

SOUVENIR

By  
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BLACK SCREEN.

The jabbering voices of three 10 year old boys, and the sound of feet on grass and gravel. A strong wind is blowing.

CHRIS (V.O.)  
Here, I've got a good one.

ADRIAN (V.O.)  
Give us a look. Nah - too small.  
It'll never get there. Here - use this  
one. Who's going to throw?

CHRIS (V.O.)  
I threw last time.

ADRIAN (V.O.)  
Yeah but ya missed ya dick. Didn't  
count.

(beat)  
Here - James. It's your turn. And  
try get it in the middle.

EXT. BANK - DAY

Three boys, James, Adrian and Chris are standing on a grassy bank. They are staring down the bank at something. ADRIAN, short brown hair, skinny is handing JAMES, curly blond hair, skinny, a stone. James gives the stone a good heave. All three boys wait in expectation. Then CRACK. They all duck down giggling and muttering "shit".

ADRIAN  
(laughing)  
Shit - you got it right in the middle.

CHRIS  
Anyone coming out?

ADRIAN  
Nah. They're not home. I told ya.  
Mum see's them at church every Sunday.

James stands to take a look down the bank. There is a house at the bottom.

EXT. BANK - MOMENTS LATER

The three boys slide down the bank on their feet and into the back yard of the house.

ADRIAN  
Laverey said he heard Mr Knotts got a  
huge stack of Playboys. Some really  
old ones too. Vintage.

CHRIS  
(not understanding)  
Vintage...?

ADRIAN

And you know O'Connor from room 12. His uncle gave him a bunch of Playboys too. They're in his room and his mum knows. She lets him have them.

CHRIS

Lucky!

ADRIAN

O'Connor said there's a couple of Penthouses in there too. I got invited to his birthday so I'll get to look at them then.

CHRIS

What's the difference between Penthouse and Playboy?

ADRIAN

Penthouse shows more.

CHRIS

I wanna see all the knives. Apparently Mr Knotts got a Rambo one, with a compass on the end. Just touch the tip and you'll bleed.

The boys reach the bottom of the grassy bank. They are in the backyard of the house James threw the stone on. The backyard is littered with piles of stuff. Old washing machines are in one pile, two concrete mixers in another, tires in another. Long grass spurts out around the junk.

The three boys weave through the piles and up to the back door of the small, one storey, weatherboard house. Net curtains are pulled across all the windows.

Adrian tries the back door - it's locked. Next to the back door is a window with glass slats.

ADRIAN

We've got one of these at home for the toilet. We can pull out the glass.

CHRIS

What if the cops come?

ADRIAN

(carefully pulling the glass window slats out)  
Man you're a chicken. Anyway, cops don't work on Sundays.

JAMES

That's bull.

ADRIAN

Richie Gifford's dad's a cop and he's always at home watching the racing on Sundays.

Adrian has all the slats but the window is a little high to climb in.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)  
Give us a boost.

Neither James nor Chris move.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)  
Jesus! Give us a boost. James!

James steps forward and links his two hands together for Adrian's foot. He lifts Adrian up who squeezes through the small window. A moment later a CLICK and the back door swings open.

Adrian stands in the doorway with a smug expression on his face. James and Chris don't move.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)  
Jesus. Don't you wanna see the Playboys and the knives?

CHRIS  
What time is it?

Adrian sighs. James looks at his digital watch.

JAMES  
Half twelve.

CHRIS  
Mum said I've gotta be home for lunch.

ADRIAN  
(exasperated)  
Jesus! James, you coming?!

James looks at Adrian...deciding.

INT. HOUSE/VARIOUS ROOMS - MOMENTS LATER

James and Adrian move through the kitchen. It is stacked almost wall to wall with stuff. There are several microwaves and miniature stoves. There are about 4 coffee percolators and a stack of recipe books in various languages dating back to god knows when. There is only enough space for a small kitchen table against one wall, and a path to the sink and bench and out into the hallway.

