

Hi.

You look nice.

The tie or the jacket.

You really don't need both.

Okay.

How's the work going for you?

I just retype A Sound Like Someone

Trying Not to Make a Sound every morning.

Sometimes he changes

a comma from a semicolon,

and then the next morning

he changes it back.

He needs a computer.  
Ted needs a driver.  
That's why he hired you,  
because he needs a driver.  
I don't get to drive  
much at home, so--  
Eddie, you're so serious.  
Boys your age  
shouldn't be so serious.  
I know a joke, [ Laughs  
] but it's not very good.  
Tell me.  
There's this battleship out in the ocean,  
and the captain of it, Captain Stern,  
this captain learns that the mother of  
one of his sailors just died. Mm-hmm.  
And the sailor's name  
is Midshipman Abernathy.  
So the captain thinks and thinks, and he tries to come up  
with the best way to tell Abernathy that his mother died.  
And finally after staying up all night,  
he comes up with a nice way of telling him.  
So the next morning he calls  
the crew up on deck and says,  
'Gentlemen, all of you whose mothers  
are still living, step forward.  
Not so fast, Abernathy.'  
I- I like that joke, Eddie. I--  
No, it's a-- it's a dumb joke.  
I do. I do.  
Why don't you ask Alice  
out on a date?  
She's not my type.  
Well, she's a good nanny anyway.  
I think it was wrong of us  
to have had Ruth.  
When we first moved here,  
the idea was,  
a new place,  
a new child,  
a new life, I suppose.  
Ted's a good father.  
But he doesn't really know how  
to do all the stuff you have to do.

And I can't.  
I can't with her.  
I picked that one  
because they're in silhouette,  
and you can almost imagine  
what they would look like now.  
Timothy looks guilty.  
Thomas looks like a wild animal.  
This one's funny.  
Tommy looks so...  
scared.  
[ Waves Breaking ]  
[ Children Shouting, Indistinct ]  
I hope I'm not disturbing you.  
Oh, no. No, not at all.  
You can tell in this picture...  
Timothy is more introspective,  
like you.  
And you know where this is?  
What does it say?  
'Come hither, boys, and become men. ''  
Not pink with lilac.  
Oh.  
I wasn't thinking about the colors.  
I don't know if they had sex.  
Thomas, maybe. He was so popular.  
But, Timothy, he was so shy.  
That's all boys want, isn't it?  
Yes.  
Before I die.  
Have you had sex, Eddie?  
No.  
Well, it's too hot in here,  
so I hope you'll forgive me  
if I don't wear the sweater.  
[ Panting ]  
You still really haven't had sex,  
have you, Eddie?  
Not really.  
No, not really.  
But I feel--  
[ Car Alarm Blaring, Distant ]  
I feel complete.  
[ Alarm Stops ]

Come here.

[ Projector Clicks ] [ Ted ] ''There was a little boy who didn't know if he wanted to be born.

''His mommy didn't know if she wanted him to be born either.

''They lived in a cabin in the woods on an island in a lake,

''and there was no one else around.

''And in the cabin there was a door in the floor.

''The little boy was afraid of what was under the door in the floor,

''and the mommy was afraid too.

''Once, long ago, other children had come to visit the cabin for Christmas,

''but the children had opened the door in the floor...

''and had disappeared down the hole.

''The mommy had tried to look for the children,

''but when she opened the door in the floor she heard such an awful sound...

''that her hair turned completely white...

''like the hair of a ghost.

''And the mommy had also seen some things,

''things so horrible you can't imagine them.

''And so the mommy wondered...

''if she wanted to have a little boy,

''especially because of everything that might be under the door in the floor.

''And then she thought, 'Why not?

''I'll just tell him not to open the door in the floor.'

''Yet the little boy...

''still didn't know if he wanted to be born...

''into a world where there was a door in the floor.

''But there were some beautiful things in the woods,

''on the island and in the lake.

''Why not take a chance? he thought.  
''And so the little boy was born  
and he was happy,  
''and his mommy was happy again too.  
''Although she told the boy...  
''at least once every day,  
''Don't ever, not ever,  
''never, never, never...  
''open the door in the floor.'  
''But, of course, he was only a little boy.  
''If you were that little boy,  
wouldn't you want to open  
that door in the floor?''

[ Applause ]

The publisher thinks the drawings are too  
rudimentary and there are too few of them.  
But, um, I'm just  
an entertainer of children,  
and I like to draw.

