

Writing 2211G
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Cognitive Development

From the moment my son was born I knew he was suicidal. I told you, when he came out of the womb nine months ago his face was purple and parasitic and his eyes were like black holes that said: ‘No thanks. It’s much too cold out here. Please, just put me back where you found me.’

I don’t know, I mean sometimes I just feel bad for the little guy. Maybe he doesn’t like all the noise or maybe he hates the way we sing him to sleep or maybe I’m right and it’s just too damn cold out here. Actually, it *is* pretty cold in here. Can you turn up the heat a little bit?

Alright, well do you have a blanket or something?

Okay fine. Anyways, like I was saying it’s probably just too damn cold out here for the little fella.

What? Tell my wife? No shit, I try to tell my wife. I try and I try, but she just won’t listen.

I come home from work—

What’s that? Where do I work? Oh, I’m an accountant over on Front Street. Been working there fifteen years now. Anyway, where was I?

Right, right. I come home from work and I say “Kitty. Kitty, listen to me this time. I’m telling you, Kitty. The kid’s suicidal!” But of course she never answers me right away. Why would she ever answer her loving husband right away? So I say, “You see it too, don’t you Kitty?”

I think you’re delusional, she’ll say to me, eyes taped to her newspaper.

“Delusional?”

Yes, Tom. I think you’re delusional, she’ll say.

“You think it’s all in my head then?” I’ll ask.

Yes, Tom. It’s all in your head.

“But Kitty, the—“

The umbilical cord. I know, Tom. It’s always back to the umbilical cord, but I told you.

“He wrapped it around his neck, Kitty! He wrapped it around his neck!” I’ll say.

And then she’ll say, *No, it was tied around his neck, Tom. It was tied. It could’ve happened when he was kicking or sleeping or just turning over.*

“Just turning over?! Bull *shit* just turning over,” I’ll say, “He looked at me when he came out. I’m telling you, he put his hand on the cord and he looked up and smiled. With his bloody face and his gummy mouth he looked up at me and smiled a conniving little toothless smile, as if to say ‘I’m getting out of here and you can’t’, the little bugger.”

He couldn’t even breathe yet, Tom. Let alone smile, she’ll tell me.

And then, Doc, he’ll start crying. From upstairs in his crib he’ll start crying and wailing as if to say: *No Tom, you’re crazy. I told you, Kitty, he’s crazy. I’m just a little baby, Kitty. He’s lost it. He’s crazy.* He’ll just *goo goo* and *ga ga* through the monitor until my oblivious wife goes upstairs and leaves me alone at the table to stew over whether or not I’ve lost my marbles.

Just hungry? Every time? Every freaking time I try to tell her?! Listen, okay? Just listen to me for a second. He wiggled you know, when he saw the doctor's scissors. He flailed his chubby arms and thrashed on the tabletop as his chubby little cheeks changed from purple to teal. And when her fingers got close he just chomped right down on them and he wouldn't let go even when his eyes bulged right out of his head. I had to hold him down, Doc! I had to hold him down and pull on his head so she could yank out her gloved fingers from that gummy little mouth of his. But just as he made what would have been his last tug on the cord, she pried her fingers free and snipped right through his first attempt at death. And right there, Doc, that's when I knew. His little black eyes filled with dirty seawater, but he never cried. They're supposed to cry, aren't they Doc? When the cord's cut I swear they're supposed to cry or something.

I guess that's true...it's pretty cold in here, don't you think, Doc? Maybe you should put some pictures or something on the wall. That'd brighten the place right up. Make it warmer even. Are you sure you don't have a blanket or something?

My childhood? What do you mean *my childhood*? Why do you want to know about *me*, Doc? For all we know my son could be crawling around sticking his fingers in sockets or chewing on wires while my wife's in the bath and you want to talk about *me*?!

I'm a good man, Doc. I am. I wake up and I go to work and I make money to support my family and I come home and for what? To spend all night chasing after this poor little guy who just thinks it's too damn cold out here?!

