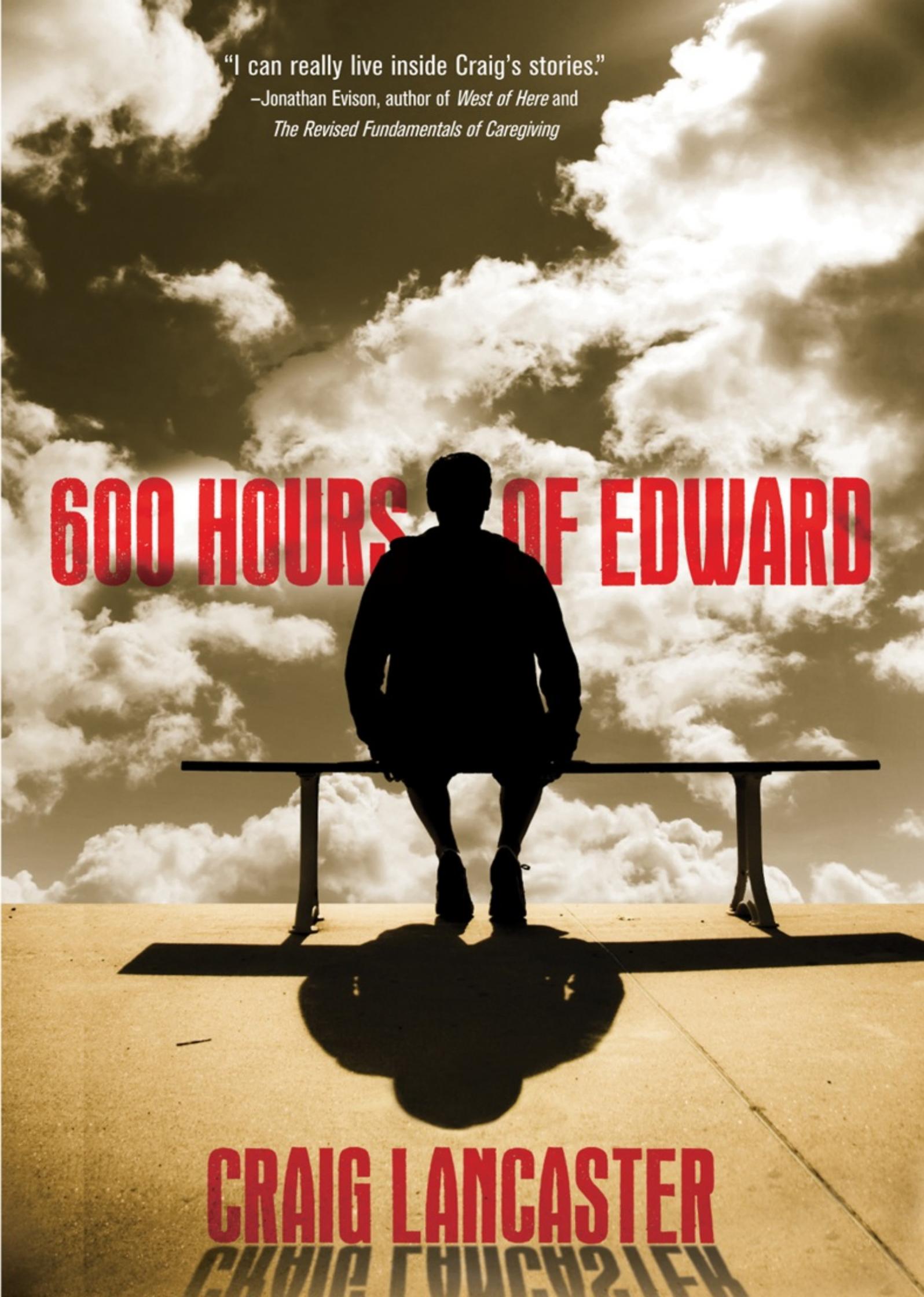


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# 600 HOURS OF EDWARD



CRAIG LANCASTER

# PRAISE FOR 600 HOURS OF EDWARD

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# 600 HOURS OF EDWARD

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CRAIG LANCASTER



The characters and events portrayed in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

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Published by AmazonEncore  
P.O. Box 400818  
Las Vegas, NV 89140

ISBN-13: 9781612184104  
ISBN-10: 1612184103

This book is for Angela Dawn, who believed that I could do it then and believes in me  
still.