Nudes, uh-- Nudes are a requisite  
fundamental exercise for anyone who draws,  
like-- like landscapes.

So you do landscapes too?

No. Long islands too flat.

You don't prefer to use  
professional models?

If nakedness-- I mean, the feeling of  
nakedness-- is what a nude must convey,  
well, there's no nakedness that compares to what it feels  
like to be naked in front of someone for the first time.

Hmm? Right, Eddie?

[ Clears Throat ]

Yes. Yeah. No.

### **#[ Car Stereo:**

Woman Singing, Indistinct ]

I'm grateful to you, Eddie. Oh, it's  
my pleasure. It was very interesting.

No, I mean, uh,

I'm grateful to you for being  
such a good friend to Marion.

She's been so unhappy.

It's good to see her smiling again.

[ Both Panting ]



[ Phone Ringing ]

Hello, Cole residence.

No, he's not here yet.

Should I go look for him?

Unsteady?

Excuse me, Mr. Cole.

Um, Patrick called

from Bobby Van's restaurant.

- He said you might want a ride home.

- I have a ride.

Go on home, Eddie.

Sorry, Mr. Cole. Good night.

#[ Classical ]

#[ Continues ]

[ Turntable Rattling ]

Ready, Eddie?

Yup.

Ahh.

I, uh, converted this barn into a squash court when I first bought the place.

Not quite regulation in its dimensions.

Plus, uh, there's a dead spot in the floor by the back walls.

So, basically, I'm considered even by the best players on the island... to be unbeatable on my own court.

You play much?

Um, this is my third time.

Ahh, well, don't expect mercy from me.

I'm gonna grind you into a fine powder.

Huh!

Where those red lines intersect, that's called the ''T.''

Whoever controls the ''T'' controls the game.

You need to win control of the ''T'' if you hope to win the game.

Aah! Jesus!

You all right?

Yeah, I'm fine.

Yeah, it was a good shot though.

Still made it to the wall.  
Isn't that a let? Aren't you supposed  
to just take the let and not hit the guy?  
Well, technically you're right,  
but I'll take the point.  
Can't just take the 'T.'  
You gotta earn it.  
Aah!  
You look like a boy  
who'll sleep well tonight.  
Maybe you need to catch up  
on your sleep anyway, hmm?  
[ Marion Panting ]  
[ Screams ]  
Stop screaming, honey.  
It's okay. It's just Eddie and me.  
G- Go back to bed, okay?  
- Okay?  
- Okay.  
[ Sighs ]  
Did you get the stamps?  
Ah, two rolls.  
They still have the ones with  
the nocturnal animals? Mm-hmm.  
Anyway, I, uh--  
[ Vehicles Zooming ]  
I presume it was Marion's mistake,  
but surely it was a mistake for the  
two of you to let Ruth see you together.  
I'm not threatening you,  
Eddie, but I must tell you...  
that, uh, you may be called  
upon to testify. Testify?  
In the event of a custody dispute,  
regarding which one of us is a more fit parent.  
I would never have let a child see me  
with another woman, whereas Marion...  
has really made no effort  
whatsoever to protect Ruth...  
from seeing what she saw.  
And if you are asked to testify  
to what happened,  
I trust that you won't lie--  
not in a court of law.

From the sound of it,  
it was a rear-entry position--  
not that I have a personal problem  
with that or any other position.  
But for a child,  
I imagine doing it doggishly...  
must seem especially animalistic.  
[ Racket Hitting Squash Ball ]  
I'll only be about 25 minutes today.  
Just a quick sketch.  
I've never been unfaithful to Ted.  
Why didn't you leave him?  
Ted understands me.  
Ted's the only one that really  
knows what happened to me.  
You don't need some time?  
Aah! What are you doing?  
[ Giggling ]  
Okay. Ready?  
He starts with conventional portraits--  
a mother, a child.  
Then the mother,  
then the mother nude.  
Then the nudes go through phases,  
like innocence, modesty,  
degradation...  
and shame.  
Mrs. Vaughn?  
Mrs. Vaughn is experiencing the...  
degrading phase right now.  
#[Jazz ]  
Move your head to the light.  
To the--  
Evelyn, more to the light.  
Evelyn.  
I want to know more about you.  
You know too much already.  
Tell me about the accident.  
I mean, do you know  
how it happened, or--  
or was it anybody's fault?  
Marion?

**M:**

- Marion? [ Ruth ] Mommy.

Mommy.

