

Caught Being

A note from the person who gave you this:

Hello.

Thanks for spending a little time with these workbooks.

They aren't races.

They're walks.

Some people move through one in an afternoon.

Others take their time over days or weeks.

Either is just fine.

I won't ask you to agree with everything here.

I won't ask you to finish every page.

I won't ask you to do every exercise.

I'll simply invite you to notice a few ordinary moments as you go.

If something stays with you, wonderful.

If nothing does, that's okay too.

Thank you for taking the walk anyway.

I'm glad you're here.

— *Frank*

Caught
Being

A Workbook

By

Frank Wood



A CAUGHT SOONER BOOK

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This book was written to be shared in spirit. Please feel free to recommend it, lend it, or give it to someone who may find it useful.

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For more information, visit
caughtsooner.com

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Welcome

Yes, this is a workbook.

Eight lessons.

Some short stories. A few small questions along the way.

Nothing here is going to transform you.

Not the goal.

The goal is smaller.

To notice the thing a little sooner than you might have.

That's it.

And — worth saying.

This workbook works with you. Not on you.

Some part of you brings the willingness to look.

The lessons meet that part.

Where the willingness goes, the work goes.

That part is yours.

It does ask something of you.

A little focus.

Not a lot.

Enough to be in the room while you're reading.

If this is your first Caught book — welcome.

Different door. Same you.

If you've been to another one of these — welcome back.

Different room. Same porch.

You'll see a similar structure.

Eight lessons. Stories. Small questions. Two letters at the close.

That's intentional. And it's not rocket science. It's structure.

Similar to:

— *houses. Studs. Joists. Headers. The framing the walls hang on.*

— *roads. Shoulders. Lane markings. The grade of the curve. The drainage you don't see.*

— *other places where the same load gets carried the same way.*

What changes is what each book is about. The structure stays.

Live in the house. Drive on the road. Carry the lesson.

Once you see the structure, you can stop noticing it. The lessons do the rest.

This workbook will explore something that may already be operating in you.

A line, a look, a move, a version of you that arrives before you've quite chosen it.

Lesson 1 will both name the workbook's focus and offer you an anchor — a way of helping visualize the book's focus.

The pace is yours.

Take what you take.

Come in.

A Note from David

Hello.

I'm glad you're here.

You can call me David.

You'll find me throughout the Caught workbooks, audio lessons, and other conversations that live around this work.

Over the next few lessons, I'll be walking alongside you through this workbook.

Whether you're sitting with a coffee, taking a walk, riding a train, or spending a few quiet minutes in your favorite chair, think of these pages less as a class and more as a conversation.

As you read, you may notice stories, questions, and small moments to reflect on. There are no grades here. No right pace. No finish line.

Just ideas to sit with.

If it helps, imagine me as a workbook companion. A friendly voice
beside you on a porch, a park bench, or a walk around the
neighborhood.

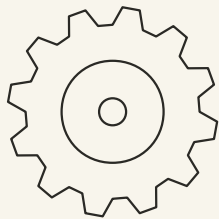
Take what helps.

Leave what doesn't.

And take your time.

I'm glad you're here.

— *David*



LESSON 1

Being is a word

*Being is partly the moves we made before we noticed
we were making them.*

Glad you're here.

This one's for the person who keeps showing up in moments a little ahead of themselves.

The phrase that's already out.

The move that's already made.

The version of you already in the room.

If that is you —

What you find here may help.

To arrive a little more on purpose.

A little more like the you you'd choose.

Glad you found this.

STORIES.

Two small moments before we go further. No hurry.

The sidewalk.

I was on a walk the other morning.

A woman approached and shared that we had a common friend. She remembered me. Then — having established sufficient footing — began sharing.

Her husband's health. Plans on selling the condo. The move from warm-local to north. Yes there's snow, but. Then her family. Two or three children, all grown. She's hoping it'll work out.

I stood there on the sidewalk and listened.

My weight settled into one leg. My head tilted slightly. I made the small sounds at the right places. I asked the one or two clarifying questions that kept her going.

The whole thing lasted maybe six or seven minutes.

She thanked me and went on her way.

I walked the rest of my walk.

She was a person who felt that caring is sharing. She shared with friends, with friends of friends, even with strangers. She had learned sharing is important and so sharing is what she did. Sharing is who she was.

She had found someone to put these facts to.

I had become that someone before she'd finished the second sentence.

Maybe because sharing is what she did, was who she was.

— *I've stood on a sidewalk like that.*

— *Different stranger. Same first gear.*

Hey hey hey.

I have a friend I've known forty years.

Hey hey hey.

On nearly every greeting. Same tempo. Same warmth. Same three.

Once this closes.

Applied to the kids. To work. To golf. To the holidays. Whatever's currently happening that he's waiting to be on the other side of.

I've sat on his porch and listened to next week for the fortieth time.

The hey hey hey arrives before he's seen who he's greeting.

The once this closes arrives before he's chosen what to say.

He was or is a person who knows how to keep things light and that when interacting with a friend, even a friend of a friend, or even a stranger, keeping things light is what you do. Because, keeping things light is how life works. And keeping things light is just what he does.

— *Forty years of the same two lines, from a man I've known for an entire life.*

— *Forty years in first gear.*

Most of us have a phrase like that.

Said about us by people who love us.

Said by us about people we love.

Some phrases families use about people they love.

The competitive one.

The worrier. He's the worrier, it's just who he is.