Our story goes on and on, sweetheart.

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To whom it may concern:

*This is a story of how my life changed. That is what one could call a dramatic statement. It's like when people find God; they say, "I found God, and it changed my life." I did not find God. I am dubious that anyone can. When someone says he has found God, he doesn't mean it in the way that one would say he found a penny or something else tangible. He is talking about inner peace or something like that, I suppose. I don't know. I haven't found God, and I don't like supposition. I prefer facts.*

*Even without God, my life did change, and Dr. Buckley suggested that I write about it. She said that writing about it would be a good project for me and one that might even help me understand how it happened and why. Dr. Buckley is a very logical woman, and I always need a new project.*

*In looking back, I can fit what happened into twenty-five days, or six hundred hours. I prefer to think of it in terms of hours, as I live my life as much by a clock as a calendar. I will tell it as it happened, from where I viewed it. Others may have seen it another way. They can tell their own stories if they want to.*

*I'll start with the last day that everything was normal, or what I believed normal to be. That's the problem with belief: if you rely on it too heavily, you have a lot of picking up to do after you find out you were wrong. I prefer facts.*

Regards,  
Edward Stanton

# MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

My eyes flash open. I wait a moment for the dull blur of morning light to come into focus, and then I turn my head ninety degrees to the left and face the clock: It is 7:38 a.m. I have been awake at this time for the past three days, and for eighteen out of the past twenty. Because I go to bed promptly at midnight, I am accustomed to stirring at 7:38, but occasionally, I will wake up a little earlier or a little later. The range isn't large—sometimes it's 7:37, and sometimes it's 7:40, and it has been 7:39 (twenty-two times this year, in fact), but 7:38 is the time I expect. It has happened 221 times so far this year, so if it were you, you would expect it, too. (You're probably wondering how frequently I've been up at other times: fifteen for 7:37 and twenty-nine for 7:40.) Although I do my part by going to bed at midnight sharp, the variances occur because of things I can't control, like the noise made by my neighbors or passing cars or sirens. These things frustrate me, but I cannot do anything about them.

I write down the time I woke up, and my data is complete.

You've probably done the math and know that it's the 287th day of the year. The reason, aside from the sheer scientific fact that Earth has rotated on its axis that many times, is that it's a leap year. I have to take the leap year into account in my calculations, but that's easy for me to do, as it comes up only once every four years.

I can tell when my feet touch the floor that the house is warm, warmer than it usually is for October 13, and this has nothing to do with the leap year. The house has hardwood floors, which are good for reflecting whether it's hot or cold. I have read about newer houses with something called radiant floor heating, where the floors are the source of heat for the home, but this house doesn't have that. While I am intrigued by the notion, I have to remember that this house was built in 1937, and the cost of retrofitting it for radiant floor heating would be prohibitive. My father could afford it, and it is, in fact, his house and not mine, but he never would do it. He's never here, and so it probably doesn't make any difference to him that radiant floor heating would be a lot more economical. It should matter to him, as he pays the heating bill, but my father sometimes is not a logical person. I can't worry about this now, although I have half a mind to write him a letter and tell him that he is being foolish for not thinking of radiant floor heating.

I walk across the hardwood floor of the house, open the front door, and pick the *Billings Herald-Gleaner* off the stoop. According to the front page, the temperature will reach seventy-two degrees today in Billings, and that is as I suspected when my feet touched the floor: It will be warm for October 13. It's far warmer than last October 13 (fifty-six degrees). Of course, I won't know for sure until tomorrow's

newspaper comes, the one with the official temperature for today. The number on the front page today is just a forecast, and forecasts are notoriously off base.

I flip over to the back page of the Local & State section and look at the weather data from yesterday, Sunday, October 12, the 286th day of the year (but only because this is a leap year). The weather data is always on the back page of the Local & State section, and while it does bother me that the Local & State section is sometimes Section B and sometimes Section C, I have learned to cope with this inconsistency, as I have no choice. I once wrote to the editor to complain about it, but I did not receive a reply.

The high temperature yesterday was fifty-three and the low temperature was thirty-one, and those are much more in line with the ten-year trends that I have recorded in my notebooks. I write those numbers down, and my data is complete.

