

Caught Waiting

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
Waiting

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

CONTENTS

	Welcome	9
	A Note from David	12
LESSON 1	Waiting is a word	15
LESSON 2	The dead-looking leaf	25
LESSON 3	The look	41
LESSON 4	Henry	55
LESSON 5	Older leaves	67
LESSON 6	The Committee	79
LESSON 7	Uncle Henry, again	95
LESSON 8	Two letters	109
	A comment from the author.	127
	Caught Book Club Opportunity	129

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

Waiting is a word

Glad you found this.

This one's for someone carrying something they can't put down.

A person. A situation. Themselves.

If that is you —

what you find here may help.

To carry it a little differently.

Glad you came in.

Two short moments first. No hurry.

She called on a Tuesday.

Her son hadn't spoken to her in seven months.

She'd tried everything.

The texts that went unanswered.

The voicemails she rerecorded three times before sending.

The birthday card she drove past the mailbox twice before finally dropping in.

Nothing.

And then, that week, she heard through someone else that he'd moved.

She didn't know where.

She was sitting in her car when she called me.

A parking lot. Engine off. Just sitting there.

She wasn't asking me to fix it.

She needed someone to know she was in the parking lot.

With the engine off.

Waiting on a son who'd gone quiet.

— *I've sat in that parking lot.*

— *Different car. Same engine off.*

The doctor said the results would be back in three to five days.

That was six days ago.

She'd checked the portal four times before noon.

Refresh. Wait. Refresh.

Nothing yet.

She went to work. Came home. Made dinner. Asked about everyone else's day.

Nobody knew she was waiting.

That night she lay there doing the math she'd already done a hundred times.

The odds. The symptoms. What it might mean. What it probably didn't.

It was probably nothing.

Probably.

— *I've done that math.*

— *Different portal. Same 2 a.m.*

Most of us have a version of this.

A person who's gone quiet.

A result that hasn't come back.

A relationship that didn't end but didn't continue.

A body that's still healing.

A decision that isn't ours to make.

A child who's somewhere far.

A prayer that's been a long time prayed.

Yours is in there somewhere.

Maybe more than one.

Here's what this book is, and what it isn't.

It won't fix your wait.

The thing you're waiting on will resolve when it resolves.

This book can't hurry it.

Nothing big is offered here.

If you came in tired — tired of chasing the thing you're waiting on —
that's the right amount of tired for this.

What this book can do is smaller.

It can change how the waiting sits with you while you wait.

Smaller than a fix.

But real.

So here's a picture we'll use the whole way through.

A plant.

The plant is your life.

The people in it. Your days. Your work. The whole green, growing thing.

It's right here. And it keeps growing the whole time you wait.

Most days, you can see the plant. The whole plant. And it's good.

But sometimes one leaf goes dead-looking.

The thing you're waiting on.

And the look goes to it.

Stare long enough, and the dead-looking leaf starts to look like the whole plant.

Like that one thing is your whole life.

It isn't. It's one leaf.

The plant is still there. Still green. Still growing.

That's the cost.

Not the waiting.

Mistaking the dead-looking leaf for the whole plant.

One thing, before we go on.

This book only works if it's about your actual wait.

Not waiting in general. Yours.

So name it.

What are you waiting on right now?

The thing that brought you to a book like this.

The person. The result. The decision. The healing. The one that isn't settled.

You don't have to explain it. Just name it.

That's your leaf.

That's the one we'll keep coming back to.

Every lesson from here is about that.

Not waiting in general.

Yours.

NEXT LESSON.

A glimpse of what's ahead. Held lightly.

We'll look closer at that one leaf — the dead-looking one — and at the look that keeps going to it.

See you in Lesson 2.



LESSON 2

The dead-looking leaf

The waiting has a shape. This lesson finds it.

Glad you came back.

Last lesson — we named the plant.

Your life. The whole green, growing thing.

This lesson is about the one leaf your eye goes to.

The dead-looking one.

The thing you're waiting on.

What gets the attention.

Not the plant.