The planner. She's the planner, it's just who she is.

The fixer. She's the fixer, it's just who she is.

The accomplisher. He is the accomplisher, it's just who he is.

The one who keeps things light. You know this person too.

Probably three came to mind right away.

Probably one is sitting on the couch in your own house.

Sally is the organizer of her family.

She's been the organizer for as long as anyone can remember.

Sally being Sally — she plans everything.

That's just Sally.

Jim is the shy one in his family.

He's been the shy one for as long as anyone can remember.

Jim being Jim — he doesn't say much.

That's just Jim.

Years ago my mom asked me a question.

She was in her eighties.

We were at the kitchen table.

She said —

Was I too competitive with you when you were seven?

I thought about it for a long time before I answered.

You were just mom.

In this workbook we'll call it the gear.

The thing the family knows you by.

The phrase that fits.

The move that arrives ahead of you.

The version of you the room has come to expect.

Most of us have a gear we figured out a long time ago.

A move we still make. A line that still comes. Something we picked up
at some point and somehow kept using.

The gear is the same.

Just a different sidewalk. A different porch.

The gear has been helpful.

Most of the time it's served you well.

Most of the time it's served the people around you well too.

The gear sometimes constrains.

It shows up in moments that didn't ask for it.

It arrives before you have looked at who is in front of you.

A little smoother. A little quicker.

A little less like the you you'd choose if you were choosing.

That's the cost.

Not the gear.

The shape of it goes something like this.

It came naturally.

Was used and re-used.

Here and there.

Others noticed.

Became your way of being.

It's now just who you are.

Six lines.

We'll be coming back to them.

ONE QUESTION.

If you'd like.

If you're able — think of your way of being.

Probably how you're known.

Probably how you know yourself.

The shape of who you tend to be.

That's your way of being.

Sit with it.

You named your way of being.

That is the beginning.

NEXT LESSON.

A glimpse of what's ahead. Held lightly.

The gear came from a moment.

See you in Lesson 2.

CARRY THIS.

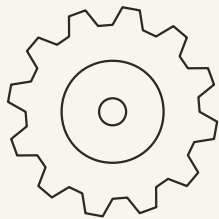
This week — once — notice the phrase your family uses about you.

Or the phrase you use about yourself.

Just notice it.

Sooner than you might have.

That is enough.



LESSON 2

Where I figured it out

The gear came from a moment that asked for it.

Glad you came back.

Last lesson — the phrase. The gear underneath the phrase.

Something you carry that you didn't quite decide to carry.

This lesson is about where the gear got figured out.

Whatever you noticed — it had a beginning.

Somewhere.

Specific.

STORIES.

Two small ones before we go further. No rush.

The table.

I learned to keep things smooth at my parents' table when I was nine.

My father came home tired. My mother came home tired. The table was the place we all met for an hour.

If something was off — somebody's day, somebody's mood, somebody's tone — I noticed it before I knew I was noticing.

I'd say something light.
Or ask about something safe.
Or make my sister laugh.
The table would settle.

I didn't decide to do this.
It came naturally.
By eleven I was the one the table relied on without anyone saying so.

I'm fifty-four now.
The other day I was at a work lunch with three people I barely know.
Someone said something a little sharp.
I felt my mouth move before I knew it was moving.
I said the light thing.
The table settled.

That was me at nine.
The smoother at the table.

It came naturally.

Was used and re-used.

Here and there.

Others noticed.

Became my way of being.

It's now just who I am.

— *I've sat at a table like that.*

— *Different table. Same nine.*

The finisher.

A friend of mine learned to be the one who finishes the job.

Oldest of four. His father started things and didn't finish them.

By twelve, my friend was the one who finished what his father started.

The lawn.

The repair.

The phone call to the cousin nobody wanted to make.

He didn't mind.

The finishing made him useful.

He's sixty-one now. Just retired.

He told me last month that he's been doing other people's unfinished jobs on Saturdays.

The neighbor's gutter.

His son-in-law's deck.

A guy from church who's behind on his estate paperwork.

He laughed when he told me.

He said he doesn't know what to do with himself if he isn't finishing somebody's something.

That was him at twelve.

The finisher.

It came naturally.

Was used and re-used.

Here and there.

Others noticed.

Became his way of being.

It's now just who he is.

— I've watched someone like that.

— Different friend. Same twelve.

Most of us have a story like that.

Whatever you figured out worked.

We were good at it. We are good at it.

And — the moments now aren't always the moments then.

The moment asked for the gear.

You heard the ask.

Another might have heard an ask for a different gear.

Not you.

You heard your ask.

You kept using it.

Whoever was in that moment mattered.

They were probably there in moments full of other things.

Their attention. Their care.

Things you might still be grateful for.

Those moments shaped a great deal of who you are.

The gear stayed because you kept reaching for it.

You kept reaching because it kept working.

THE MOMENT — A CLOSER LOOK.

Some questions. If you'd like.

A specific moment — not in general.

1.

Bring back a moment when the gear got figured out. Or close to it.

A table. A back seat. A schoolyard. A hallway in a particular house at a particular hour.

Just the moment.

Write it in a couple of words

2.

Now — what was the room?

Who was in it. What it sounded like. What was probably going on under the surface.

Probably someone who mattered. Maybe more than one.

That was the room.

Name it

3.

Now — what was the moment asking for?

The settling. The finishing. The laughing. The listening.

What was the gear doing for it?