[ Turn Signal Clicking ]

[ Ruth ] It was early in the morning, and Mommy was just waking up. Thomas and Timothy crawled under the covers. And Daddy took the picture in France.

But what did you do to the feet?

Well, maybe it never happened.

You know, maybe it was just a dream. No.

I guess it's just a mystery.

No, it was paper.

Don't you want to go back to bed?

Yes.

Bring the picture.

It's my picture. It's not yours.

That's true.

[ Ruth Crying ]

Mommy.! Mommy.!

[ Water Running From Faucet ]

[ Ruth ]

Ow. Ow.!

She cut her finger, badly.

Ow.

[ Marion ] Shh. It's

okay. Am I going to die?

No. You're not

going to die.

You're not going to die.

You don't understand. I put the picture in her room. It's my fault.

That's not the point. The point is, you shouldn't have gone into her room in the first place.

That's her mother's job.

I told you, Marion was asleep.

I doubt it. I doubt 'asleep' would accurately describe Marion's condition.

I did it to her. I asked her about the accident.

Ah, it doesn't matter.

She was a great mother to the boys, but she's for shits now.

It's my fault.

No. It's Marion's fault.  
Ruthie, please. Mommy.!  
- Come on now. Go to sleep now. Please.  
- Mommy!  
I'm here, sweetie. Come on. Mommy!  
Mommy! Come on. Now, please, Ruth.  
Mommy!  
Come on now, honey.  
Mommy! Mommy! Come on.  
She had a bad dream. She  
heard bangs. Heard banging noise.  
What kind of banging noise?  
I-- I don't know.  
What difference does it make?  
Come on, honey.  
It's okay.  
It's okay.  
It's okay.  
It's okay. It's okay.  
It's okay.  
It's okay. Come on.  
Take me back.  
Leave it! Goddamn it.  
Why now?  
I've stayed too long already.  
You want me  
to do what?  
I want you to give her these,  
but not the portfolio.  
Just the drawings--  
I want the portfolio back.  
Isn't she expecting you?  
Tell her I'm not coming,  
but I wanted her to have the drawings.  
It-- It might be, um, awkward...  
to ask for the portfolio back.  
It won't be a problem.  
I- I don't really understand. He-- He wants  
to give them to me. He doesn't want them?  
He said he wanted you  
to have them.  
Uh, but when is he coming?  
He's coming Friday, isn't he?  
I have the whole day for him on Friday.

He knows I have the day.

Will you stop?

Is he coming on Friday?

I- I don't know.

Yes, you do know.

- Uh-- - Did you look at those drawings? Did he show you?

My God, I'm locked out.

You're gonna have to break in.

Me?

You're gonna have to carry me over the glass. I have bare feet.

How dare you? How

dare you detest me? Ow!

You're not exactly living an 'un-sordid' life yourself, are you? Just-- Please, I wanna go home.

Oh, go!

- Why did she think you looked at the drawings? Did you?

- No.

Oh, Christ. Of course you did. No.

I didn't. She exposed herself to me.

Jesus. She did what? She didn't mean to, but she exposed herself. The wind, it b-blew her robe open.

- Jesus Christ.!

- And she locked herself out because of you.

She said you liked all the doors to be locked, and you didn't like the gardener to be around.

She told you that?

Yes.

She said she had the whole day for you Friday.

I can't spend the whole day with her Friday.

You're gonna have to come and pick me up in 45 minutes. Make that a half an hour.

On Friday morning, you're going to leave him at Mrs. Vaughn's.

I know-- for half an hour.

No. You're never going back, and it'll take him all day to make his way back home by himself.

Mrs. Vaughn won't offer him a ride.

I don't expect him back before dark.

Ted's gonna be really pissed off.

I read your, um-- your story.  
Oh. I thought you forgot. No. I just  
didn't have a chance to get to it before.  
It's not very good, is it?  
Oh, it's, uh-- it's very heartfelt,  
very-- very personal.  
It's, um--  
Well, it's just a collection of personal  
anecdotes that don't really add up to much.  
It's, uh-- I was just tryin' to see if  
I could write something that seemed true.  
Oh, it seems true. It, uh,  
just isn't very interesting.  
Sort of a--  
an emotional outburst, but, uh,  
it isn't really a story.  
And that, uh-- the guy, Hank-- you  
know, the one who dies at the end? Yeah.  
You need to prepare a reader  
for something like that. Uh--  
It just-- It didn't seem like  
the way things happened. Well,  
you need to let your audience  
guess what's gonna happen--  
you know, anticipate what's gonna  
happen-- and then you surprise them.  
But, um, you have to guide them  
through it. You know what I mean? Yeah.  
There's a part of writing that, uh,  
involves a certain manipulation.  
That may seem cold to you, but it is, you know, sort of cold. I  
- I guess.  
Everything in fiction is a tool:  
pain, betrayal,  
even death.  
These are, you know--  
These are like, uh, different colors on  
a painter's palette. You need to use them.  
Also, the details--  
they could be more specific, you know?  
Specific details, they--  
they create whole scenes in a reader's mind.  
Not being specific, that's just sloppy.  
It's sloppy thinking.