The plant is real and the plant is yours and the plant keeps growing
where it is.

The dead-looking leaf is different.

It isn't the whole of what you're waiting on, even.

It's the one spot the eye keeps landing.

Here is what that looks like.

The 6:14 a.m. wake-up that wasn't to an alarm.
The phone checked before the coffee.
The text composed and not sent.
The dinner where part of you was somewhere else.
The fine when somebody asked.
The shortness with the cashier who didn't earn it.
The hours of rehearsing a conversation that may or may not happen.
The 2 a.m. math.

Some of that is one minute.
Some of it is the whole day.
Some of it is a week of mostly that.

That's the eye, going to the dead-looking leaf.

Useful to name it.
Not because you're going to fix it.
Because what gets named gets seen.

Most of us never named this.

It just rode along.

And we figured the waiting was the thing.

The waiting is part of the thing.

Where the eye goes is the rest of it.

STORIES.

Two short moments before we go further. No hurry.

A friend of mine called on a Sunday afternoon.

He'd been waiting on a business decision for eleven weeks.

A partnership that would either go or it wouldn't.

He'd done everything he could do. The other party was just — slow.

He told me he was fine during the day. Busy enough.

But at night, in the quiet, it kept finding him.

He'd check his email one more time.

Scroll back through the last conversation, looking for something he might have missed.

Lie there wondering if he should follow up.

Or if following up would cost him.

“I know there’s nothing I can do,” he said.

“But I can’t stop doing something.”

— *I’ve checked one more time.*

— *Different inbox. Same Sunday night.*

Her sister hadn’t returned a call in six weeks.

She’d left two voicemails.

Sent one text.

Kept it light — just checking in, no pressure, hope you’re well.

Nothing back.

She told herself it was fine.

Her sister got busy.

It happened.

But she'd noticed herself scanning for her sister's name whenever her phone lit up.

Composing messages she didn't send.

Running through the last conversation they'd had.

Looking for the thing she might have said wrong.

She didn't know if she had.

That was the part she couldn't put down.

— *I've scanned for that name.*

— *Different phone. Same lit-up screen.*

The picture.

Waiting is a funny thing.

We use the same word for all of it.

Waiting for a birthday.

Waiting for a concert.

Waiting in line for coffee.

Waiting for a package.

And waiting for a diagnosis.

Waiting for a court date.

Waiting for a phone call that matters.

Same word.

But they don't seem to live in us the same way.

Some waiting stays where it belongs.

The birthday stays on the calendar.

The concert stays next month.

The package stays somewhere between here and there.

Other waiting comes with us.

To dinner.

To work.

To the shower.

Into the next conversation.

Into bed.

Into the middle of the night.

The waiting may still be somewhere ahead.

And yet part of us is already there with it.

Looking.

The shape, by now, looks like this.

A leaf caught the eye.

The leaf became the thing being watched.

The watching became most of the looking.

The plant kept growing while we watched.

Soon the leaf looked like the whole plant.

And the leaf still hadn't told us how the story ends.

You've heard it before.

You'll hear it again.

WHAT GETS THE ATTENTION — A CLOSER LOOK.

Some questions. Sit with these.

A specific moment — not in general.

1.

Bring back a recent moment.

A specific one. When your eye was on the dead-looking leaf.

The buzz at 2 a.m.

The text you almost sent.

The conversation you replayed in the shower.

The dinner where you went quiet.

Just the moment.

Write it here, in a couple of words

2.

Now — what came out of you in that moment?

What was your reach?

Maybe you checked the phone again.

Maybe you sent the text.

Maybe you went quiet.

Just the move.

Name it in a few words

3.

Now — what else came with that moment?

Not only the thing you're waiting on.

The pile.

The other waiting that's already been in the room before this one.

Maybe a cousin to it — an older version of the same waiting.

Maybe a memory.

Something that wasn't physically there but arrived anyway.

Your eye wasn't going only to this one leaf.

Write what else was in the room

4.

Look back at what you wrote.