That was the ask.

In a word or two

4.

As you look at Q1-3, anything surprise you?

Anything jump out?

If you want, write a word or two

You named the moment.

You named the room.

You named the ask.

You named what surprised you.

That is the beginning.

Hold lightly.

The gear came from somewhere.

The somewhere mattered.

NEXT LESSON.

A glimpse of what's ahead. Held lightly.

What kept the gear in motion.

See you in Lesson 3.

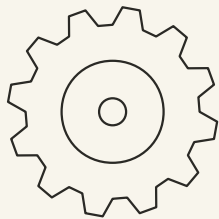
CARRY THIS.

This week — once — let yourself notice that the gear came from a moment.

Specific. Real.

Sooner than you might have.

That is enough.



LESSON 3

How a gear becomes familiar

Used. Answered. Spread.

Good to see you again.

Last lesson — where the gear got figured out.

The smoother at the table. The finisher with his father's unfinished work.

This lesson is about what happened next.

A thing used once and never used again rarely becomes familiar.

Lots of things happen once.

Something else has been going on.

The gear worked.

Then it worked again.

Family dinner.

School.

The hallway.

A teacher.

The long car ride.

Fifty-seven times family meals asked for my gear.
At least one hundred and thirteen times, at school.
No rush.
Just repetition.

Useful things tend to get used.
No surprise there.

Sally.

Sally figured out organizing somewhere around eleven.
By twelve she was making the family's grocery list.
By seventeen she was running the senior class trip.
By twenty-eight she was the one her sister called when the wedding planner quit four months out.
By forty-three she was the one her mother handed the medical paperwork to when her father got sick.
By sixty-two she was the one who knew little Johnny needed the seat where he could see whatever was being seen.

Sally being Sally.

— *Same Sally.*

— *Different room. Same organizing.*

Jim.

Jim figured out staying back somewhere around seven.

By eight he was the kid the teacher called on least.

By sixteen he was the one who didn't go to the dance.

By twenty-four he was the one who let his roommate do the talking at the leasing office.

By forty he was the one the new coworkers learned not to push.

By fifty-seven he was the one at the back of the wedding.

Jim being Jim.

— *Same Jim.*

— *Different room. Same staying back.*

Then the rooms started answering back.

Good job.

Thanks for helping.

You're funny.

Glad you're here.

That helped.

Don't worry about Jim. He's fine.

We can count on Sally to handle it.

People answer things.

Rooms answer too.

Of course repetition grows when the rooms keep saying yes.

Then something quiet happened.

Parking lot gear.

Highway gear.

Sidewalk gear.

Different rooms.

Same move.

Not because you decided.

Because familiar things travel.

The shape, by now, looks like this.

It came naturally.

Was used and re-used.

Here and there.

Others noticed.

Became your way of being.

It's now just who you are.

You've heard it before.

You'll hear it again.

THE ROAD — A CLOSER LOOK.

Some questions. If you'd like.

A specific gear — yours.

1.

Bring back the gear you've been sitting with. The one that came from a moment.

Just the gear.

Write it in a couple of words

2.

Now — what rooms has it traveled to?

Probably more than one.

Probably some that wouldn't have asked for it if they'd been asked.

That was the traveling.

Name them

3.

Now — what have the rooms said back over the years?

Probably some thanks. Probably some names. Maybe a phrase that quietly stuck.

That was the answering.

In a word or two

4.

As you look at Q1-3, anything surprise you?

Anything jump out?

If you want, write a word or two

You named the gear.

You named where it traveled.

You named what the rooms said back.

You named what surprised you.

That has been the road.

NEXT LESSON.

A glimpse of what's ahead. Held lightly.

After enough repetitions, something else sometimes begins
happening.

See you in Lesson 4.

CARRY THIS.

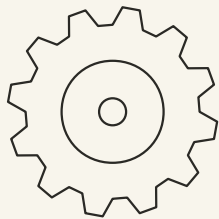
This week — once — let yourself notice that the gear has traveled.

Different room. Same gear.

Just notice.

Sooner than you might have.

That is enough.



LESSON 4

Gear, my gear, me

Used. Named. Yours.

Good to see you.

No rush with this one.

Take what you take.

Last lesson followed the road.

Used. Answered. Spread.

This lesson stays with what happened after the road got traveled.

Useful things don't only get repeated.

Pause.

Sometimes they get your name.

A STORY.

One story this time. Take your time with it.

The funny one.

A friend of mine made his sister laugh when he was four.

The room had been quiet. His mother was tired from the long day. His father was reading the paperwork for a new refrigerator.

He said something small — he can't remember what — and his sister, who was eight and didn't usually laugh at his things, laughed.

His father looked up.

His mother turned her head.

He noticed.

At dinner, humor, being funny, again.

His grandmother laughed.

His mother smiled — first time that day.

His father said —

That one — he's gonna be the funny one.

He was four.

It worked at school.

The teacher said no, but — and smiled.

The kids who didn't usually look at him looked at him.

By second grade, the kids who did usually look at him counted on him for it.

It worked at family parties.

The aunts saved him for the right moment.

Wait, ask him.

The cousins forwarded it.

Did you hear what he said at Easter.

It worked when his parents fought.

Something in the doorway timing. Something in the angle.

The fight would pause.

His mother would shake her head — the kind that meant don't make me laugh right now — but she'd be laughing.

The gear worked.

By twelve he'd been doing it for eight years.