S- Specific details?

Yeah--

smells, taste-- details.

But I'll tell ya, for a, uh--

for a first effort, it's not that bad.

You know, the, uh--

Thanks.

the prose is a little purple, a little pretentious. Thanks. Thanks anyway for reading it.

You're welcome.

You ever think about getting a computer?

Be easier to do your own revisions that way, so you wouldn't need an assistant.

Maybe the next book.

Yeah.

Oh, boy.

Uh, you better wait for me.

I'm not gonna last

a half hour with this woman.

Twenty minutes tops,

maybe 10.

Five.

If he hits you, hit him back.

He won't make a fist.

At worst, he'll slap you.

You should make a fist,

and punch him in the nose.

If you punch him in the nose,

he'll stop.

You can call Alice to help

you with Ruth. Screw Alice.

You better start to like her a little.

When Ted kicks you out, you're going to

need a ride to the ferry at Orient Point.

And who's gonna

explain this to Ruth?

I won't be a bad mother to her.

I'd rather be no mother

than to be a bad mother to her.

That doesn't

make any sense.

I don't want her

to be like me.



Remember, honey, don't cry  
when the doctor takes the stitches out.  
I promise you, it won't hurt.  
Can I keep the stitches  
to show you?  
You can take her anywhere for lunch. All she  
ever eats is grilled cheese and French fries.  
And ketchup.  
And ketchup.  
I have money.  
I love you.  
So long, Eddie.  
Evelyn. Evelyn, wait! Wait now!  
Come here, you son of a bitch!  
Come here, goddamn it!  
I'll kill you, you fucking fraud!  
Evelyn, Evelyn, Evelyn.  
Evelyn!  
Why the hell did he--  
Run!  
All right.  
And one more.  
Did we get the picture?  
What picture?  
Feet. Oh, the photograph.  
No, it's not ready yet.  
That's not very nice. My stitches  
are ready. My cut's all fixed up.  
Yeah. You know what? You're right. Let's go to the frame  
shop and tell 'em to give us the picture. Good idea.  
Ted Cole?  
Yes. It is. It is Ted Cole.  
Good morning, Mendelssohn.  
It is Ted Cole. It is.  
Forgive me for bleeding.  
Don't be silly. It's nothing  
you need be forgiven for. Uh--  
Could you-- Ah! Get  
Mr. Cole a chair.  
Can't you see he's bleeding?  
Look, I-- No, you look. If there's no  
manager here, there must be someone else.  
There must be someone else here besides you,  
and I'm not leaving without that photograph.

Did you got mad at her?  
Yes, I did.  
To put it simply, I need  
a ride home. A ride? Yes.  
I'll take you myself.  
Of course, um, I'm going  
to have to call the wife.  
She's probably out shopping,  
but not for too long.  
You see, my car, it's in the shop. Mm.  
I use a bicycle,  
else I'd take you home.  
Mm. Too bad.  
You warned him, you disgusting cretin.  
If you have killed him, Mrs. Vaughn,  
you would have gone to jail.  
You want this? Hmm?  
It's your last paycheck. You're fired.  
I understand that you're angry.  
I'm very sorry about that.  
When my customers are angry, I ask them to voice  
their complaints in writing, if you don't mind.  
I work for Ted Cole. I'm a writer's assistant.  
Then you won't mind writing, will you?  
'60 times.' Really?  
Yes.  
The Vaughns of Gin Lane?  
We framed a painting by Sibley for  
them called The Epitome of Diabolism.  
Please go on.  
Your signature is very, very beautiful.  
I need a pen with a broader nib.  
Also, some red ink, hmm?  
Red like blood,  
not like a fire engine.  
Yes. Of course.  
This is Ruth. She's four.  
What do you want from me?  
Just the photograph.  
It's of Ruth's mother.  
She's in a bed in a hotel room in Paris.  
It's not a good picture of the boys.  
It's only their feet.  
- Yes, I know. Ruth likes the feet.