— • —

My father bought this house eight years ago. Actually, it was eight years and eighty-six days ago. He bought it for me to live in because I had become “a distraction whose presence was proving divisive in the family home.” My father didn’t write those words; his lawyer did. I have never heard my father refer to the “family home” before or since.

The reason I know that his lawyer wrote the letter is that it arrived on the lawyer’s letterhead. I do sometimes talk to my father face-to-face, but many times, it is followed up with a letter, sometimes on his letterhead and sometimes on the lawyer’s. I have not figured out how to predict which letterhead I will receive, although I can always predict the letters. I don’t trust predictions anyway. I prefer facts.

I live in this house alone. When my father bought it for me, he made it clear that I was to have no roommates without approval. I don’t know why my father worried about it. A roommate would probably mess up my routines and fool with my weather data. I know how roommates are. I have seen the television comedy *Perfect Strangers*, although not in many years, as it was canceled in 1993. I liked Balki Bartokomous. He was very funny. If I had a roommate like Balki, though, I would have to keep watch over my weather data. His rambunctiousness (I love the word “rambunctiousness”) would wear on me if he started fooling with my data.

— • —

The two-drawer filing cabinet in my bedroom holds one of the most important collections I have. Inside are my letters of complaint. I have them filed in green office folders under the name of the person I am complaining to, and in those files, the letters are arranged by date.

You are probably thinking that it is odd to keep copies of letters of complaint, and you would be right if not for the fact that these are not copies. These are the actual letters of complaint, and they will never be sent.

The letters are Dr. Buckley’s idea. I don’t know where she got it, but it’s a great

one. Eight years ago, after my father and his lawyer persuaded Garth Brooks to drop the restraining order against me, my father bought this house for me. He seemed to suggest that the “Garth Brooks incident,” as he still calls it, was what caused him and my mother to decide that I could no longer live in the “family home.” I think that my letters of complaint to Garth Brooks were entirely justified. If you look objectively at country music, you cannot come to any conclusion other than he ruined it. He also ruined a lot of pop music, especially when he pretended to be that Chris Gaines person and when he covered that song by Kiss. I merely wrote to him and let him know about the damage he was doing, because I thought that maybe he didn’t know and would stop if he did. I had to write to him forty-nine times before he wrote back, but it wasn’t really him. It was his lawyer.

After that, I came to live here, and I had to start seeing Dr. Buckley. I have seen her every Tuesday of every month of every year since then. She encouraged me to continue to write my letters of complaint, but she suggested that I not send them so I do not have trouble with other people. I will admit that it didn’t make a lot of sense to me at the time, but it really does work. Writing the letters makes me feel better. I find that after I write one and file it away, I soon no longer wish to send it.

Dr. Buckley is a very logical woman.

— • —

Every night at 10:00 sharp, I watch *Dragnet*. I watch only the color episodes of *Dragnet*, the ones that were made between 1967 and 1970. *Dragnet* does not appear on television anymore, so I have to watch the episodes that I recorded on videocassette in 2000, when the TV Land network was still showing it. I have all ninety-eight color episodes on videocassette.

Because today is October 13, the 287th day of the year (because of the leap year), I will be watching the ninety-first episode of the series, “Burglary: The Dognappers.” This will be the third time this year that I have seen this episode, which originally aired on February 26, 1970.

Here is my method for watching *Dragnet*: On January 1 of every year, I start with the first episode of *Dragnet*. I then watch the episodes in succession, one each night, until I reach the end, and then I start over.

Because the 365 days in a year—or 366 days in a leap year—are not cleanly divisible by ninety-eight episodes, I will watch each of the episodes at least three times a year, and I will watch the first seventy-two episodes four times. Because this is a leap year, I’ll watch the first seventy-three episodes four times. You would think that I would know the first seventy-two (or seventythree) episodes a little better than the others because of the disparity (I love the word “disparity”) in watching them, but I have no proof that’s true. Perhaps I should see if I can find the scripts and run some calculations on how many of the words from the first seventy-two (or seventy-three) I know, as opposed to the last twenty-six (or twenty-five). That will be a good project for another time.

“Burglary: The Dognappers,” the nineteenth episode of the fourth and final season of the color episodes, is one of my favorites. In this episode, Sergeant Joe

Friday and Officer Bill Gannon work a case involving people who steal dogs from cars and then return them to the owners for reward money. You could make a credible case that every *Dragnet* episode has a moral component, but this one does especially. It's not right to steal. Also, people love their pets, if they have them. I do not have pets.

