

Alone: A Novel



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I had been living alone again--had been for nearly a year--when I learned that my kid had set himself on fire. So begins the story of Earl Dimes, a management consultant by trade and a novelist by calling, whose carefully orchestrated life comes apart at the seams. Riveting as narrative, achingly true in its emotional impact, it is a vibrant, tragicomic tale of one man's awakening to the emptiness of forty years

of an emotionally guarded existence.

Earl, born in Maine to Jack and Nola Dimes, has learned early the lesson of emotional self-protection, for his parents self-absorption effectively shuts out him and his brother Richie. As Earl grows up, however, and marries into the ebullient Italian-American Stephano family of Long Island, the lesson, we see, has terrible consequences. His marriage to Linda stumbles along for fifteen years and produces one son--Keefer. Earl does well in business, becoming financially secure, and even manages to publish a well-regarded novel. But these "successes do not produce happiness, for he cannot connect emotionally with his wife and son. It is as though Earl lives his life behind a wall of plate glass, safe, he believes, from the vulnerability that is the inevitable result of giving oneself fully to others.

The glass wall is shattered abruptly when Linda throws him out after his one act of infidelity--one of the funniest scenes in recent fiction. Earl's well-ordered world fails apart and he loses everything--his lucrative job, his carefully built-up fortification of creature comforts, and, most painful of all, access to Keefer.

Using any stratagem he can think of, Earl
tries to piece his life together again and to make sense of it.

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