- Are the feet ready?

Yes, dear.

I'll go check. Should be

almost ready. Excuse me, ma'am.

Can I have my writing back, please?

It's really not out of my way.

I'd be honored to take you. Really.

No. That's all right.

Someone else will come along soon.

It's not trouble.

Really, I don't mind.

No. Really. There you are. If you need  
a few minutes, I can run a few errands.

I

- I'd be thrilled to take you. Really. No.

There's no charge for the photograph.

Thank you.

Yes. I'm sorry.

- Is the blood all gone?

- Yes, dear. See?

As good as new.

- Okay. Thanks.

- Young man, if you're ever interested in a job,  
perhaps next summer.

I can always use an extra  
hand in the summer. Thank you.

She wrote her freshman English  
term paper on you. Shut up.

Mmm.

What was the title of your term paper?

Uh, "'An Analysis of the Atavistic Symbols  
of Fear in The Door in the Floor. ''

As you know, um, myths and fairy tales  
of tribal peoples are full of images...

like magic doors

and children disappearing...

and people being so frightened

their hair turns white overnight.

And the vagina? When the, uh, little boy's in  
the womb, the door in the floor is a... vagina.

How long was this paper?

Twenty-eight pages--

not counting the footnotes

and bibliography.

But--

I don't suppose you girls have a car?

Believe it or not, I need a ride.

Oh. Is this sandwich for me?

Yes.

These slippers are just wonderful.

They were a Christmas gift  
from me to my late husband.

Ah. May I?

Please.

I'll get these clothes right back to you. I  
was just gonna give them to the Goodwill anyway.

Look at that.

Phil was almost exactly your size.

You know,

this is rather serendipitous.

I've been looking for two suitable  
subjects for a mother and daughter portrait.

Something I'm thinking about for my book.

At first I would want to draw  
you and your daughter together.

That way, when I draw  
each one of you separately,  
uh, the presence of the other one is--  
is, uh, somehow there.

How long would it take, and...

Uh-- which one of us would you  
want to draw first... separately?

I should do Glorie first.

First, uh-- Well, first, the two  
of you together, and then, uh--  
then Glorie alone, and then when  
Glorie's back at college, you alone.

Mr. Cole,

you really are an enigma.

So which are you,  
and artist or a writer?

Oh, Glorie, I'm--

I'm neither, really. I'm--

I'm just an entertainer of children,  
and I like to draw.

What sort of drawings

did you have in mind?

Don't-- No, no, no.! Don't-- Don't stop.

My goodness.

Wiper! Wiper.

Uh, yeah. Why don't you, uh,  
just come in and wait on the porch.  
I'll be right there.

[ Kisses Softly ]

[ Keys Jingle ]

[ Engine Starts ]

[ Car Departs ]

Would you like, uh, some  
refreshments, some water or some tea?  
For the whole rest of your life, whenever you  
need to feel brave, just look at your scar.  
Your hand will grow bigger, and your finger will grow  
bigger, but your scar will always stay the same size.  
And it will always show up in your  
fingerprint. What's a fingerprint?  
I'll show you.

[ Vehicle Approaching ]

[ Engine Stops ]

- Those are my fingerprints.  
- Ooh. That's really neat, Ruthie.  
- So you were at the doctor's office  
getting the stitches taken out? - Uh-huh.  
And we went to the beach.  
And we had lunch.

And Eddie showed me my fingerprint.

Oh, that's really neat, Ruth.

- I see the photograph was ready finally.  
- We got the feet back!

Look at all this sand in your hair, Ruth.  
You're gonna need a bath.

Well, I was waiting quite a while  
for you this morning. Where were ya?

Where's Marion going? I'll give  
her the bath. Better read that.

- Answer me.

- Read that first.

What's this? It's the only good  
writing I've done all summer.

'60 times'?

[ Door Slams ]

Okay. Let's run.

Did you see that?