They move quietly through the kitchen and into the hallway. A variety of bookshelves line the hall walls, completely crammed with books, stacked two back. Where there are no book shelves there are stacks of books, several hall tables, each stacked with books and small knick knacks. At one end of the hall there are boxes piled high - they don't look like they have been moved in an age. Behind it we can just make out the front door. At the other end the hall has one room coming off it and then it turns a corner.

Directly in front of the boys, opposite the kitchen doorway, is the lounge. They sneak in.

INT. LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

The lounge is the same. Boxes, books, paintings, numerous telephones from various decades, an empty and dusty fish tank filled with dusty fish tank accessories. A narrow path between the stuff leads through the living room.

ADRIAN  
(tripping on something)  
Shit!

He's tripped on a pile of telephone books. He picks up the top one - "Auckland Telephone Directory 1975".

ADRIAN (CONT'D)  
What a bunch of crap.  
(beat, disappointed)  
I bet Lavery was bull-shitting about the Playboys.

He looks up, expecting an answer from James - but James isn't there.

ADRIEN  
James?

Adrian edges forward nervously between the boxes.

ADRIEN (CONT'D)  
James?!

He moves around the corner of boxes and his jaw drops. James is standing in front of a four metre long table, pushed against the back wall of the lounge, and covered with a miniature model landscape and miniature figurines. Adrian approaches and stands next to James.

The two boys admire speechlessly the greatest toy of their dreams. The table bears a model landscape, complete with miniature grass, trees, hills, streams, rocks...and covering the landscape are small figurines dressed in a sort ancient military armour. There are two types of figurines, each depicting a different side in a battle and each amassed on either side of the hilly landscape.

James reaches in and picks up a figure who stands alone on one of the hills behind one of the armies.

Suddenly there is a COUGH from another room. The boys' hearts stop in their chests.

ADRIAN  
Jesus! Run!

Adrian dashes past the boxes, back towards the hallway.

James hesitates a moment, looking back at the battle scene. And then he too bolts. Adrian whips past the boxes, accidentally flicking one with his foot on the way through, stumbling slightly as a result and causing a bird cage on top of the boxes to fall down behind him and block the path. Adrian is out the door by now. James tries to move the cage, but it is wedged. He is trapped in the lounge. Breathing hard, he looks around him - searching for a place to hide. Finally he dives under the model table.

Everything is now silent. James' heart is still racing. He looks around him under the table. To his left, pushed into the corner he sees a stack of Playboy magazines, from the looks of the model on the top one it appears to date from the 70s.

Then he hears another COUGH. And a rhythmic TAP, TAP, TAP. The tapping grows louder...closer. James' breathing grows quicker. And then the metal end of a metal and plastic walking stick appears in front of his face, and with it a pair of slippers. With a groan, a figure bends down and his face appears directly in front of James'. It's MR KNOTT, an old man with a face well creased and a little chubby. They stare at each other for a beat. And then the old man is hit by a coughing fit. James simply stares at him...unsure what to do. Mr Knott recovers, wipes his mouth with a handkerchief and then...

MR KNOTT

Well...how do you take your tea Jimmy?

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Mr Knott is searching through a kitchen cupboard overflowing with stuff.

MR KNOTT

Milk and sugar...My wife says I'm lactose intolerant so we don't have any milk...and I can't figure out where she hides the bloody sugar...

He closes the cupboard and turns to James who is standing in the doorway.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)

...so how about black with no sugar.

James, still standing in the doorway, doesn't react.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)

Sit down Jimmy. You're not going to have your tea standing in the doorway I hope.

James obediently moves to the kitchen table and sits.

The old man pushes some stuff out of the way at the sink and finds the jug.

He pours water into it, plugs it in, and turns it on.  
He takes the tea and the teapot.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)  
How much tea am I supposed to put in  
Jimmy?

James doesn't answer. Mr Knott turns to him.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)  
Eh?

JAMES  
I don't know. Mum always makes it.