As always, in this episode, Sergeant Joe Friday is a very logical person, and while Officer Bill Gannon isn't as logical, he can be funny. I like them both.

— • —

After *Dragnet*, I get things ready for the next morning. I double-check my wake-up time and weather data and then put my notebook on the end table beside the bedroom door so I can find it first thing after I wake up. I also put three pens beside the notebook, because I don't want to be in a situation where I can't write down the time I wake up and the temperatures from the previous day. One backup pen is just asking for trouble, so I make sure I have two.

The last thing I do before going to sleep is I write my letter of complaint. It's hard sometimes to wait until the very end of the day to do this, but it jumbles my day up too much when I write my letter of complaint at the moment that someone makes me mad. If I'm not careful about the timing, for example, I could miss the 10:00 p.m. start of *Dragnet*, and that would just foul up everything. Also, writing the letter at the end of the day allows me some "separation time" between the incident that made me angry and my response to it. Dr. Buckley says that I can avoid many bad situations by learning to use "separation time." She is a very logical woman.

As you might expect, I'm going to complain to my father. I already have five green office folders that hold letters of complaint to him. Soon, I may need six.

*Dear Father:*

*I think you have erred in not considering radiant floor heating for the house that I am living in. I have read many articles about this type of flooring, and it is my understanding that by utilizing pipes in the concrete floor that carry hot water, you can significantly reduce your energy costs. As you know, in Montana, winter can be very cold. I think that radiant floor heating would bring substantial savings, although I will concede that there is an upfront cost of installation that must be considered.*

*I also must concede that perhaps you have thought of radiant floor heating and simply have not communicated those thoughts to me. I would ask that you show me the common courtesy of letting me know what you're thinking in regard to this issue, for if you decide to install radiant floor heating, I will have to adjust my life to accommodate the intrusion of a contractor.*

*Finally, I would urge you to not use the unseasonably warm weather we have been having as an excuse to disregard the heating apparatus of this house. I have ten years' worth of weather data that show conclusively that we will, at some point, come in for some cold weather. That said, I do not like to rely on predictions. I*

*shall wait for the facts to bear this out before contacting you further.  
I appreciate your consideration.*

*With regards, I am your son,  
Edward*

# TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

The sound of a lawn mower jolts me awake. I turn to face the clock, and it reads 7:28. This is an oddity. Every previous day this year, I have awoken at 7:37, 7:38, 7:39, or 7:40. Now, on the 288th day of this year (because it is a leap year), I am awake at 7:28. Further, I am all but certain that I have never awoken at this particular time. I will have to check my data, as I don't like to trust assumptions. I prefer facts.

I retrieve my notebook from the end table and grab a pen. I record my waking time, and my data is complete.

At the front door, I bend over and retrieve the *Billings Herald-Gleaner* from the front stoop. I can now see the source of my early awakening: The woman across the street, the one who moved in on September 12 (the 256th day of this year, but only because it is a leap year), is mowing her front yard. I have seen her a few times since she moved in, but this is the first time I have seen her mowing her front yard. A boy lives with her, and I assume that he is her son, although I don't like to assume. He looks to be eight or nine years old, but I'm not comfortable with such conjecture. If I could find out the boy's birth date, I would know for sure and would feel more comfortable about the situation. There is a big difference between the ages of eight and nine, and in this case, I just don't know. This frustrates me.

I have not seen a man over there, and so I wonder whether my neighbor has a husband or her boy has a father. I would be sad to think that he doesn't, but having a father isn't necessarily a good thing. I have one, and while he did buy this house for me to live in, he also has his lawyer send me a lot of letters and may not have given any thought to radiant floor heating.

I see now that the woman across the street has stopped pushing the lawn mower and is waving at me. I think it would be better if I looked at the weather information and recorded it inside. I close the door. Soon, my data will be complete.

— • —

After breakfast, I thumb through my voluminous (I love the word "voluminous") data sheets, and I am correct: Before today, I have never awoken at 7:28 a.m. Today is a landmark.

— • —

Because I have many things to do today, including my weekly appointment with Dr. Buckley, I will have to put off my Internet time until later. I meet with Dr. Buckley promptly at 10:00 a.m., just as I have every Tuesday of every month of every year since I started seeing her, save for one.