By twenty he'd been doing it for sixteen.

The friends he kept were the ones who laughed easiest.

The girlfriends he chose were the ones who said you're so funny.

The career he ended up in was sales, where the gear paid the mortgage.

His college friends had a nickname for him.

His coworkers called him the funny one.

His wife called him the bit.

Affectionately.

A name had arrived.

He's fifty-three now.

A few months ago he was driving home from a meeting where he'd done the thing.

Opened with the joke. Kept the room warm. Closed the deal.

The traffic was bad. He was tired.

He caught himself, in the car, rehearsing the next line.

For the next meeting.

Two days away.

His face was already arranging itself.

He hadn't decided to.

That is a story about a gear that became a person.

A useful gear.

A loved gear.

A gear that worked.

Forty-nine years of working.

Then —

the funny one

— *wasn't a description anymore.*

It was just him.

It came naturally.

Was used and re-used.

Here and there.

Others noticed.

Became his way of being.

It's now just who he is.

Gear.

My gear.

Me.

That is what happened to him.

To others.

Sometimes — to us.

No rush.

That's a lot to see in one page.

Take a breath.

Take what you take.

GEAR, MY GEAR, ME — A CLOSER LOOK.

Some questions. If you'd like.

A specific gear — yours.

1.

Bring back a gear you've come to think of as yours.

Probably one you've been using a long time.

Maybe one that's hard to imagine yourself without.

That's the gear we'll sit with.

Write it in a couple of words

2.

Now — what have the people around you called that gear over the years?

Probably said with affection.

Maybe a name that quietly stuck.

That was the name.

Name it

3.

Now — when did you notice the name had become you?

Probably gradual.

Maybe a small moment — something somebody said. Or something you said about yourself, and then heard yourself say it.

That was the moment.

In a word or two

4.

As you look at Q1-3, anything surprise you?

Well, anything say anything to you?

If you'd like, write a word or two

You named a gear.

You named what the people called it.

You named the moment it became you.

You named what surprised you.

That is the road.

That is what produced the person.

Hold there.

No diagnosis.

No management.

No rescue.

Just sit.

NEXT LESSON.

A glimpse of what's ahead. Held lightly.

The road bends.

Sometimes there is a little more space than there used to be.

See you in Lesson 5.

CARRY THIS.

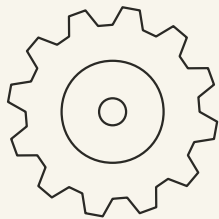
This week — once — notice that the gear has your name on it.

That you've called it me for a long time.

Just notice.

Sooner than you might have.

That is enough.



LESSON 5

The road bends

Sometimes there is a little more space than there used to be.

Good to see you.

No rush.

Last lesson stayed with something heavy.

Used. Named. Yours.

Take what you take.

The road bends.

And look —

there's a tunnel.

No need to do anything with that yet.

Just notice it.

A STORY.

One story this time. Take your time.

The worrier.

Someone I know is the worrier.

She catches risk before anyone says there's any.

She has been doing this a long time.

Tuesday morning. Coffee. The usual table. The usual people.

Three things were coming.

Her son's job interview that afternoon.

Her mother's blood pressure.

The text from her sister that hadn't come yet.

All real.

All worth worrying about.

The gear was loading.

Then —

She noticed the design in cream on top of her coffee.

Some kind of leaf. The barista had drawn it.

And the pleather rim of the booth seat.

She was sitting on it.

Hm.

Very small.

Not enough to stop anything.

Not enough to change the room.

Just enough that the gear didn't quite engage.

The three things were still real.

Still worth her attention.

And — the gear didn't quite get out the door.

Sometimes there seems to be a little more space than there used to be.

Not every time.

Not often.

No schedule.

No technique.

Sometimes.

Maybe you've had moments like that.

Driving home.

Kitchen.

Shower.

Halfway through a sentence.

Text already typed.

The joke already out.

Helping already started.

Then —

Hm.

Not because you decided.

Not because you learned a trick.

Just because sometimes inside you something notices.

No rush.

That may be enough for today.

THE HM — A CLOSER LOOK.

Some questions. If you'd like.

No pressure either way.

Light. Held lightly.

1.

Bring back a recent hm moment.

A moment when you paused for a short moment.

Maybe in the car, the kitchen, halfway through a sentence.

Just the moment.

Write it in a couple of words

2.

Now — when did the hm arrive?

Before the gear got out. During. After.

Probably during. Sometimes during is the gentlest place.

That is when.

Name it

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

3.

Now — what felt familiar in that moment?

Probably the move itself.

Maybe the voice. Or the angle of the room you were already turning into.

That is what showed up.

In a word or two

4.

As you look at Q1-3, anything surprise you?

Did your pen want to write something?

If so, write a word or two

Hold lightly.

No rush.

Sometimes roads bend slowly and tunnels arrive, just beyond the bend.

NEXT LESSON.

A glimpse of what's ahead. Held lightly.

What sometimes happens in the moment.

See you in Lesson 6.

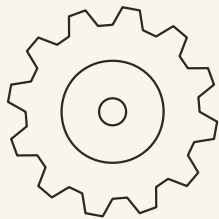
CARRY THIS.

This week — once — if a small pause arrives —

Just notice it arrived.

Sooner than you might have.

That is enough.



LESSON 6

The catch

Sometimes the gear arrives. Sometimes you arrive too.

Here we are.

