

# *Sketch*

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## I Should Have Stayed In Bed

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# I Should Have Stayed In Bed

Elizabeth S. Schabel

## **Abstract**

I should have stayed in bed that morning is what I should have done; but instead, Theresa and I ran away to get married, me saying, “Hey, Theresa,” from a phone booth at seven-thirty that morning, “I’ve packed my duffle bag and I’m at BeDel’s and if you want to get married, you’d better come over here, quick,” and Theresa is saying, “You’re crazy, do you know that —you are crazy,” but slamming down the receiver and rounding the corner of Eggert Road and Northbriar, wheels whining, a few minutes later...

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*by Elizabeth S. Schabel, English Grad*

I should have stayed in bed that morning is what I should have done; but instead, Theresa and I ran away to get married, me saying, “Hey, Theresa,” from a phone booth at seven-thirty that morning, “I’ve packed my duffle bag and I’m at BeDel’s and if you want to get married, you’d better come over here, quick,” and Theresa is saying, “You’re crazy, do you know that—you are crazy,” but slamming down the receiver and rounding the corner of Eggert Road and Northbriar, wheels whining, a few minutes later.

Theresa is pushing open the heavy plate glass doors to BeDel’s, yelling “What about your parents,” loud enough for early-morning couples, sipping their hot chocolate in dull-brown, imitation-leather booths, to turn and stare, and I’m guiding Theresa out the door and into her Dad’s big black Buick, explaining to her that with ten children in the family, all I have to do is hire a stand-in for a few days, while Theresa is telling me that her family will be no problem, that Ashby will probably pour another Old Fashioned and congratulate himself on having one less wedding to finance, and while she is telling me this, I’m thinking about how I’ll miss Theresa’s brother’s skin flicks that he shows for me on his south-west bedroom window, and I’m remembering Virginia Ding Dong Bell twirling her pendulous bosoms in opposite directions and I’m thinking, “No more silhouettes on the shade for Mr. Prior next door,” and I’m remembering Theresa saying all the time, “I’m so glad you’re getting to know my brother so well.”

Theresa is asking how I got to BeDel's that morning and I'm telling her how I stuffed underwear, socks, corduroy pants, two clean shirts, and a tooth brush into my duffle bag, threw it out the window of my second story bedroom, slid past my mother who was elbow deep in pancake batter, went out the door, retrieved the duffle bag from the juniper bushes beneath the window, smiled at Mr. and Mrs. Popper who were staring at me from their breakfast table next door, sprinted to the corner deli, and called her from the phone booth in the back of the deli next to the soda fountain, and all the while I'm watching Theresa shaking her head and hearing her mumble, "You're crazy . . . YOU ARE CRAZY."

After I finish telling Theresa all this, she asks me, "What'll we do now," and I answer, "You've got a college loan, don't you—well, we're going to cash it in and fly to Detroit," but I hardly get the word "Detroit" out when Theresa starts shrieking, "Detroit, Jesus," and I tell her, "For god's sake, Theresa, stop shrieking," and ask her, "Can you think of a better place when we're both under age," but all Theresa can say is, "You're crazy—YOU ARE CRAZY."

Theresa and I fly to Detroit and we arrive, me with an ice pack on my head, shirt undone, tie loosened, gasping for air, panic in my eye, and Theresa is just walking along beside muttering, "Detroit, Jesus."

I tell Theresa, "The first thing we have to do, Theresa, is to get our blood tests," and as we make our way through the crowd and reach the door of the terminal, we see rain, pelting down at a forty-five degree angle, and we hear somebody saying, "The damn Texas coast hurricane has come all the way to the Great Lakes," and Theresa is muttering, "Detroit in the rain—Jesus."

Theresa and I get our blood tests and we take the bus downtown and pick out two gold bands from a pawn shop south of City Hall, unfolding two crisp ten dollar bills for the rings, and I mentally calculate what we have left after buying two plane tickets, paying for blood tests, two hotdogs, two cokes, bus fare, and two gold bands, and I hear Theresa mumble, "Class," and I say, "Shut-up."

Theresa and I are united in holy matrimony on the sixth floor of Detroit's City Hall, overlooking the Detroit

River with its barges of scrap iron threading their way through the brownish foam, and I notice the judge has asthma, and when he opens and reads from the text, "Do you take thee, Theresa," he has to sneeze, and I say, "God bless you — I do," while trying to stifle Theresa's mutterings, and all the while, the maids who are our witnesses, who are leaning on their mops, thankful for a brief rest from cleaning the sixth-floor toilets, are getting all dewy-eyed, and one starts shuffling around and reaching under the cuff of the sleeve of her dress for a Kleenex to give to the judge so he can blow his nose and get the ceremony over with, which he finally does, and I kiss Theresa, mainly to keep her quiet.

Theresa and I take the elevator from the sixth floor of City Hall down to the main lobby, where we have two dollars' worth of pictures taken from the portable, coin-operated photo machine that stands between the cigar counter and the brass spittoon, and Theresa is saying, "I can't believe this is happening," while asking me for another quarter so that she can have a picture of both of us together.