On Tuesday, June 11, 2002, Dr. Buckley had to move my appointment to 11:00 a.m. It was a disaster. All I could think about was that the shuffling had put my 10:00 p.m. viewing of *Dragnet*—episode number sixty-four, “Frauds: DR-28”—in jeopardy, and so I could not answer questions about how my medication was doing or what projects I was working on or how my letters of complaint were working out. Dr. Buckley cut the session short, which mitigated against the damage done to my schedule, and we both agreed that from then on, we would meet at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesdays.

This is one of the things I like about Dr. Buckley. Although she sometimes makes mistakes, she is a very logical person.

— • —

My first stop is Home Depot, in the paint department. I have decided to paint the garage. I need a new project, and the ten-day weather forecast looks as though it will allow me to do this. I don’t like forecasts, though, as they are notoriously off base. I will have to wait for the actual data, and it is my hope that by then the garage will be painted.

There are more paint varieties and colors here than there were the last time I was at Home Depot. There must be an entire arm of the paint industry dedicated to coming up with new colors and combinations, and I instantly wish that I had looked at some possibilities on the Internet before coming here. I’m frustrated with myself for not thinking of this.

The man in the paint department, who is supposed to assist me, isn’t helpful at all. He asks many questions, faster than I can answer them, and he is talking about things like ambience, things that I don’t care about. I just want to find the right paint.

“Leave me alone,” I say.

The paint man trudges away, shaking his head.

Did you know that there are NFL team colors available in paint? I am intrigued by this. I like the Dallas Cowboys, but I don’t think that I would want their colors on the garage. I will have to think of a project that would work with Dallas Cowboys team-color paint. This is something I would like to do, sometime after I finish the garage.

After I spend a few more minutes looking at swatches, it’s obvious that the paint situation is hopeless. I cannot decide on a color, and I can feel the urge to rip these swatches from the wall welling up inside of me. I close my eyes, as Dr. Buckley has suggested that I do when I feel this way, and I try to breathe. Dr. Buckley says that when I feel overwhelmed by frustration, I should think before I act and find the path that will carry me away from the frustration.

Dr. Buckley is a very logical person. I do as she has counseled me, and my path becomes clear.

I walk over to the unhelpful man and say, “I would like three gallons each of the Behr mochachino the Behr parsley sprig, and the Behr bronze green.”

As the unhelpful man walks over to gather the supplies needed to mix my paints, he is shaking his head again.

— • —

I like Dr. Buckley’s waiting room. The walls have dark wood paneling, and the lighting sets me at ease. Dr. Buckley also plays soft music in her waiting room. I prefer rock music—my favorites are R.E.M. and Matthew Sweet—but I think that if Dr. Buckley played Matthew Sweet, some of her patients would not like it. Matthew Sweet has a song called “Sick of Myself,” and I am pretty sure that is exactly the wrong song name for a therapist’s waiting room.

I try to arrive at least ten minutes early for my 10:00 a.m. appointment, although I can never be sure exactly what time I will get here. Things like stoplights and the uncertainty of where in the parking lot I will find a place for my car affect it. I once asked Dr. Buckley if I could have my own parking space, but she assured me that was not possible.

I arrive early for two reasons: First, as I said, the lighting and wood paneling and the soft music help set me at ease. Second, Dr. Buckley’s other, less-organized patients are always getting the magazines out of order. I sometimes need the full ten minutes to organize the magazines by title and date. I would do it after our appointment, when I have more time, but Dr. Buckley prefers that her patients not linger.

Today, however, the magazines are not badly out of sorts, and so I have three minutes to just sit and listen to the music.

— • —

When Dr. Buckley emerges from her office to summon me in, I look down at my digital watch, and the time is 9:59:28. I tell Dr. Buckley that it is not quite time for my appointment, and so we stare at each other for thirty-two seconds.

— • —

There is a rhythm to my talks with Dr. Buckley. She asks many of the same questions every week, but it’s not by rote. She is interested in my answers. Dr. Buckley has never been less than professional, and she is a very logical person.

“How has your week been, Edward?”

“Very good, I think. My data is complete, and before I came here today, I bought some paint for the garage.”

“It’s a little late in the year for that, isn’t it?”

“The ten-day forecast looks good.”

“You’re trusting forecasts now?”