Not analyze. Just look.

Anything surprise you?

Anything jump out?

Did you linger longer with one answer?

Write a word or two about what stood out

Not to fix.

Not to solve.

Not to figure out.

Just to notice.

Sooner than you might have.

You just drew the picture.

Not someone else's picture of what waiting looks like.

Yours.

The plant.

The dead-looking leaf.

Your eye, going to it.

What it has been costing.

That's what's been happening.

NEXT LESSON.

A glimpse of what's ahead. Held lightly.

There's something small that's been happening between the looking
and the looking back.

You may have done it already.

Without naming it.

In Lesson 3 we'll find it.

See you in Lesson 3.

CARRY THIS.

This week — once — when you notice you are looking;

That is enough.



LESSON 3

The look

The look that lingers

Still here.

Last lesson the picture got drawn.

The plant. The dead-looking leaf. Your eye going to it. What it has been costing.

That took something.

This lesson is about the look itself.

STORIES.

Two short moments before we go further. No hurry.

A woman I worked with had a husband whose cancer hadn't come back yet.

But might.

Every morning, the worry would wake her before her alarm.

For a while, she responded by checking.

His last labs.

Articles about recurrence rates.

Symptoms she might be missing.

She'd scroll for an hour before her feet touched the floor.

One morning she noticed something she hadn't before.
How long the look had been going.
How it kept coming back, even after she set the phone down.
It was small — the noticing.
But it was there.

— *I've had that look.*
— *Different morning. Same scroll.*

A father waiting up for his teenager who hadn't come home yet.
It was after 1 a.m.
The kid was 17.

His phone was face down on the kitchen counter.
He'd been imagining the call.
The which-hospital call.
The accident call.
He kept walking to the front window.

One night he noticed himself standing there.

Looking at the dark street.

And then noticing he was still looking, long after there was nothing to see.

That noticing was something.

— *I've stood at that window.*

— *Different night. Same look.*

Here's the part we haven't named yet.

The waiting hasn't happened.

Not really.

The result isn't back. The phone hasn't rung. The person hasn't come home. The answer hasn't arrived.

All of that sits somewhere ahead.

And yet the looking happens now.

Right here.

The considering. The arithmetic. The replaying. The checking. The wondering.

The waiting may belong to tomorrow.

The look happens today.

The look that lingers.

Sometimes the look stays longer than it needs to.

Not a stare.

More like a long look.

The eye lands on the leaf and doesn't quite leave.

A conversation ends and part of the look stays there.

The phone goes back in the pocket and part of the look stays there.

The day moves on. The look doesn't quite move with it.

The look that returns.

And the funny thing is that even when the look leaves, it often comes back.

Back to the text. Back to the symptom. Back to the conversation. Back to the thing we're waiting on.

Most of us don't particularly enjoy waiting.

Not in traffic. Not for coffee. Not for bigger things either.

So the look returns.

Just to see if anything changed.

Even when we already know it probably hasn't.

The look that turns inward.

This one often happens where nobody can see it.

The 2 a.m. ceiling.

The shower.

The drive home.

The conversation about the day while another conversation is
happening underneath it.

The leaf isn't even in front of you anymore.

And yet the look continues.

Running quietly in the background.

Still looking.

Before we go further —

Your plant is still there. And so is the leaf.

The person. The situation.

The one you've been longing for.

Missing.

Stirred by every time their name comes up.

Real today.

Real tonight.

This lesson isn't about making the leaf green again.

The leaf stays.

This lesson isn't about looking away.

It's about seeing the look for what it is.

You've heard this before.

A leaf caught the eye.

The leaf became the thing being watched.

The watching became most of the looking.

The plant kept growing while we watched.

Soon the leaf looked like the whole plant.

And the leaf still hadn't told us how the story ends.

THE LOOK.

Some questions. Sit with these.

A specific moment — not in general.

1.

Bring back a recent moment.

A specific one. When the look was on the dead-looking leaf.

Maybe the same one from Lesson 2.

Maybe a different one.

Just the moment.