I put our wedding album in my wallet, between my draft registration card and my laminated library card and Theresa puts a picture of me in the zipper compartment of her brown leather purse, complaining all the time about how terrible her hair looks in that one picture of her in her brown-checked, boxed-jacket wedding suit and brown felt derby hat.

I tell Theresa that we don't have enough money to fly back to Buffalo, and that we are going to have to take the train, and I'm ready for her "The train — it figures," and we go to the Detroit Depot, take the long ride back, stopping at Cleveland in the middle of the night, Theresa saying several times, "I used to live in Cleveland when I was in the second, third and fourth grade," while I'm wondering what my parents are going to say when I tell them that Theresa and I are married and ask them if we can move in for a while when they already have nine other children filling up every bit of space in their tiny stucco house on the dead-end street near the university.

Theresa and I are standing in the Buffalo Depot and I'm on the phone, trying not to let Theresa hear, "What do you mean, you're married—no, we won't pick you up from the airport—Bill, they want us to pick them up from the airport—Dad wants to know if Theresa is gonna turn Catholic—you can't sleep together until you are married in the church—you just tell Theresa that and see what she says—Bill—they want us to pick them up—do you know how worried your father and I were—don't you think of anybody but yourselves—Bill—we might as well pick them up—Dad says we'll pick you up but you'd better talk to Theresa about getting married in the church and turning Catholic—do you know what you put us through," and Theresa is saying "Jesus," and I'm feeling sick.

Dad is driving and Theresa is sitting next to him and he's saying, "I've already talked to Father Cronin and he's agreed to give you lessons—you can get married and go to confession and . . ." and Theresa is pinching my hand I'm getting worried about being alone with Theresa and I'm wondering if my Dad is gonna make us sleep in separate bedrooms until we get married in the church and Dad is saying to Theresa, ". . . and you two can't stay in the same room—you're not married in the eyes of God," and Mom is beginning to say the rosary because we have a twenty-minute drive and Dad is joining her and Theresa's hand is getting sweaty because she hasn't learned the rosary and I can just hear her saying "Jesus," even though she's quiet, for once.

I should have stayed in bed.

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I should have stayed in bed that morning is what I should have done, but instead I was on the floor groping for my pants and not looking at Theresa with her crusty Maybelline and her hair in strange corkscrews and not listening to her either as she swiped at the General Electric Snooze alarm and missed and leaned over the edge of the bed so I'd be sure to hear, "Your brother came in here last night—do you know that—of course you don't know that—you sleep through anything—well he did, and he wanted to sleep with you—can you believe that—Jesus," and I'm ignoring Theresa and thinking how Theresa and I had

gotten married last week and come to live with my folks and my little brother had come in every night because he still wanted to sleep with me just like he'd done before Theresa and I had gotten married, and Theresa had been yelling at him every night, things like "Get outa here, you little wart," and I had started wondering when Theresa would start calling my little brother a lot worse things than "you little wart."

Theresa was still mouthing off as I headed for the bathroom—"And that's not all, you ass, I tripped over your mother last night when I got up to go to the bathroom because she was saying her night prayers on the stairs—how was I supposed to know she always says her night prayers on the stairs—answer me that," and I'm mumbling "Shut up, Theresa," and almost tripping over my mother who is saying her morning prayers on the stairs.

I'm heading back into the bedroom and I'm hearing my little brother's voice and I'm seeing the train track that he's pulled from under the bed where he always keeps it, and I'm seeing Theresa doubled over on the edge of the bed laughing as my little brother is saying," . . . and I woke up and there he was, peeing all over my train and I kept yelling at him to stop, but he just kept on peeing and when he was done he pulled up his pajamas and went back to bed— he never even woke up and he ruined my transformer and Dad had to get me another one . . ." and I'm groaning 'cause I know Theresa is never gonna let me forget that and Theresa is already saying, "Wait till I tell . . ."

I'm listening to Mom put away her rosary in the drawer of the table by the stairs and I'm telling Theresa to hurry up and get ready for breakfast and we're sitting at the table and Mom is bringing in platefuls of french toast and Theresa is muttering, "French toast out of hotdog buns, Jesus," and I'm telling Theresa, "Theresa, for god's sake, shut-up," and Theresa is saying, "But who ever heard of making french toast out of hotdog buns, and I'm thinking that we got to get a place of our own.

I'm putting on my coat and I'm listening to my mom telling Theresa, "He's a gigolo—I kept telling Dad, our boy's a gigolo—you were always picking him up in that big

Buick and now, look at the two of you—you working every day down at that Blue Cross office—having to take the bus all the way downtown, and him, taking a couple of courses at the university—and driving—I always knew that boy of mine was a gigolo . . .” and I’m thinking of how I been busting my ass, working every night at Acme stocking groceries until midnight, taking six courses so I could graduate and make some money to support Theresa and the kids—if we ever have any—and I have to stand here and listen to my mother call me a gigolo and Theresa call me an ass and complain about my mother’s praying on the stairs and her french toast, and my little brother tell Theresa how I’d ruined his transformer.

I should have stayed in bed.