“No, but you’ve told me that I should have a little faith, right?”  
“Very good. Have you been taking your medication?”  
“Every day. Eighty milligrams every day.”  
“Any problems with the Prozac?”  
“I prefer the term fluoxetine.”  
“Any problems?”  
“No.”  
“Excellent. Are you still writing letters?”  
“I wrote one to my father last night.”  
“But you didn’t send it, right?”  
“No.”  
“What was your complaint to your father?”  
“I don’t think he’s even considered radiant floor heating. Do you realize how much money he could save?”  
“Radiant floors are nice. Do you know why this is so important to you?”  
“It’s not that it’s important. I’m frustrated that he hasn’t thought of it. It doesn’t speak well of him.”  
“Do you think, perhaps, that it might be too much to expect that your father has thought of radiant floors just because you have?”  
“I don’t know. Maybe. He makes me mad.”  
“We can talk about that some more.”

— • —

Tuesday is also the day that I go to the grocery store. It just makes good sense. Dr. Buckley’s office is at Lewis Avenue and Sixteenth Street W., which means that I can go north on Sixteenth to Grand Avenue, take a right turn, and be at the Albertsons store three blocks later. After shopping, I can take a right turn on Grand, then another right turn on Sixth Street W., then another right turn on Clark Avenue, where I live.

I like right turns much better than I like left turns.

At Albertsons, I buy the same things every week: three packages of spaghetti, three pounds of ground beef (the kind with only 4 percent fat), three bottles of Newman’s Own roasted garlic spaghetti sauce, a twelve-pack of Diet Dr Pepper, a big box of corn flakes, a half gallon of milk, a quart of Dreyer’s vanilla ice cream, five assorted frozen Banquet dinners, and one DiGiorno pizza (usually spicy chicken).

I can get three meals out of each box of spaghetti; spaghetti is my favorite food. I mix the spaghetti with a package of ground beef and one of the bottles of spaghetti sauce. That’s nine meals total. The five Banquet dinners bring the total to fourteen meals. I can get seven bowls of cereal from the corn flakes, so that’s twenty-one meals, or three a day for the seven days of the week. The ice cream and the DiGiorno pizza are treats.

Ever since the Albertsons on Grand put in self-checkout stands, I have been a happier shopper. Before, I sometimes had to wait behind several people in line, and that threatened to affect the projects I had at home and, conceivably, although it never happened, could have caused me to miss the 10:00 p.m. start of my *Dragnet* episode.

I'm no longer permitted to go to the Albertsons on Sixth Street W. and Central Avenue, which is actually closer to the house that my father bought for me.

It was a dumb situation: I was in the checkout line behind an old woman, and she and the checker were talking a lot, and the line was moving slowly. I asked if they could quit talking so I could leave faster, and the checker shot me a mean glance and then kept talking. So then I said, "Please, hurry up because I have to leave soon." The man behind me didn't like this and pushed me, and I ran into the old lady and knocked her down.

The store manager called the police, and my father had to come to the store and tell the police that he would make sure it never happened again, even though I told them that it was not my fault and that I wouldn't have run into the woman if I had not been pushed. Nobody believed me.

You can probably guess that the whole thing ended up involving a letter from my father's lawyer, who ordered me not to go back to that Albertsons ever again.

But now that the Albertsons on Grand Avenue and Thirteenth Street W. has self-checkout stands, I think it's a moot point. I don't have to talk to anyone to pay for my groceries now.

— • —

After I get home and unload and put away the groceries, I notice that the mailman has already been to the house. Ideally, I would like to add to my data sheets the time that the mail is delivered each day, but my projects and appointments sometimes take me away from the house, and so I don't always see the mailman when he comes by. I might be able to rig up a video camera that would record his visit even when I'm not home, but Dr. Buckley says that is the sort of impulse that I need to work on controlling.

I don't receive much mail. My bills go directly to my father, and he pays them. My name is not on this house or on my car, and so even junk mail is scarce. That's how the junk mail people find out who you are and where you live. They go snooping around in public records, like home and car titles, and then they write to you. Also, if you apply for credit cards, you are sure to get all sorts of junk mail. The only credit card I have is for my expenses, and the bill goes to my father. If this card has resulted in junk mail, I can only assume that my father is receiving it. I don't like to assume. I prefer facts.

Today, there is one letter in the mailbox. It is from my father, in an envelope from his office. I am relieved that I am not hearing from my father's lawyer, but hearing from my father isn't necessarily better. I will have to open the letter to find out.