Write it in a couple of words

2.

Now — what was the room?

Where were you. Who was around. What it sounded like.

The place the look happened in.

Name it

3.

Now — what was the look doing?

Lingering? Returning, even after you looked away? Running inside,
eyes closed?

What was it asking for?

What did you find?

4.

Look back at all three.

Not analyze. Just look.

Anything surprise you?

Anything jump out?

Write a word or two

Not to fix.

Not to solve.

Not to figure out.

Just to notice.

Sooner than you might have.

That's your look.

Not someone else's look.

Yours.

You can come back to it.

You don't have to catch it every time.

Seeing it counts.

NEXT LESSON.

A glimpse of what's ahead. Held lightly.

The dead-looking leaf you have now isn't the first one you've stared at.

Some of them have been around longer than you may have realized.

In Lesson 5 we'll find an older one.

See you in Lesson 4.

CARRY THIS.

This week — once — when your looking becomes a linger:

Just notice the linger.

That is enough.



LESSON 4

Henry

*A week everyone waited months for. And the
waiting ate it.*

Good to see you.

Last lesson — the look got named. Lingering. Returning. Turning inward.

This lesson, a story.

The vacation.

They'd planned it for months.

Kids finally out of school.

Two rental houses, side by side. Room for everyone.

Cousins together again.

And Uncle Henry.

The cousins were staying in Henry's house.

The first day was the one they'd waited for.

The long drive behind them.

Sun. Sand. The good kind of tired.

Then bedtime came.

Everyone found their bed.

The house went quiet.

And then —

The snore came through the wall.

Low at first. Then not low.

The cousins lay in the dark and waited for it to stop.

It didn't stop.

So they looked.

At the wall.

At Henry, on the other side of it, where they couldn't even see him.

Eyes open in the dark. The look already going.

Nobody said anything.

They just lay there and looked toward the snore and waited for a quiet that didn't come.

Morning. Nobody had slept much.

And then Henry ate his cereal.

Nobody said anything.

They just looked.

Over, and away.

The kind of look you think nobody catches.

By the afternoon they were at the beach.

The thing they'd driven all that way for.

Henry had his allergies.

Out came the pocket square. The sneeze. The square away, and then out again.

The looks slid sideways.

Not at the water.

At Henry.

None of it was anything.

A man snores. A man eats. A man sneezes at the beach.

By now nobody needed it to be anything.

By the second day, Henry was the reason.

The reason the week wasn't what it was supposed to be.

The vacation they'd waited months for.

The cousins. The two houses. The kids already in the waves.

All of it, going on.

All of it, unwatched.

Every look in the house turned the other way — toward the snore, the cereal, the square.

After the week, everyone drove home.

Henry had been right there.

At the table.

At the beach.

On the other side of the thin wall.

The whole time.

YOUR HENRY.

Some questions. Sit with these.

A specific moment — not in general.

1.

Bring back your own Henry.

Not the person — the moment your look locked on the one thing.

The snore. The comment. The habit. The thing you couldn't stop watching.

Just the moment.

Write it in a couple of words

2.

Now — what was the room?

Where were you. Who else was there. What else was going on around the one thing.

Name it

3.

Now — what was the look asking for?

The quiet. The week to be what it was supposed to be. The one thing to just stop.

What did you find?

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.

4.

Look back at all three.

Not analyze. Just look.

Anything surprise you?

Anything jump out?

Write a word or two

Not to fix.

Not to feel bad about.

Just to notice.

Sooner than you might have.

NEXT LESSON.

A glimpse of what's ahead. Held lightly.

Once the look learns to find one thing, it gets good at finding more.

In Lesson 5, the leaves start showing up everywhere.

See you in Lesson 5.

CARRY THIS.

This week — once — when your looking begins to take the whole room.

Just, notice the room, just beyond the looking.

That is enough.



LESSON 5

Older leaves

The look didn't start with this leaf. It's been practicing a long time.

Good to see you.

Last lesson we watched a look practice.