Last lesson the road bent.

A tunnel appeared.

The hm arrived very small. Just enough.

This lesson is about a small thing that sometimes happens in the tunnel.

Something small.

Not changing the gear.

Not stopping it.

Just noticing.

S T O R I E S .

Two small moments before we go further. Both about noticing in the middle. No rush.

The fixer.

Someone I know is the fixer.
Sees the problem before anyone names it.
Has the solution before anyone asks for one.
Has been doing this a long time.

Saturday morning. His daughter calls.
She's been thinking about whether to leave her job.
She has been thinking about it for months.
She is not asking him what to do.
She is telling him she has been thinking.

He was already two sentences in.
The thing about her benefits. The 401(k) match. The timing of the
bonus cycle.
The fixing was loading.
Was already loading.

Then —

He heard his own voice.

Realized she hadn't said anything for almost a minute.

Realized she was waiting for him to finish.

Hm.

He didn't stop the sentence. He finished it.

But he heard it.

And when he was done, he said —

Sorry. Tell me what you're thinking.

The daughter told him what she'd been thinking.

For about twenty minutes.

He listened.

Same fixer.

Same gear.

Different ending. Because noticing arrived.

— *I've heard my own voice like that.*

— *Different call. Same hm.*

The helper.

Someone I know is the helper.

Notices what needs doing.

Starts doing it.

Has been doing this a long time.

Thursday evening. The friend's house.

Dinner. Six people. Wine.

Her friend's mother had just been diagnosed.

The friend was telling the story.

Slowly. The way it wants to be told.

The helper was already moving.

Already searching for the specialist.

Already drafting the offer to come help with the appointments.

Already thinking about the casserole she would bring on Sunday.

The helping was loading.

Hadn't quite gotten out the door.

Then —

She noticed the candle on the table.
Some kind of fig leaf scent.
And her friend's hand on the stem of her wine glass.
Holding it. Not lifting it.

Hm.

She didn't start helping.
She kept listening.
The friend kept telling the story.
She waited until her friend had shared enough.

At the end her friend looked across the table and said —
Thanks for not solving it.

Same helper.
Same gear.
Different ending. Because noticing arrived.

— *I've been at a table like that.*

— *Different friend. Same hm.*

Most of us don't notice before.

Sometimes not during either.

Sometimes later —

Car ride home.

Shower.

Kitchen.

Text replay.

And sometimes — halfway through — something else arrives.

You.

Two arrivals.

Here is the image we'll be working with.

Picture two arrivals.

The gear.

And you.

Sometimes together.

Sometimes not.

The catch is not control.

The catch is not improvement.

The catch isn't proving anything.

The gear still arrives.

Sometimes you arrive too.

For now — just the catch.

The way of being you noticed back in Lesson 1 —

Became your way of being.

It's now just who you are.

And — sometimes —

You arrive too.

THE CATCH — A CLOSER LOOK.

Some questions. If you'd like.

A specific moment — not in general.

1.

Bring back a recent moment when the gear was showing up.

Probably ordinary.

Maybe something from this week.

Just the moment.

Write it in a couple of words

2.

Now — when did you notice?

Before. During. After.

All honest. Probably during is what we're after — but any is fine.

That was when the catch arrived. Or didn't.

Name it

3.

Now — what was the gear doing in that moment?

Smoothing? Finishing? Joking? Checking? Fixing? Helping?

Whatever it was up to.

That was what the gear was up to.

In a word or two

4.

As you look at Q1-3, anything surprise you?

Anything?

Write a word or two

You named the moment.

You named when the noticing arrived.

You named what the gear was up to.

You named what surprised you.

Sometimes the gear arrives.

Sometimes you arrive too.

NEXT LESSON.

A glimpse of what's ahead. Held lightly.

The room can catch too.

See you in Lesson 7.

CARRY THIS.

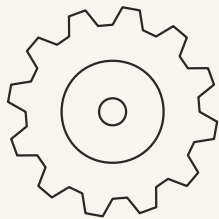
This week — once — if the gear arrives —

Notice when you noticed.

Nothing else.

Sooner than you might have.

That is enough.



LESSON 7

The room

Sometimes the room catches it for you.

Here we are.

Last lesson — the catch.

Sometimes the gear arrives. Sometimes you arrive too.

This lesson is one story. Followed all the way through.

Longer than the others. Take it slow.

THE STORY.

Take your time with it.

Sally.

Sally's gear is organizing.

You've met her.

The grocery list at twelve. The senior class trip at seventeen. The wedding her sister called her about. The medical paperwork. The seat where Johnny could see whatever was being seen.

Sally being Sally.

Sixty-two now.

Still running the family.

Still knowing whose flight comes in when.

Still making the grocery list three days ahead.

Still picking the seat where each grandchild can see whatever the day
is asking them to see.

Her husband loves the life.

House mostly organized.

Trips planned.

Meals — yum.

Finances tracked.

Yard kept.

Holidays happen.

Kids all in matching navy at Christmas.

All three kids' names begin with the same letter.

She picked the letter when she was pregnant with the first one.

She had the second and third already in mind.

She was thirty-one.

It came naturally.

Was used and re-used.

Here and there.

Others noticed.

Became her way of being.

It's now just who she is.

And.

Sally has two closets.

And one desk drawer.

The closets are upstairs.

One in the hall.

One in the spare bedroom.

Inside the hall closet —

The half-finished memoir from 2017.