*Edward:*

*I have received your credit card bill from last month. Everything looks to be in order, but I am confused by one charge: \$49.95 for eHarmony.*

*Call me so we can address this.*

*Ted Stanton*

I had a suspicion that this was going to happen. Now it is a fact.

I go inside the house, pick up the phone, and dial the number at my father's office.

"Yellowstone County Commissioners."

"It's Edward Stanton. Let me talk to my father."

"One moment, please."

I listen to the orchestral version of a pop song—Muzak, it is called. Paul McCartney's "My Love."

"Ted Stanton."

"Father."

"Edward, thank you for calling. How are you?"

"I am fine, Father."

"Can you tell me about this forty-nine dollars and ninety-five cents?"

"I signed up for eHarmony."

"What is that?"

"It's an online dating service."

"You're dating?"

"I am looking at online personal advertisements."

"Does Dr. Buckley know about this?"

"My treatment with Dr. Buckley is between me and Dr. Buckley."

"Online dating, eh?"

"Yes."

My father's voice softens. "Well. This could be interesting, Edward. This could be something good for you."

"You're going to pay the bill?"

"Sure. Yes. Why not?"

"It's the only one you will get. I canceled the membership."

"Oh."

"Good-bye, Father."

— • —

I guess I should tell you about eHarmony. I spend a lot of time on the computer looking at websites on the Internet. I used to keep track of how many hours and minutes I spent on the Internet, but I don't do that anymore. It was easy when you had to pay for the time on the Internet, because you could just write down the time when you got the bill. Now the Internet is hooked up through my cable television, and I can spend as much time as I want on it for one price, which my father pays. It bothers me sometimes that I don't keep track of the time I spend on the Internet, but I've learned to "let that go," as Dr. Buckley says. Dr. Buckley was very happy for me when I

stopped tracking my Internet time. I'm not sure why she cared.

Lately, I have been spending most of my online time at Internet dating sites. On the television commercials, everyone who is finding dates online seems so happy, and all of them have found a "soul mate," whatever that is. I doubt that they have any scientific proof that they have found their soul mate—for all they know, someone even more special is out there dating someone else—but I cannot argue with how happy they all are. I am envious.

I have not gone on an Internet date. I think I would like to go on an Internet date, but so far I haven't met anyone who keeps track of weather data, and I think it is important that whomever I date on the Internet have something in common with me.

I have not told Dr. Buckley about the Internet dating yet, as there is nothing to tell. I wouldn't have told my father, either, but he got the bill and asked me about it, so I had no choice.

I now use Montana Personal Connect. I tried eHarmony, because I liked the white hair and glasses of that guy on the commercials, and his manner was gentle, but eHarmony told me that its system and its twenty-nine levels of compatibility couldn't find anyone for me.

That hurt my feelings.

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At 10:00 p.m. sharp, I watch episode number ninety-two of *Dragnet*, which originally aired on March 5, 1970.

The episode, the twentieth of the fourth and final season, is called "Missing Persons: The Body," and it is one of my favorites.

In this episode, Sergeant Joe Friday and Officer Bill Gannon have only two clues to identify a woman who was found dead under the Venice Pier in Los Angeles: a wadded piece of paper and a ring. But because of their doggedness, they eventually find out who she was and crack the case. Sergeant Joe Friday and Officer Bill Gannon are good cops.

When I started to learn my way around the Internet, I found that the actors who appeared on *Dragnet* were, in many cases, not difficult to track down. Most of them were not big stars, and some even have listed phone numbers and addresses. That's not the case with the main actors in this episode, Anthony Eisley, Virginia Gregg, and Luana Patten; they are all dead. A lot of other people who were in the ensemble are dead, too, but some are alive. I exchanged some mail with an actor named Clark Howat, who appeared in twenty-one episodes of *Dragnet*. He was very nice. He told me how the star and creator of the show, Jack Webb, who plays Sergeant Joe Friday, didn't want his actors to act because the series had such a small budget and could not afford more than one take on each scene. Instead, Jack Webb had them read their lines off teleprompters. Mr. Howat said it was hard to get used to, as actors' training is to be more natural. But, he said, Jack Webb's methods worked. I wrote back to Mr. Howat five or six times, and even invited him to have a cup of coffee with me if he ever came through Billings, but he never wrote back. It's just as well. I don't like coffee, and I think it would be difficult to sit at a table with a stranger and talk, even if he was in