Snore. Then cereal. Then the pocket square.

Once it learned where to land, it kept landing.

This lesson — how long it's been practicing.

The look has a history.

The leaf you're watching now isn't the first leaf.

It's just the one in front of you.

The look has landed on leaves before.

Some older than you'd think.

Some so small you'd never call them waiting.

Some are tiny.

A long red light. Twelve cars deep.

A package that's late.

A spinning wheel on a screen.

A line that isn't moving.

Nothing's at stake.

And there's the look anyway.

Landing. Checking. Trying to make it move.

Some are old.

A waiting from a long time ago.

A different house. A different decade. A different person.

A phone that didn't ring then, either.

You'd almost forgotten it.

But the look remembers the shape of it.

Because it practiced there too.

Same look. Different leaf.

Tonight's leaf is real.

The thing you're waiting on right now is real.

And — some of how it feels tonight is older than tonight.

Not all of it.

Some.

That doesn't make the current thing smaller.

It means the current thing has company.

Older company.

OLDER LEAVES.

Some questions. Sit with these.

A specific moment — not in general.

1.

Bring back a recent moment.

A specific one. When the look was on the leaf.

Maybe the same one from earlier. Maybe a new one.

Just the moment.

Write it in a couple of words

2.

Now — what was the room?

Where were you. Who was around. What it sounded like.

The place the look happened in.

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 — notice what else arrived.

An older leaf. From a different house, a different decade.

Or a tiny one — a red-light kind of small.

Same look. Different leaf.

Name the older one

4.

Look back at all three.

Not analyze. Just look.

What's familiar between them?

Write a word or two

Not to fix.

Not to solve.

Not to figure out.

Just to notice.

Sooner than you might have.

You've had this look before.

Different house.

Different decade.

Same look.

Knowing that doesn't make the leaf green.

But it changes what the look is to you.

A little less new.

A little more known.

NEXT LESSON.

A glimpse of what's ahead. Held lightly.

When the look is on the leaf, there's usually someone else in the room too.

A voice.

In Lesson 6 we'll find it.

See you in Lesson 6.

CARRY THIS.

This week, look at what feels older than this moment.

That is enough.



LESSON 6

The Committee

*When the look is on the leaf, there's usually a voice
running too.*

Here you are.

Last lesson the look got a history.

Older leaves. Tinier ones. Same look, different leaf.

That took something.

This lesson finds something that's been talking the whole time.

STORIES.

Two short moments before we go further. No hurry.

A few weeks ago I was at the dentist.

They take the X-rays.

They send you back to the waiting room.

You wait for them to call you in.

I was sitting there.

The voice started up.

*“You don’t floss enough.
You haven’t flossed in days.
The hygienist is going to know.
She’ll do that thing with her eyebrows.
You should have flossed this morning.
You’re a grown man. You should have a system.”*

*I’d been there twelve minutes.
The voice had said all of it three times.*

*— I’ve heard that voice.
— Different waiting room. Same scolding.*

*A woman I worked with had just finished a big interview.
Senior role. Months of prep.
She walked to her car.
Forty-five minutes of driving home.*

The voice started.

“You shouldn’t have said that thing about your last boss.

That came across as bitter.

They probably noticed.

Why do you always do that.

You had three months to prepare.

Why didn’t you practice that question.”

She’d answered the question fine.

She knew that.

But the voice had already decided otherwise.

— I’ve heard that voice.

— Different drive home. Same review of the tape.

Here’s what the look doesn’t do alone.

There’s a voice inside.

It runs commentary while the look is on the leaf.

About what you should have done.

About what you should be doing now.

About whether you’re handling this right.

The voice is yours.

But it doesn't always feel like you.

It speaks fast.

It speaks with authority.

It doesn't pause.

That's the voice that engages the looking.

It keeps the look on the leaf.

It gives the look something to do.

And here's the thing about it.

It often sounds older than you.

Sometimes much older.

It might sound like someone you knew once.

A parent. A coach. A teacher.

A version of yourself from a long time ago.