The renovation plans she paid an architect for and put away.

Lesson plans from the year she was going to teach.

Cards she meant to send. Still in their plastic.

Photo albums she'd been meaning to assemble since 1998.

A cookbook she'd outlined.

Home-schooling materials for the year that didn't quite work out.

Inside the spare bedroom closet —

Wrapping paper from every occasion she might need.

Ribbon in every color.

Boxes she'd saved because they were too nice to recycle.

Tissue paper folded a particular way only she would fold it.

Gold-handled scissors.

Cards in their plastic.

Pens that still worked.

A brushed silver picture frame she'd bought on sale in 2003 and never put a photograph in.

Inside the desk drawer —

Keys to old houses.

Envelopes from her late father with his handwriting.

A half-written letter to her sister that had been in there six years.

Her kids rib her about the closets.

Affectionately.

It's been a family joke for fifteen years.

Mom and her memoir.

Mom and her abandoned cookbook.

Mom and the renovation that never quite happened.

Her husband never talks about the closets.

Or the rest of it.

He tried three or four times in the early years.

Once he asked about the memoir.

Once he suggested they hire someone for Thanksgiving.

Once he asked if she wanted to take a road trip without an itinerary.

Each time cost something.

Days. Weeks once. The closest thing to a real rift they ever had.

He learned.

Organizer is good.

Anything else — dog house land.

By the late nineties he had stopped trying.

He has held the silence for over twenty years.

It is real and it is not free.

And — he has loved the life she has built.

Mostly without resentment.

Mostly with gratitude.

Most days he doesn't even feel he's paying.

Sally walks past the closets every day.

Opens them once a year. Looks in. Closes them.

Shhhhhh.

The Saturday.

It was December.

Some occasion. A birthday gathering. A holiday. It doesn't matter which.

The three kids were at the house.

Late twenties and early thirties now.

Coffee in the kitchen. Music from somebody's phone.

They were trying to figure out what to get Mom.

Same conversation every year.

The middle one said —

We should get a picture of the closet as a gift for Mom for the holiday party of her book club. Her friends would love it.

They laughed.

The oldest said — we should.

The youngest said — do it.

They walked upstairs.

Dad was on the back porch with the paper. Mom was at the grocery store.

The photo.

They opened the spare bedroom closet door.

The middle one took out her phone.

Lined up the shot.

Took the picture.

Then she looked at it.

It wasn't what she'd expected to find funny.

She lowered the phone.

The oldest looked over her shoulder.

He said — oh.

The youngest said — we can't post this.

The middle one said —

We should give it to her.

They had seen what was actually in the picture.
Wrapping paper from every occasion she might need.
Ribbon in every color.
Boxes she'd saved because they were too nice to recycle.
Tissue paper folded a particular way only she would fold it.
Gold-handled scissors.
Cards in their plastic.
Pens that still worked.
A brushed silver picture frame.

They saw what their mother had been doing.
For thirty years.
Preparing.
For moments she didn't know were coming.

The wrapping.

The middle one took the photo to the drugstore on the corner.
Five by seven.
She came back.

They put the photo in the brushed silver frame.

The frame was exactly the right size.

Of course it was.

They picked a box from the closet.

One Mom had saved from a gift her sister gave her years ago.

They picked paper.

Some she had bought for a wedding that hadn't happened.

They picked ribbon.

The silver from the third shelf.

They picked a card.

From a pack still in its plastic.

They wrote everyone's name on it.

They were belly-laughing the whole time.

Cracking up at the gold-handled scissors.

Cracking up at the way the tissue paper was folded.

Cracking up at the brushed silver frame she'd had for twenty-three years without a photograph in it.

The oldest sat down on the floor of the closet because his legs weren't holding him.

They had been carrying a long love that didn't quite have a place to go.

Today it found a place.

It came out as laughter on the floor of Mom's closet.

The evening.

They walked into the gathering still laughing.

The middle one was wiping her eyes.

Dad looked up.

Saw their faces.

Smiled.

He didn't know what they were laughing about. He smiled because they were happy.

The youngest blurted out —

Mom, you have to open this first.

Sally was at the kitchen counter.

She set down the dish towel.

Took the gift.

Smiled at them.

She didn't know what they were laughing about either. She smiled
because they were smiling.

Sally opens every gift carefully.

Folds the ribbon.

Sets the paper aside.

She unfolded the ribbon.

She set the paper aside.

She opened the box.

She saw the brushed silver frame first.

She recognized it immediately.

Her face changed.

Then she saw what was in the frame.

Her closet.

Honestly photographed.

Everything she'd been keeping for thirty years.

All of it.

She looked at the wrapping paper she'd set aside.

She knew where it was from.

She looked at the ribbon.

She looked at the box.

She looked at the card.

All of it from the closet.

She put her hand over her mouth.

The oldest said —

We love all of you, Mom.

The middle one said —

Not just the part you let us see.

The youngest said —

The closet too.

Sally didn't say anything.

Her hand stayed at her mouth.

The youngest reached over and took her other hand.

Her husband was looking at his oldest.

His eyes were wet.

The kids had never seen him tear up.

He said —

That was kind.

Thank you.

He didn't make a joke.

He's never been able to make a joke about the closet.

Twenty years of held silence had not given him that lane.

The kids had the lane. He didn't.

He stayed in the lane he had.

Tenderness. Quiet. The small kind sentence.

Wet eyes.

Sally lowered her hand.