MR KNOTT  
Your mum and my wife. But I'm afraid  
we're on our own this time.

Mr Knott scoops in several teaspoons of tea into the  
pot.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)  
That should do the trick.

The jug is boiling. He pours the water into the pot.

Suddenly a tabby CAT jumps onto the table in front of  
James, giving him a fright.

Turning, Mr Knott sees the cat.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)  
(shooing the cat away)  
Get out of it.

The cat jumps off the table and darts out of the room.  
Mr Knott puts the tea and two mugs on the table.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)  
Watch out - he'll bite ya as soon as  
look at ya. Bloody bad temper.  
(turning back to the  
cupboards)  
And apparently he's lactose intolerant  
too.

Mr Knott turns back to the cupboards, forages through  
one, and pulls out a packet of biscuits from the back.  
He puts that on the table too. And he takes a seat  
opposite the boy, a small groan of relief as he gets  
off his feet. He leans the walking stick against the  
wall beside him.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)  
This your first burglary then Jimmy?

James doesn't know what to say.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)  
 (pouring the tea)

I knew a chap, Mick someone-or-rather,  
 down in Taranaki when I was working at  
 the plant. He did houses too. He'd  
 strip naked and rub himself in  
 vegetable oil before each job. Figured  
 if someone tried to grab him he'd just  
 slip through their fingers so to  
 speak.

(beat)

Silly bugger never got caught in a  
 house, but finally got done for public  
 indecency while he was leaving one.

(laughs to himself and  
 passes a mug and the  
 biscuits to James)

Here you go.

James takes a biscuit and puts it carefully by his mug.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)  
 I've seen you at church before.  
 Decided to go on strike today eh?

JAMES  
 (taking a sip of his tea -  
 it burns his lips a  
 little)

Mum goes. I used to have to. But now  
 I get to stay home with dad. He  
 sleeps in on Sundays.

MR KNOTT  
 (nodding)

I don't have much time for it all  
 anymore either. Used to go with my  
 wife...but finally I figured I was  
 only going for her, and that's not  
 really why you're supposed to go, is  
 it.

(beat)

I just didn't need it.

(beat)

What's your thinking on it all Jimmy?

JAMES  
 What?

MR KNOTT  
 God. Jesus. Heaven.

JAMES  
 I don't know.

Mr Knott nods. James takes a bite of his biscuit. It  
 is soft - well past its use by date. He can't help  
 make a face. Mr Knott doesn't notice.

MR KNOTT  
 How'd you get in? I didn't leave the  
 back door unlocked did I?



JAMES  
 (shaking his head)  
 The window. My friend took the glass  
 out.  
 (beat)  
 But we put it back.

Mr Knott just nods, as if he only half heard the  
 response.

MR KNOTT  
 We can't use the front door. I've got  
 years worth of stuff in front of it.  
 ...drives Mary up the wall.  
 (imitating his wife)  
 "I'm sick of going out the back door.  
 I wanna be able to go out the front  
 door for once in my life!"

Mr Knott laughs to himself, his laugh turns into a  
 cough. He takes a sip of his tea to ease the cough.  
 They sit in silence for a moment.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)  
 (breaking the silence)  
 You like history?

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mr Knott in the lead, the two move amongst the boxes in  
 the lounge...

MR KNOTT  
 Watch your step Jimmy - my phone books  
 are just there.

...to the model table. The is cat roaming around the  
 landscape.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)  
 (hurrying up with  
 difficulty and shooing  
 the cat away)  
 Get out of there! Bloody cat. Eats the  
 soldiers.

The cat jumps out of the way, into the boxes.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)  
 Right. Ancient Greece and the Battle  
 of Marathon. Very important. Between  
 the Athenians and the invading  
 Persians. The Persians outnumbered  
 the Athenians by up to six to one.  
 But the Athenians had tactics.  
 (beat)  
 I was into battle re-creations for a  
 while.  
 (beat)  
 That was a few years back now...but I  
 left this one up.  
 (MORE)

MR KNOTT(CONT'D)

Our son used to like playing with it.