The voice borrowed something from somewhere.

The borrowing is so old you stopped noticing.

And it isn't the only one.

Once you hear one voice, you start noticing there are others.

Some are more negative.

The worst-case voice.

The feared outcome voice.

The voice that already knows how this ends.

The voice that has been rehearsing the difficult phone call before the phone has even rung.

Some are more positive.

The voice that says it will probably be okay.

The voice that reminds you that you've done what you can do.

The voice that says life has a funny way of working things out.

You know that one too.

Some are louder.

Not necessarily truer.

Just louder.

The voices that get your ear.

The ones that sound certain.

The ones that speak as though they are in charge.

Some are more followed.

Not always the ones you agree with.

Just the ones you end up listening to.

The ones that get you out of bed.

The ones that get you checking again.

The ones that get you doing something when there isn't really anything to do.

And then there's another voice.

A quieter one.

Not because it talks less.

Because it isn't trying to win.

It doesn't argue with the others.

It doesn't obey them either.

It just notices.

The worried voice.

The hopeful voice.

The loud voice.

The certain voice.

The whole committee.

And sees them for what they are.

Voices.

Funny thing.

Once you notice the committee, it becomes a little harder to mistake every voice for the truth.

Knowing a voice is a voice — not the whole truth — is part of the work.

Not making it stop.

Making it audible as a voice.

When you can hear it as a voice, it gets quieter.

Not gone.

A little less sure of itself.

Before we go further —

The voices have been loud about your actual leaf.

They're loud because it matters.

The person matters. The situation matters. The wait is for something that matters.

And — it's worth saying.

A forced return isn't really what you're waiting for.

A coerced answer isn't really what you're waiting for.

A demanded come-back isn't really what you're waiting for.

Real return is what you're waiting for.

Real answer.

Real coming back.

Real return can only arrive on its own terms.

Or not.

The voices can push you to demand any version.

They cannot deliver the real one.

That's worth knowing while they're loud.

YOUR VOICES.

Some questions. Sit with these.

A specific moment — not in general.

1.

Bring back a recent moment.

A specific one. When the look was on the leaf.

And a voice inside was running too.

Probably yesterday. Probably last week.

Just the moment.

Write it in a couple of words

2.

Now — what did the voice say?

Not the paraphrase.

The actual words.

What should have happened. What must happen. What ought to be different.

Write a line or two

3.

Now — where have you heard that voice before?

The tone. The phrases. Whose voice does it borrow from.

A parent. A coach. A teacher. A boss. Yourself at fourteen.

Just who comes to mind

4.

Look back at all three.

Not analyze. Just look.

Anything surprise you?

Anything jump out?

Write a word or two

Not to fix.

Not to solve.

Not to figure out.

Just to notice.

Sooner than you might have.

Those voices have been with you a while.

Probably longer than you've realized.

Knowing whose voice they borrow from doesn't make them stop.

But it changes what they sound like.

A little less true.

A little more borrowed.

NEXT LESSON.

A glimpse of what's ahead. Held lightly.

Uncle Henry, who you met in Lesson 4. We will meet him again.

See you in Lesson 7.

CARRY THIS.

This week — once — notice the voices, and the push or pull you feel from them.

That is enough.



LESSON 7

Uncle Henry, again

The look took focus from a lot of things. Including Henry.

You came back.

Last lesson — the committee.

All those voices. And the quiet one that just notices.

That took something.

Now back to someone we already met.

Remember Uncle Henry?

In Lesson 4 we spent a week with him.

The snore through the wall. The cereal. The pocket square at the beach.

We watched the look land on him and stay.

We spent a whole week looking at Henry.

And never once saw him.

So let me tell you about Henry.

He was funny.

He was kind.

He told stories.

He told jokes.

He was Uncle Henry.

There was this one story.

He shared about his trip to Arizona once. Sedona.

It was a story he'd shared, many times.

And yet, each time the story began, it felt as if Uncle Henry was sharing a memory from last week.

He saw a blue jay.

Except it wasn't a blue jay he'd ever seen.