Where are all the other pictures? Uh,  
I don't know. Maybe Mommy moved them.  
Look at you. You've got sand in your toes and in  
your hair and in your ears. I got it in my crack too.  
Well, I guess it's a good time  
for a bath then.  
But Mommy didn't move those things.  
What are those things?  
They're picture hooks.  
[ Water Running From Faucet ]  
- Mommy moved all the pictures but not the picture hooks.  
- I'll give Ruth the bath.  
I'll take a quick shower.  
Yeah. Make it quick.  
Why would Mommy do that?  
I don't know, sweetie.  
[ Sighs ]  
Hi. This is Ted.  
I can't play today, Dave.  
Yeah, my wife's left me.  
No, no. I'm okay.  
Yeah. All right. Yeah.  
I'll see you then. Bye.  
[ Hangs Up Phone ]  
Aah!  
Where the fuck is my wife?  
I don't know.  
Don't lie to me.  
Jesus!  
[ Panting ]  
Christ!  
I hit you with an open hand--  
with the flat of my hand!  
You clench your fist, you  
punch me in the nose? I'm sorry.  
Jesus Christ.! I'm sorry. Marion  
said it was gonna make you stop.  
[ Ice Cubes Clinking ] 'Marion said'? If  
she thinks she's got a rat's ass of a chance...  
to get custody of Ruth,  
she's got another think coming.  
She doesn't expect to get custody of Ruth.  
She has no intention of trying.  
- [ Exhales ] She told you that?

- She told me everything I'm telling you.

[ Scoffs ] What kind of mother doesn't even try to get custody of her daughter?

I don't know.

She didn't tell me that.

God.

Okay. Okay.

Christ.

[ Ice Cubes Clatter ]

Why-- Why did she have to take all

of the photographs? There're negatives.

She could have taken the negatives and had prints of her own made. She took the negatives too.

The hell she did.

Go look for yourself.

[ Drawer Opening, Clattering ] She can't have the photographs and the negatives.

They were my sons too. I should have half the photographs, for Chrissake. What about Ruth?

Ruth should have some of the photographs.

Marion said you'd say that. But she said no.

Oh. Well, obviously, she went to New York.

I doubt it.

What do you know, Eddie?

That's the only place she could go. I even know where in the city she is. I just can't imagine her goin' to New York.

You don't have an imagination, Eddie.

[ Sighs ] Christ. Aren't you planning on getting a divorce with her anyway?

That Marion's question, or is that your question?

- It's mine.

- Eddie, just stick to what Marion told you to say, okay?

- She didn't tell me to get the photograph. That was my idea.

- Well, that was a good idea.

- I was thinking of Ruth.

- Yeah. I know you were.

Thank you.

You want a drink?

[ Ice Cubes Clinking ]

No.

What day is tomorrow, Saturday? Yeah.

I want you out of here by tomorrow. Sunday at the

latest. That's fine. I just need a ride to the ferry.

Alice can take you.

[ Sighs ]

What about this one?

Tell it!

I'm sorry, Ruth. I don't

know. Okay? I just--

This is the one with Thomas in the tall hat.

Timothy is trying to reach Thomas's hat.

Timothy can't reach Thomas's hat, 'cause Thomas is standing on a ball. Timothy got mad and started a fight.

Was the fight in the picture? No. The fight was after the picture, you dummy!

Okay. We're gonna go watch a movie. Yes. We're gonna go. No! No!

We're gonna go pick a video. Yes, we are. No!

Ruthie, stop it!

No! No!

Stop it!

No!

[ Sobbing ] [ Ice Cubes

Clinking ] Oh, Alice.

What? What have you done to Alice, Eddie?

I didn't do anything. She was crying when I first got here.

I've been asking her what's wrong, and she won't even talk to me.

[ Sighs ]

Where's Ruthie?

Uh, she's asleep. She was crying. [ Sniffles ]

[ Sighs ]

I'm sorry, Alice, for springing all of this on you.

Fuck you, Ted. I appreciate you pickin' up the slack.

I've spent years trying to get over my own fucked-up family.

And I've done the best I could with Ruth.

No.

[ Sobbing ]



No. I just can't anymore. [ Sniffing ] I'm gonna quit. I quit. And you should have the decency to quit too. It's-- It's too late for me to quit, Alice. I just got fired. I never knew you were such a superior person, Alice. [ Scoffs ] Alice has been superior to me all summer. Haven't you Alice? I am morally superior to you, Eddie. I know that much. 'Morally superior.' What a concept. Don't you ever feel morally superior, Eddie? Hmm? To you I do. Yeah. You see? Everyone feels morally superior to someone. Fuck you guys. There goes my ride to the ferry. Oh, you're a smart boy, Eddie. You'll think of someone to give you a ride. [ Ice Cubes Clinking ] [ Ted ] You want a drink? No, thanks. Oh, for Chrissake. Have a beer. [ Bottle Cap Twists Off ] Jesus. Look at this yard. Cannot believe she doesn't want custody of her own daughter. What kind of mother leaves her daughter? I don't know her well enough to judge her. [ Sighs ] Let me tell you something, Eddie. I don't know her well enough to judge her either. Yeah, well, don't forget, it's you she's really leaving. Guess she knew you pretty well. [ Chewing ] Well enough to judge me, you mean? Certainly.