Looked across the room at her husband.

He didn't look away.

She said —

I know.

Two words.

Said to him.

Not to the kids.

To him.

He nodded.

Didn't say anything else.

His lane was full.

Then Sally laughed.

Through her hand still partly at her mouth.

A small sound at first.

Then a real one.

The kids belly-laughed with her.

All three. Loud.

The youngest's wine almost went over.

Her husband smiled.

Didn't join the laughter.

His lane didn't include laughter about the closet.

It included tenderness. The kind sentence. Wet eyes. The nod.

That was enough.

The night kept going.

Somebody put on music.

Somebody refilled wine.

The kids started talking about something else.

Sally took the framed photo to the kitchen counter and set it down
where she could see it.

Sunday.

The kids drove home Sunday afternoon.
Hugs. Leftovers in Tupperware. Drive safe.
The framed photo stayed on the kitchen counter.
Sally moved it to her dresser that night.

Monday.

Monday morning.
Coffee was made.
The house was quiet.

Sally walked down the hall.
Her husband walked beside her.
They walked past the closet.

Both of them saw it.
Neither of them said anything.

Her hand brushed his hand.

They kept walking.

Sometimes the gear arrives.

Sometimes you arrive too.

And sometimes the room arrives.

The room is the people who have been around the gear for a long time.

Watching.

Loving.

Waiting.

Sometimes the room sees what the carrier can't quite see.

Sometimes the room catches it for them.

That's what Caught Being points to.

Half a second.

Eyes.

Position.

Enough room for all of you to be in the room.

THE ROOM — A CLOSER LOOK.

Some questions. If you'd like.

Held lightly.

1.

Bring back a closet of your own.

The part of you the room around you doesn't quite name.

That's the closet.

Write it in a couple of words

2.

Now — who has tried to ask?

And who learned not to.

Probably someone who loves you.

That was the silence.

Name them

[illegible]

3.

Now — who might give you back to yourself one day?

Possibly your kids.

Possibly someone the family didn't yet have the rules for.

Possibly nobody. Possibly just you.

That would be the room arriving.

In a word or two

4.

I'm not sure about every person reading this question.

But if you're the one I'm thinking of — maybe even the one this question was written for — would you look up and smile?

You named the closet.

You named the silence.

You named who might arrive.

That is the work.

The book.

You've reached the end of the lessons.

Seven of them.

Being is a word.

Where it figured itself out.

How it became familiar.

Gear. My gear. Me.

The road bends.

The catch.

The room.

All of them have been pointing at the same standing place.

Where you are.

Where you've been.

Where the room around you has been with you.

CARRY THIS.

Not just this week.

From now on.

When the gear arrives —

Half a second.

Eyes.

Position.

Enough room for all of you to be in the room.

Sometimes you'll catch it.

Sometimes the room will catch it for you.

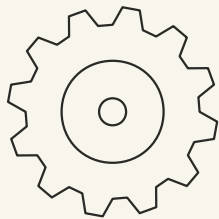
Sometimes no one will.

Either is alright.

This is the work.

Mom is still Mom.

Even with her closet.



LESSON 8

Two letters

Your turn.

You're back.

Last lesson — the room.

Sally's closet. The framed photo. The two words to her husband — I know.

Mom is still Mom. Even with her closet.

You looked up.

Maybe you smiled.

Seven lessons taught.

This one is yours.

No rush with this one.

Take what you take.

Here is what this lesson asks of you.

Two letters.

Both letters are to you.

One to you being your you.

One to you being you.

Two versions of you.

Both real.

Both yours.

A word on how to do this.

Here's what tends to land for people.

Write the first letter.

When you're done — sit with it for a moment.

You don't have to do anything with it yet. Just keep it close.

Then write the second letter.

Then read them together.

First one. Then the other. Then side by side.

That's the part that tends to do the work.

Reading them together. Both at once.

When you've read both — that's when you'll know what to do with them.

Keep them. File them. Tear them up. Frame them.

Whatever your body says.

Any way you'd like.

On paper. On a screen. In a notebook you have. In a notebook you'll buy. On the back of an envelope.

Short or long.

In one sitting or across a week.

If your body doesn't want to do this — don't.

The book continues to be the book.

The carrying continues whether you write these or not.

The first letter.

To you being your you.

The you the room came to expect.

The version of you the family knows you by.

The smoother. The finisher. The funny one. The worrier. The fixer. The helper. The organizer. The shy one. The competitive one. The accomplisher. The one who keeps things light.

Or whatever yours is.

The gear that arrives ahead of you.

The move you didn't decide to make.

The line that comes out before you've chosen what to say.

The you that's already in the room before you got there.

That you is still here.

Still real.

Still doing what it has always done.

Some things you might say to that you.

You don't have to say all of them. You don't have to say any of them.

These are just here in case the body has trouble starting.

— *I see you.*

At the table when you were nine. At the schoolyard when you were eight. In the doorway when your sister laughed.

Wherever the gear got figured out.

I see what you did.

— *The gear worked.*

It got you through.

It served the rooms that needed serving.

It served you too.

Forty years of working. Or fifty. Or sixty.

That mattered.

— *The moment asked for the gear.*

You heard the ask.

Another might have heard an ask for a different gear.

Not you.

You heard your ask.

You kept using it.

It kept working.

— *Whoever was in that moment mattered.*

They were probably there in moments full of other things.

Their attention. Their care.

Things you might still be grateful for.