Lighter blue.

Almost like somebody had bleached it.

He went on about that bird for an hour.

“What’s wrong with the blue jays out here.

Did somebody bleach ’em.

What kind of place is this.”

He told that story at every dinner for years.

The Bleached Blue Jay of Arizona.

He’d get to the punchline and slap his knee.

Turns out there are lighter blue jays in Sedona.

A real thing.

But that wasn’t the point.

The point was he noticed.

A different blue.

And it stuck with him for thirty years.

He had a joke about birds, too.

He’d lean in. Look around the table. Make sure everyone was listening.

“Why don’t seagulls fly over the bay?”

Long pause. Eyebrows up.

“Because then they’d be bagels.”

Knee slap.

Laughed harder than anyone else.

Every single time.

He’d told it a hundred times.

It got funnier.

So.

Uncle Henry snored.

Loud. For decades.

Uncle Henry also told dad jokes about birds.

Noticed a different blue.

Made everyone laugh at the dinner table.

Both Henrys.

The snore through the wall. The stories.

The cereal. The bleached blue jay.

The pocket square. The bagel joke.

That's my Uncle Henry.

That was always Uncle Henry.

He was there the whole week.

— *I know an Uncle Henry.*

— *Different person. Same both.*

The look took focus from him.

It also took focus from:

The sunrise.

The cousins.

The waves.

The week.

The leaf isn't always literal.

It might be the consuming layoff.

The diagnosis.

The not-yet.

The childhood thing that still pulls.

The parent who died, with grief that didn't finish.

Different shapes.

Same look.

Same erosion of everything around it.

Same with your leaf.

It's dead-looking. It takes the focus.

And while it does:

Your sunrise is happening.

Your breakfast.

Your kid's recital. Your friend's birthday. Your Tuesday afternoon.

The week.

Then someone you love comes over.

Or someone you love is leaving.

The season keeps happening.

Whether you're noticing it or not.

Catching sooner is noticing what else is here.

Not making the leaf green.

Not making it stop being dead-looking.

Not pretending it isn't real.

Just letting yourself see the plant, too.

Even while the leaf is dead-looking.

Especially while the leaf is dead-looking.

UNCLE HENRY, AGAIN.

Some questions. Sit with these.

A specific moment — not in general.

1.

Bring back a recent moment.

A specific one. When the look was on the leaf.

Probably still the same wait you've been carrying.

Maybe new. Maybe ten years old.

Just the moment.

Write it in a couple of words

2.

Now — what came out of you?

The check. The reach. The going quiet. The look that stayed on the leaf.

Just the move.

Name it

3.

Now — what else has been happening while the look was on the leaf?

Your sunrise. Your breakfast.

The texts. The walks. The small Tuesday things.

Maybe a blue jay — something small that stuck with you.

Something you noticed and almost didn't.

Probably more than you've been counting.

Name what almost got missed

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?

That's the season.

The sunrise. The breakfast. The week. The blue jay.

It's been happening.

While the look was on the leaf.

The leaf is real.

So is the rest of it.

Both Henrys.

Both seasons.

Both yours.

Uncle Henry would have noticed.

NEXT LESSON.

A glimpse of what's ahead. Held lightly.

In Lesson 8 you'll have a turn.

Something with paper.

We'll start there.

See you in Lesson 8.

CARRY THIS.

This week — once — if you are open, look up, the plant is still there.

So, once, just look up.

Notice a blue jay.

Or something like one.

That is enough.



LESSON 8

Two letters

Your turn.

You're back.

Last lesson — Uncle Henry.

The snore through the wall. The bleached blue jay. The bagel joke.

Both Henrys. The week he was there the whole time.

You looked up.

Maybe you smiled.

Seven lessons taught.

This one is yours.

Two letters.

Both to you.

One to the you who gets lost in the leaf.

One to the you who sees the leaf — and the plant.

Two versions of you.

Both real.

Both yours.

The look was on the leaf for a long time.

And while it was, the rest of the plant kept growing — unwatched.