But then, she's leaving you too,  
isn't she, Eddie?  
You don't expect her to call you up  
for a secret rendezvous, do you?  
No. I don't expect to hear from her.  
No, me neither.  
[ Chewing ]  
Hmm. I have drawings of her.  
I drew her long ago,  
before the accident.  
[ Sighs ] She was so-- so incredible.  
So fucking beautiful. Amazing.  
You should have known her then.  
[ Sighs ]  
Oh, Marion.  
She hated to pose for me.  
These are the only drawings I kept.  
I was never good enough  
to draw Marion.  
I didn't know how to.  
I didn't have the ability, I guess.  
You want one?  
You can have one.  
No. Ruth should have them.  
Mmm.  
That's a good idea.  
You're full of good  
ideas, Eddie. [ Sighs ]  
Wrong cubes.  
[ Gagging, Spitting ]  
[ Gagging Continues, Distant ]  
Marion?  
Jesus, aren't you the optimist?  
Forget the light, Eddie.  
This story's better in the dark.  
What story? You told me you  
asked Marion to tell it to you,  
but Marion can't handle this story.  
Turns her to stone just thinking about it.  
Remember, you turned her to stone  
just asking her about it.  
I remember.  
Go on.  
Well, here's the deal.

Thomas had his driver's license,  
but Timothy did not.  
Tommy was 17 and...  
been driving for a year.  
Timmy was 15. He had only started  
to take driving lessons.  
It was Ted's opinion that Timmy,  
who was only learning,  
was already a more attentive student  
than Thomas ever had been.  
Timmy studied the driving manual diligently.  
[ Sniffles ]  
He was a more patient driver than Thomas.  
Not that Tommy was a bad driver.  
Tommy was a good driver.  
He was alert, confident.  
He had excellent reflexes.  
And he was cynical enough to assume--  
as Ted had instructed him--  
that every other driver is a bad driver.  
Who taught to you drive, Eddie?  
Um, my dad.  
Well, good for him.  
Tell him for me,  
he did an excellent job, would you?  
Okay.  
Keep-- Keep going.  
We were out west, actually,  
and it was after a long day of skiing.  
It was snowing--  
a wet, thick snow.  
At 17 and 15, respectively,  
Thomas and Timothy  
could ski the pants off their parents.  
That day, in fact, Ted and Marion  
had retired to the bar at the ski resort...  
where they were waiting  
for a very long time...  
for Thomas and Timothy  
to finish their last run...  
and the last run after that.  
I get the picture.  
You were drunk.  
Well, that, uh--

that was one aspect  
of what would become trivial...  
in the... area of the ongoing argument  
between Marion and Ted.  
I mean, Marion said that Ted was drunk,  
although in his view, he wasn't.  
Marion, while not drunk, certainly had had  
more to drink than she was accustomed to.  
Besides, Tommy had not been drinking.  
He had his license.  
There was no disagreement  
as to who among them should be the driver.  
And, brothers being brothers,  
Timmy sat beside him in the passenger seat.  
And as for the parents,  
Ted and Marion... sat in the backseat.  
Ted and Marion  
began to quarrel...  
about the best route  
back to the hotel.  
There was gonna have to be a left turn  
no matter how Tommy did it.  
So, Tommy moves into the center lane.  
It's, um, a turning lane.  
It's not a passing lane.  
He puts on his blinker,  
not knowing that both lights  
are covered with wet, sticky snow...  
that his father failed to clear off  
at the same time his father...  
failed to clear off the rear window.  
Any cars coming up from behind Tommy's car  
can't see the directional signals or...  
the brake lights or the tail lights.  
The car is not visible,  
or it's visible only at the last second to any--  
anyone approaching from behind.  
[ Turn Signal Clicking ]  
[ Ted Narrating ] And then, the  
interior of the car is filled with light.  
- It's the headlights from the car coming up from behind.  
- [ No Audible Crash ]  
[ Exhaling Quietly ]  
[ Exhales Louder ]

The snowplow cut the car  
almost perfectly in half.