Listen here, okay? Just listen here for a second. Last week I came home and I couldn't find him anywhere. I checked his crib and it was empty. I checked his playpen and it was empty, too. He wasn't crawling around on the floors or the counters. He wasn't tucked underneath our bed. He wasn't sticking his fingers in sockets or chewing on wires, he was just gone, Doc. Just like that he had disappeared. But then I heard a trickling in the bathroom so I opened the door and there he was with his round little baby-head stuck inside the toilet. He was just laying there, his crowfeet in the air not moving an inch. So I ran over to him, Doc. I ran over and I yanked him out of that ugly porcelain cesspool, but he wasn't moving. His arms were stiff like plywood and his body was so cold, Doc. And his eyes, they were like a wave pool just sloshing around back and forth and back and forth and I couldn't get them to stop. So I took two of my fingers, the first two on my right hand, and I pushed on his heartless little chest. One two three breath breath, one two three breath breath, one two three breath breath. And when the life finally flooded back into his little black hole eyes do you know what he did, Doc? Do you?! He furrowed his eyebrows and spat on my face. Right on my face, he spat! It was as if he was saying, 'Again Dad?! Again?! I told you Dad it's too cold out here. Please just put me back where you found me.'

I just don't know what to do anymore, Doc. I feel for the little guy, I do. It's just too cold for him, you know? It *is* pretty cold out here, Doc, let me tell you.

What do I mean it's cold out here? I don't know. I mean, we all just walk around and pretend to laugh and smile like nothing's wrong. Like the sun inside us is so bright that it just beams right out of our eyes, our noses, our pores. We look like we're warm, Doc, because we want people to think it. But that's the thing, we spend so much time trying to look like we're warm that we throw all our heat out into the air just like that! Instead of keeping all our warmth inside, we just throw it into the air! All of our heat is

pouring out of us and we smile and nod like everything's fine, but it's so cold, Doc. It's so cold. And maybe he's right, you know? Maybe it's just too damn cold out h—

Meds? I don't need meds I need a goddamn jacket! And a blanket, too, for the little guy! That'll warm us right up. That'll do the trick, I tell ya.

If it doesn't? Oh, well in that case then I guess we'll both just have to go right back where we came from, Doc. We don't have another choice if that doesn't w—

Spend the night?! What do you mean spend the night here?! I've got work in the morning! Kitty will be up waiting for me! And the baby! Don't forget about the baby!

Admitted? What does that mean? What do you mean? Listen here, Doc. I—

NO, DOC. YOU AREN'T LISTENING TO ME! Look, it's not me. I swear. It's HIM. I'd never do such a thing, Doc. I'm a good man, I am. I'm just a little chilly is all. And the poor little bugger, it's him. Alright? He's the suicidal one. I'm telling you, from the moment he was born, I knew. Please just let me go home, Doc.

Please just let me go home.

Revision Notes

I think that my revision process has greatly enhanced the piece I started out with and has been very beneficial to my work. The entire class provided extremely constructive feedback that served as the backbones for my new work. Some things that came up consistently were more sensory imagery, issues with the ending, and trying to make the speaker trustworthy at the beginning of the piece instead of seeming completely psychotic from the get-go.

To combat the issue with the lack of sensory images that are not visual, I decided to include the recurring image of the cold. This keeps coming up to make the reader feel uneasy and even though at first it seems like a line that is brought up in passing, the more and more it shows up, the clearer it is that Tom is suicidal himself. He begins to relate the cold that he uses to describe the baby's suicidal tendencies to his own life. This not only resolves the issue of sensory images, but it also provides insight into Tom's motives throughout the piece, which were much more unclear in the first draft.

The ending was far too open in the first draft, which I realized upon rereading the piece after receiving feedback from the class. It felt very incomplete, as the therapy session simply ended without resolving any of Tom's issues. In order to resolve this issue, I changed the ending so that instead of the therapy session ending, it's hinted at that he gets admitted to the hospital, but it is still somewhat ambiguous. This allows for a sense of closure, but it's still unclear as to whether or not the doctor allows Tom to go home. The ending also provides insight into Tom's repetition of the coldness around him, which is supposed to embody his mental illness.

Lastly, in order to make the speaker more trustworthy, I provided some insight into his life. I disclose where Tom works, and this makes him a bit more believable since he has a respectable job. Further, I tried to use less circular language so that his psychosis builds as the piece progresses. Also, I try to imply issues in his marriage with Kitty when he mentions things like "Why would she ever answer her loving husband right away?" The purpose of this is to show that it is possible that Kitty does not believe him because their marriage is failing, and not necessarily solely because Tom is psychotic.

I feel as though if I were to revise again I would try to expand more on Tom's backstory. I would focus on his relationship with his wife in particular and perhaps try to provide insight into what Tom was like before the baby was born. This would likely allow for a more three-dimensional speaker/main character, as Tom probably did not always have delusions like these.