The dinners you were half-at. The mornings that went by while you checked. The people who were right there.

More than you were counting.

Write the first one first.

When you're done, keep it close.

Then write the second.

No rush. Short or long. Anywhere you like.

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

The carrying continues whether you write these or not.

The first letter.

To the you who gets lost in the leaf.

The you whose eye keeps going to the dead-looking one.

The version of you the wait has gotten used to.

The checker. The refresher. The one who scans for the name. The one who runs the 2 a.m. math. The one who replays the conversation. The one who can't quite put it down.

Or whatever yours is.

The look that goes to the leaf before you've chosen it.

The reach you didn't decide to make.

The phone checked before the coffee.

The part of you already there with the thing you're waiting on.

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

— *I see you.*

In the parking lot, engine off. At the 2 a.m. ceiling. At the window, looking at the dark street.

Wherever the look first learned to go.

I see what you did.

— *The look was trying to help.*

It was watching for the thing that mattered.

It stayed on the leaf because the leaf was real.

The person mattered. The result mattered. The wait was for something worth waiting on.

That mattered.

— *The leaf was real.*

You weren't making it up.

The thing you're waiting on is real, and the waiting is hard.

The look wasn't foolish.

It was on something that counts.

That was true.

— *The look became the whole view.*

Stare long enough and the leaf looks like the plant.

The one thing looked like the whole life.

It wasn't. But it felt like it.

That happened.

— *Anything else.*

Whatever the body wants to say.

To the part of you that has been watching the leaf.

Carrying the wait.

All this time.

When you're done, keep it close.

You're not done with this lesson yet.

The second letter.

To the you who sees the leaf — and the plant.

Without the look going only to the leaf.

Without the dead-looking one filling the whole view.

Without the wait being the only thing in the room.

The you who looked up and saw the sunrise.

The you who noticed the blue jay on the fence.

The you who caught your kid's recital while the wait was still running.

The you who laughed at the dinner table with the thing still
unresolved.

The you who felt the plant still growing, even with the leaf dead-
looking.

That you is already here.

Has been here.

More moments than you've been counting.

Some things you might say to that you.

— *I see you too.*

In the look up.

In the half-second when the eye left the leaf and found the rest of the plant.

In the moments when the wait was loud and you were also somewhere alive.

I see what you've been doing.

— *You weren't trying to look away.*

You weren't trying to make the leaf green.

You weren't pretending the wait wasn't real.

Something noticed the plant.

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

That was it.

— *The leaf is still here.*

And — sometimes — the plant is too.

Both at once.

Not the plant instead of the leaf.

Not the leaf instead of the plant.

Both.

— *You looked up.*

With the leaf still dead-looking. You looked up anyway.

Whoever taught you that 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 lost in the leaf.

And there you were too.

The one who saw the season — sometimes before the look, sometimes alongside it, sometimes after.

More often than you've been counting.

— *Keep looking up.*

Or don't.

Some moments you'll see the plant.

Some moments the look will be on the leaf and the rest will go by.

Some moments someone will point to a blue jay you'd have missed.

— *Anything else.*

Whatever the body wants to say.

To the part of you that has been looking up.

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 see the plant while the leaf is still dead-looking.

Someone allowing it is you.

[illegible]

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

Now — both letters.

Read the first one.

Then the second one.

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

Both at once.

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

The you who gets lost in the leaf.

The you who sees the leaf — and the plant.

Both real.

Both yours.

Both with you at the same time.

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 not.

Either is alright.

What you do with them is yours.

Keep them. File them. Tear them up. Frame them. Read them again
next year.

The work has already happened.

Two letters.

Written by you.

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

The you who gets lost in the leaf.

The you who sees the leaf — and the plant.

Both real.

Both yours.

This was the workbook.

The carrying continues.

The leaf is still here.

The plant is still growing around it.

Somewhere a blue jay is sitting on a fence.

A different blue.

Look up.

Uncle Henry would have noticed.

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.

CAUGHTSOONER.COM