[ Metal Scraping, Crashing ]

Tommy was killed by the steering column.  
Crushed his chest. Died instantly.

And Ted...

was trapped in the backseat  
for all of 20 minutes.

He--

- He couldn't see Tommy, but he knew he was dead because Marion could see  
him.

- [ Turn Signal Clicking ]

[ Continues Narrating ] She couldn't see  
Timmy. He was directly in front of her.

Ted, however, could see  
that Timmy was still breathing.

Ted could also see that the snowplow,  
as it cut the car in half,  
also cut Timmy's left leg off  
at the thigh.

[ Clicking ]

Timothy Cole bled to death  
of a severed femoral artery.

[ Exhales ]

Marion knew that Tommy was dead,  
but only that Timmy  
had been carried from the wreckage,  
hopefully... to the hospital.

And then Marion,  
she sees Timmy's shoe in the wreckage.

'Oh, look. Timmy's shoe.

He's gonna need his shoe. ''

And she walks over to it,  
reaches down to pick it up.

Ted-- Ted wanted to stop her.

[ Sighs ]

[ Chuckles ]

Talk about turned to stone.

I couldn't move.

I couldn't even speak.

And that was when Ted  
allowed his wife to discover...

that her younger son's shoe  
was attached...

to a leg.  
And that was when Marion realized  
that Timmy was gone... too.  
And that--  
that is the end of the story.  
I hired you, Eddie,  
because you look like Thomas.  
I gave her you.  
See you in the morning, Eddie.  
[ Door Closes ]  
It's Eduardo.  
What's Eduardo doing here?  
I don't know. Maybe Mrs.  
Vaughn hired him to kill you.  
No, no.  
Not-- Not Eduardo.  
You don't see her out there anywhere, do  
you? She's not in the cab or in the back.  
Maybe she's lying underneath the  
truck. [ Pop-top Cracks Open ]  
- I'm being serious, for Chrissake.  
- So am I.  
Why-- Why don't you go out there  
and, um, see what he wants?  
Not me.  
I've been fired.  
Oh, for Chrissake.  
What?  
Wha--  
[ Sighs ]  
At least go with me then.  
I can't go out there alone.  
Mrs. Vaughn fired me.  
Eduardo, Eduardo, Eduardo.  
Let me make sure I understand you.  
You think you saved my life,  
and this cost you your job?  
Yes, I did save your life, and it  
did cost me my job. Well, Eduardo,  
I play squash regularly,  
and I'm pretty fleet of foot, um,  
but I do-- I do appreciate  
your brave warning.  
How much money are we talking about exactly?

I'm not here for a 'hand-down,' Mr. Cole.

I was hoping you might  
have some work for me.

Ah.

Let me-- Let me show you  
where I want to put a pool.

I want, uh, more lawn,  
like an athletic field, you know?

Just, uh, pretty big. You  
want some lines painted on it?

No, no.

Just the size of an athletic field.

Wow. That's a lotta lawn.

A lotta mowin'. All right.

And a lot of fertilizers.

Yeah.

Well, whatever you say. I'm putting  
you in charge. Thank you, Mr. Cole.

What about your wife?

What about her? Oh, uh, does  
she work, or what does she do?

Yeah, sure.

Sure, she works.

She cooks, she look  
after our children. Mmm.

Maybe, uh--

Maybe she'd like to clean my house.

Or maybe she'd like  
to cook for me and, uh,  
look after my daughter, Ruth.

Sure. I'll ask her.

Yeah?

Good. Good. Excellent.

Gotta do something about  
these straggly flower beds too.

[ Eduardo ] Oh.

You can start today, Eduardo.

You can begin by taking my former assistant  
to Orient Point, hmm? Sure. I can do that.

Uh, immediately. Before  
breakfast, huh? Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

Well, you're a fairly good driver, Eddie.

About Marion,

there's another thing you should know.

Even before the accident--  
I mean, even--  
even if there had never been  
an accident,  
she still would be difficult.  
I don't believe it.  
About the shoe,  
it was a basketball shoe--  
an 'Air Jordan,' I think he called it.  
Specific details, Eddie.  
Specific details.  
- [ Slapping Door ]  
- [ Engine Starts ]  
[ Racket Hitting Squash Ball, Distant ]  
[ Hitting Ball Continues, Distant ]  
[ Breathing Heavily ]  
[ Racket Clatters On Floor ]