



The  
**Cold,  
Cold  
Shoulder**

ANNE SCHRAFF

**PAGETURNERS®**

# Chapter 1

**T**he big house on Caulfield Lane reminded Cody Walker of his childhood home. An old apple orchard had surrounded his grandmother's three-story house. That comfortable home had sheltered several generations of the Walker family.

The Caulfield house was shabbier. And there was no warmth there. Now Cody lived with eight strangers. Some were college students. Others, like Cody, worked at the new discount department store in town.

At twenty, Cody had already had many jobs. Before working as a clerk, he'd been a tree trimmer. And before that he was a mechanic's helper.

His parents had died when he was a small boy. He was left in his grandmother's care. After his grandmother died, he had spent several years in foster care. When he'd turned eighteen, he was on his own.

Cody didn't make friends easily. But he did hang out with a coworker. Todd Clifford also rented a room in the house where Cody lived. The guys jogged together. Sometimes they went fishing. And they would hang out at one of the local nightspots.

The two young men made fun of the college students. They called them "bookheads." Cody and Todd barely made it through high school. But the truth was that they were envious.

"Did you see Eddie leaving for school this morning?" Cody asked Todd. "I heard him clicking away on his keyboard last night."

Todd shook his head. "No, I didn't. He'll wear out his fingers, though," he said, laughing.

A grouchy middle-aged man owned the big house. His name was Reed Breck. He said he was a widower. His children were grown and gone.

Now, as Cody and Todd walked toward Cody's car, they passed Breck. "Did you happen to see Eddie Paine this morning?" Cody asked. "Maybe he overslept. He'll have a hissy fit if he's late!"

Breck shrugged. "That's his problem. It's not my job to get the tenants up in the morning," he said.

Cody started to back his car out of the driveway. Todd spotted Ashley Root. She was another college student who rented a room. Ashley hurried toward the bus stop.

"Hold up," Todd said to Cody. Then he leaned out the window. "Hey, Ash!" he called out. "Want a lift to school?"

"Yeah, sure," she said. "It beats waiting for the bus."

Todd hopped out. He held the door open

for her. “You go ahead. Take the front seat. I’ll get in the back.”

Ashley took Todd’s place without a word. Cody turned toward her. “Did you see Eddie this morning? He’s usually halfway to school by now.”

“I don’t pay any attention to the slugs who live here,” Ashley said. She yawned.

When they’d moved in, both Cody and Todd had noticed Ashley right away. She was hot! But for some reason she seemed to hate guys.

Cody had started to back up the car again. But then he suddenly braked. “You know, maybe I’d better check on Eddie. It’ll only take a minute,” he said. Then he hopped out of the car.

Ashley groaned. “Oh, give me a break!” she said, rolling her eyes.

Cody sprinted back to the house. He went up to Eddie’s room. The door was open slightly.

The rumpled bed was empty. Eddie's backpack was on a chair. The only thing amiss in the room was the old-school clock. It had fallen onto the floor. It looked like Eddie had left in a hurry. The time on the clock had stopped at 12:10 a.m.

What had happened? The scene didn't look a bit like Eddie. The guy was a neat freak. Under normal circumstances, his room made Cody feel like a slob. If the fire alarm went off some night, Eddie would clean up before he evacuated. He would never leave a messy bed behind.

Cody was worried. Even though Eddie was a college student, he felt bad for him. The guy was a geek. He seemed pretty lonely. What was going on? Where did he go?

Then, from outside, Cody heard Ashley complaining to Todd. "Where is he? We've got to get going!" Then she started yelling out the car window. "Cody! Come on! What

are you doing? I can't be late for my class. The professor is a witch."

Cody sighed as he glanced around the room one more time. Then he headed out to the car, shaking his head. He couldn't let go of an uneasy feeling. Had something bad happened to Eddie? He got those intuitions sometimes. Mostly he was right.

## Chapter 2

**H**e got back into the car. “So, did he oversleep?” Todd asked.

“Nah, he wasn’t even there. Looks like he left in a hurry at 12:10 this morning. That’s when he must have knocked over his clock. He didn’t even bother to pick it up,” Cody said.

“So what? Can we get going now?” Ashley snapped. “I’ll be late for class!”

As Cody drove, he couldn’t get Eddie off his mind. The guy was so meticulous. Why had he left so early? And he never would have left his broken clock on the floor.

“I figure something really wild must have happened to him. Maybe he got a bad phone call or something,” Cody said.



“Yeah,” Ashley grumbled. “Like anybody cares. He’s a freak! Always staring at me. He gives me the creeps!”

“He’s not a bad guy,” Cody said. The girl’s rotten personality constantly surprised him. He pitied her future boyfriends.

“Too bad I have to go to this boring college,” Ashley said. “I wanted to go to an Ivy League school. But it’s too expensive.”

What was with her? Me. Me. Me. She was no prize.

“You’re a pretty good student. Can’t you get a scholarship?” Todd asked her.

“Maybe. But not enough to cover everything. Boy, I never have any luck,” Ashley said bitterly.

Cody dropped her off. She jumped from the car and hurried away.

“What a winner she is,” he said with sarcasm. “Talk about losers. She is missing a sensitivity chip.”

Todd shook his head. “Yeah, but she’s so

beautiful,” he said. “I get weak in the knees just looking at her.”

“Nah, she’s shallow,” Cody said. “My grandmother always said, ‘Beauty is as beauty does.’ That always stuck with me. I’ll never fall for a girl unless she’s nice.”

“Guess you’re right,” Todd said, sighing.

“Ashley’s all surface,” Cody added. “She doesn’t care what happened to Eddie. We’re not really friends. But we all live under the same roof. I’d like to know what happened to him.”

“Eddie is such a little weirdo,” Todd said. “Don’t worry about him. He probably went stargazing.”

“Where is he now, though?” Cody asked. “He’d never skip school.”

They pulled into the employees’ parking lot. Then they went to punch the time clock. Cody didn’t enjoy his job. There were always mobs of people waiting to check out. Some of them got angry and impatient. The store

was too cheap to hire enough checkers. Customers took out their frustration on the clerks who were there.

Sometimes Cody wondered if he should be a bookhead too. He could squeeze in a couple of college classes if he tried. Otherwise, he might end up like his father. The man had been a laborer. One day he fell off a roof and broke his neck. He left a wife and four kids. Cody's mother had faded away. She died shortly after his father's death. Cody had always thought the trauma must have been too much for her. Since then, Cody had lost track of his siblings.

He sighed. It would be horrible if he got stuck here at the register for another decade.

He got back home in the late afternoon. The first thing he did was check Eddie's room. Everything was just as it had been that morning. The broken clock was still on the floor.

Cody tracked down the landlord. "Look,

I think something bad might have happened to Eddie,” he said.

Breck followed him upstairs. They both went into Eddie’s room.

“What do you think? Where could the guy be?” Cody asked.

“Like I should know,” Breck snapped. “We’ll wait a couple days. If he’s not back then, I’ll clean the room. Then I’ll rent it to somebody else. The rent is due in two days, you know. If he doesn’t show up, I’ll just throw his stuff into the trash.”

Cody couldn’t believe his ears. “But don’t you think we should call the police?” he asked. “Obviously something has happened to him.”