(beat)

Now where's Pheidippides...

Mr Knott begins searching the landscape for something.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)

He's usually up on this hill.

The hill that had borne the soldier James had been admiring is empty. James appears nervous.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)

(frustrated, heated)

Bloody cat. He's eaten five of them so far. Two Persians, two Greeks and a tree. And now he's got Pheidippides.

Mr Knott appears stressed by the loss. He is looking all over the table - hunting for the specific soldier. James just stands there. With some difficulty, Mr Knott begins looking under and around the table. But he can't find the soldier. A coughing fit overcomes him, forces him to stop. He sits down heavily in the arm chair next to the table. He appears tired.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)

(his throat hoarse)

Bloody cough. Pass my tea please Jimmy.

James takes Mr Knott's tea off one of the boxes and hands it to him. Mr Knott catches his breath a moment and then takes a sip. It soothes him.

Beat.

JAMES

How do you know my name?

MR KNOTT

I don't know your name Jimmy.

JAMES

You keep calling me Jimmy.

MR KNOTT

That's just what I call a chap if I don't know his name.

(beat)

Your name's Jimmy?

JAMES

James.

Mr Knott leans forward in his chair and offers his hand to James. James hesitates for a moment - he's never shaken a hand before. Then he takes Mr Knott's hand and they shake.

MR KNOTT

Is your room tidy lad?

JAMES

Not really.

MR KNOTT

(looking around him)

Mine neither.

(beat)

I don't know why I keep it all. Drives Mary up the wall. She's got her own room...keeps it immaculate - I'm not allowed to put any of my stuff in there.

(beat)

We've lost things in the past. Important things. Maybe there's something in that.

(beat)

That box there. To your left.

James turns to his right.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)

Your other left.

(James turns the other way)

Open it up.

James opens the box and looks in. Then he looks at Mr Knott.

JAMES

It's just stones.

MR KNOTT

Take one out.

James reaches in and pulls out a small smooth stone.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)

How does it feel?

JAMES

Like a stone.

MR KNOTT

How does it smell?

James is a little puzzled, but he draws the stone to his nose and sniffs.

JAMES

Like nothing.

MR KNOTT

We used drive down to Taranaki once a year to spend Christmas with my dad. And we'd always stop halfway at the same spot...just there on the Waikato...and eat our sandwiches.

(beat)

(MORE)

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)

And without fail our little boy would wade on in, collecting stones out of the river - the smoothest ones, funny shaped funny ones, strange colours. For his collection.

(beat, a small laugh)

I don't remember why he started...but I guess he kept on doing it because...it was just what he did there. His way of marking each trip.

(beat)

And now I've got them....So - that's what that stone feels and smells like to me. Those days.

Beat. James appears puzzled.

JAMES

Who's Pheidippides?

Mr Knott perks up a little. He likes this subject.

MR KNOTT

Pheidippides!

(beat)

Give me a hand up Jimmy.

James leans in and helps Mr Knott to his feet, who takes hold of his walking stick and shuffles over to the model table.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)

When the Athenians had beaten the Persians, one soldier, Pheidippides was given the job of running all the way from the battlefield to Athens to report the good news.

(beat)

And he did. All 40.8 kilometers. And when he got to Athens he shouted to the people "We were victorious!"

(beat)

And then he dropped dead.

(beat)

I always wondered if it was worth it. Poor bastard.

(beat)

I guess it made him famous. We named the marathon after him. I don't think they'll still be talking about me in two and a half thousand years.

(laughing to himself)

Maybe we don't want them to, eh Jimmy?

(beat)

You hungry? I could make us lunch.

JAMES

Well, Mum, told me to be home for lunch so...

Mr Knott nods with understanding.

MR KNOTT

Have you got a few minutes before you go...to help me with something. I need a strong lad.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Mr Knott is standing back, leaning on his walking stick, while James moves boxes from the front door end of the hall.