Those moments shaped a great deal of who you are.

— *The gear became the person.*

The description wasn't a description anymore.

It was just you.

Gear. My gear. Me.

That happened.

— *Anything else.*

Whatever the body wants to say.

To the part of you that has been the gear.

Doing the work the room asked for.

All these years.

Take your time.

Or don't.

The letter is yours.

[illegible]

When you're done — sit with it for a moment.

Keep it close.

You're not done with this lesson yet.

The second letter.

To you being you.

Without the gear arriving first.

Without the room's version showing up before you.

Without the family's name for you doing the work for you.

The you who noticed the cream leaf design on the coffee.

The you who noticed the pleather rim of the booth.

The you who said — sorry. Tell me what you're thinking.

The you who kept listening when the helping was loading.

The you whose hand brushed someone's hand and they kept walking.

That you is already here.

Has been here.

More moments than you've been counting.

Some things you might say to that you.

Again, you don't have to say any of these. These are just here in case the body has trouble starting.

— *I see you too.*

In the hm.

In the half-second when the gear was loading and you arrived anyway.

In the moments when the room came to expect one thing and you were also something else.

I see what you've been doing.

— *You weren't trying to be different.*

You weren't trying to fix the gear.

You weren't trying to be the you without the gear.

Something noticed.

And the rest of you slowed down enough to let the noticing happen.

That was it.

— *The gear is still here.*

And — sometimes — you are too.

Both at once.

Not the gear instead of you.

Not you instead of the gear.

Both.

— *You choose you.*

With discipline. Work on being you.

Whoever told you this first. Or didn't.

It came to you somehow.

You've been doing it.

— *You aren't the one I expected to find.*

I expected to find you being your you.

And there you were too.

The one who showed up sometimes ahead of the gear. Or alongside it.

Or after.

More often than you've been counting.

— *Keep showing up.*

Or don't.

Some moments you'll be you.

Some moments the gear will be running and you'll be somewhere else.

Some moments the room will catch you when you can't catch yourself.

Some moments no one will.

Either is alright.

— *Anything else.*

Whatever the body wants to say.

To the part of you that has been arriving.

Without keeping track.

Take your time with this one.

It often takes longer than the first.

Sometimes the body has been waiting a long time to be allowed to be
the you that isn't the gear.

Someone allowing it is you.

[illegible]

Now — read them together.

You have both letters now.

Read the first one.

Then the second one.

Then — if your body will let it happen — read them side by side.

Both at once.

This is the part the lesson has been pointing toward.

Both versions of you. On the page in front of you.

You being your you.

You being you.

Both real.

Both yours.

Both with you at the same time.

Take your time here.

Sit with both.

Let what happens happen.

Sometimes the body does something quiet when it reads both at once.

A small softening. A small recognition. A small smile.

Sometimes a longer stillness.

Sometimes not much at all.

Either is alright.

Then — what you do with them is yours.

Put them in a drawer.

Folder them somewhere safe.

Tear them up.

Burn them in the fireplace.

Frame them.

Read them again next year.

Where they go is yours.

The work has already happened.

That is the work.

Two letters.

Written by you.

To two versions of you who have been with you all along.

You being your you.

You being you.

Both real.

Both yours.

The gear is still here.

The room is still around the gear.

Sally is still in her kitchen. Her hand still brushes her husband's hand
on Monday mornings.

Half a second.

Eyes.

Position.

Enough room for all of you to be in the room.

Come back if you want.

They'll be here.

This was the workbook.

The carrying continues.

Sometimes you'll catch it.

Sometimes the room will catch it for you.

Sometimes no one will.

Either is alright.

This is the work.

Mom is still Mom.

Even with her closet.

A comment from the author.

Years working with people.

Never much liked wasted time.

Still don't.

Also prefer a more targeted focus.

Hence the domain.

Glad you stopped for a moment.

Hope something in here landed.

If not, hope you heard a good story.

Till we meet again.

Frank.

Caught Book Club Opportunity

There is no required way to do this.

Some people read the workbook on their own.

Some listen to the audio version.

Some do both.

Some groups read or listen together.

Some arrive having explored the lesson beforehand.

All are welcome.

Then meet.

Pull up a few chairs.

Have a coffee.

Take a walk.

Sit on a porch.

Leave an empty chair for David if you'd like.

Not because he has the answers.

Just because every now and then it helps to remember there is a quiet companion sitting with the conversation.

Ask a few questions.

What stood out?

What felt familiar?

What surprised you?

What might you be seeing differently?

What is the upside?

What is the downside?

What is the hmmm?

There is no need to agree.

There is no need to solve anything.

There is no need to leave with a plan.

Just look together for a little while.

Sometimes you will discover something about yourself.

Sometimes you will discover something about another person.

Sometimes you will discover something about the room.

Sometimes you will simply notice something sooner than you might have.

Then look up.

Smile.

Take a picture if you'd like.

And carry on.

That is enough.

Frank keeps the intention simple. If this work helps twenty more people, that will be enough.

You may read it free.
You may listen free.
You may find the physical book.
You may share it with someone else.

THE CAUGHT SOONER HOUSE

SOONER	Caught Paying the Bill
Caught Waiting	Caught Recovering
Caught Being	Caught Wanting
Caught Forgiving	28 Days · A Journal
Caught Leading	The audio
Caught Graduating	

If something in these pages landed,
there's more on the porch.
Come sit awhile.

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