MR KNOTT

Careful with that one - old maps. Very fragile.

JAMES

It's got "hats" written on it.

MR KNOTT

Oh ok - that's hats. Maps must be further back.

(beat)

I want it all out of the way. Everything moved. I tried to do it myself but with this bloody leg it was hopeless.

James walks past him carrying a box.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)

(indicating the spare room next to the lounge)

Just in there for the moment. I'll sort things out later.

INT. HALLWAY - A LITTLE LATER

The front door end of the hall is now empty and the path to the front door is clear. James is pushing the last box - a big one. He pushes it into the spare bedroom...which is now overflowing with stuff...

JAMES

I don't think I can get this one in. It's the last one.

Mr Knott is in the middle of the spare room, surrounded by an ocean of boxes. He is studying an old map.

MR KNOTT

(engrossed in the map, he looks up, his gaze is distant)

...just in the bathroom for the moment. Round the corner, last door on the left.

Mr Knott looks back at the map, as if he never left it. James nods and heads down the hall with the box.

He reaches the end of the hall - there are two closed doors - one on his left, one on his right. He mimes writing in the air with his left hand.

JAMES  
(to himself)  
Left.

He opens the door on his left and goes in.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is extremely tidy. There is a dresser with a mirror on it, a chest of drawers. It appears to be a woman's room. The fact that it's not the bathroom confuses James a little, but he drops the box next to the dresser anyway - as good a place as any. He turns to leave. He FREEZES. Something has caught his eye. He doesn't move.

Then he senses something to his left. He turns. Mr Knott is standing in the doorway.

JAMES  
(as if he's been caught)  
I turned left.

MR KNOTT  
Sorry Jimmy. I'm not all there today.

James walks to Mr Knott in the doorway and Mr Knott closes the door behind them. James, shaken, looks up at Mr Knott's old face. Mr Knott puts his hand on the back of James' neck for a moment, and appears about to say something...but then he turns and leads James back down the hallway towards the front door. His walking stick tapping rhythmically on the ground as they go.

MR KNOTT (CONT'D)  
(surveying the hallway)  
You've done a bloody good job here.  
Thank you Jimmy.

James appears thoughtful, he wants to say something. Mr Knott opens the front door.

JAMES  
I left something in the lounge.

MR KNOTT  
Off you go then. Grab it.

INT. LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

James is standing in front of the model table. He stares at the now empty hill where Pheidippides was. He reaches into his pocket, pulls out Pheidippides and places him back on his hill.

EXT. BACK YARD - MOMENTS LATER

James is moving through the back yard towards the bank.

INT. HALLWAY/BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mr Knott is in the doorway having just seen James off. He turns and slowly walks back up the hallway, his walking stick tapping all the way. He turns the hall corner and takes the first door on his left. He enters the bedroom and, with a groan, sits on a chair by the bed. In the bed we see an old woman, her eyes closed, her arms by her sides, motionless.

Mr Knott takes her hand in his and just stares at her face. We can hear only his rough breathing.

EXT. BANK - CONTINUOUS

James is running up the bank. The wind is whipping up his hair and the grass around him. Adrian materialises out of the bushes.

ADRIAN

Jesus! What happened!? How'd you escape. I couldn't go home without you! Mum would'da killed me after last time. Who was in there?

JAMES

Just the old man.

They reach the top of the bank together.

ADRIAN

Jesus! What did he do to you?

JAMES

Nothing. We talked.

ADRIAN

Talked!? Bull! Did ya see the Playboys?

James shakes his head. Shrugging, Adrian picks up a stone.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

Boring! Here - grab one. It's a competition - first one to hit the power line...Tom Fairhall said if a stone hits a power line the electricity makes it fly off...

James bends down and picks up a stone as ordered. Adrian is lining up his shot. James looks at the stone in his hand. He lifts it to his nose and smells it. And then as Adrian throws his stone with a grunt, James puts his in his pocket.

THE END