

The image shows the front cover of a book. The cover is designed to look like an ancient Egyptian sarcophagus. It has a dark, textured surface with a prominent, ornate frame around the central panel. This frame is decorated with hieroglyphs and symbols. At the top of the frame, there is a decorative band with a central circular motif. The central panel is black and contains the title 'Tubes of Time' in a large, red, serif font. Below the title is a white illustration of a falcon-headed statue, likely a falcon, standing on a pedestal. To the right of the statue, the author's name 'By Edwin Shaw' is written in a white, serif font. The entire cover is set against a white background.

Tubes of Time

By
Edwin
Shaw

Tubes of Time

by

EDWIN SHAW

*Read it aloud to yourself or someone,
it's fun to say.*



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This book *Tubes of Time*, is dedicated to my brother,
Richard Shaw.

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**Tubes of
Time**

1. And There Is No Ice

1

Me and my little brother Richie
are playing with blocks,
and
we are bored.

It's an icy Saturday, almost Christmas time,
and we've been in the house
all day,
and like I said,
we
are bored.

When we went to bed last night,
it was snowing hard.
I got up once and looked out.
The moon was big,
the snowflakes were falling slow and lazy,
and everything was quiet and very white.
Then all morning it's rained.
And melted the snow.

Grown-ups like it when all the snow melts.
So Mom went into Columbus,
with Mrs. Eibling,
to do some last minute shopping.
Without us.
Can you believe that?

2

So, we've been building stuff out of blocks
and Richie's just knocked my tower down
again

and I feel like hitting him.

I wanna watch the TV
except Dad's fallen asleep with the game on.
My dad works really hard,
but still he is asleep
with the game on.

And the only other thing that's on TV
in the middle of Ohio
on a Saturday afternoon
at the end of nineteen fifty five,
besides the Buckeyes
in the last game of the regular season,
is Channel Eight,
the cowboy channel
with its real cowboys
like I wanna be when I grow up.

Men as wind-blown
and dried out as beef jerky is.
Real men wearing real cowboys shirts, and pants and boots,
and playing pretty good on
cheap guitars
and cowboy fiddles and stuff.
And singing those high, lonesome cowboy songs about heartache
and empty spaces,
the way that real cowboys do.

And these TV cowboys,
they are all skinny and
bony men,
dried up, stick-like men,
with big stretched out Adam's apples
about the size of a trailer hitch.

And these cowboys, these Channel Eight cowboys,
they are yodeling against the backdrop
of an empty and godless sky,
until their dry souls crack wide open
with all the dismal, lost and half baked love
of something peeled off the walls
of a two-bit hotel.

And they sing,
some of these cowboys do,
these long and whispering lines,
with their eyes closed,
full of so many words,
like they are made out of poetry or something.

Songs so real they whistle through
the ragged nicotine tumbleweeds
of a real cowboy's
rawhide existence,
these cowboys as seen on Channel Eight every day after school,
by the Shaw boys,
Eddie and Richie.

Of whom I am Eddie,
older by exactly two years and fifteen minutes.

My parents told me Richie was my birthday present.
Good strategy Mom and Dad,
but it didn't work.

Remember, I feel like hitting Richie right now
because he just knocked down my tower.
Again.

3

Anyway, those real cowboys
like I wanna be,
stoic as the falling rain,
those Channel Eight cowboys,
watch
as their dark eyed,
citified,
martini drinking
Cadillac women leave town
without
even stopping to say goodbye.

And those real cowboys,
those suffering, lonely rawhide saints
light a thousand hand-rolled cigarettes
with a love
as dry as the tumbleweeds
they have
over time,
come to resemble.

And they drink down another whiskey
to help them forget about them city women
and think mostly about cows
and coyotes instead.

These were real men, these Channel Eight cowboys,
and they felt what I felt,
felt these sad, brutal feelings about
rattlesnakes, cowgirls and classmates,
and they felt it with all the tragic matinee romance
of my impossible ten-year-old life
that year that I discovered
beauty and longing.

That year I discovered,
thanks to Mr. Shandy,
music, and mathematics
and the broken world of the suffering soul.

4

It wasn't until some time in college that I learned the phrase
"existential anguish,"
and I now think of Mr. Shandy in those terms.
But I didn't have the phrase back then,
in the winter of nineteen fifty five,
I didn't have that category,
and Mr. Shandy was just way intense,
that year I discovered music and girls
and the haunted soul of this beautiful world.
That year when Mr. Shandy's solos taught us about
the blues and heartbreak,
and getting back on your feet,
and playing for real.

5

But like I said, it's a Saturday, almost Christmas
and I feel like hitting Richie,
"You're a stupid little brother!
Watch out what you're doing."
"I'm sorry Eddie." he says.
And I think he is sorry.
I see it in his clumsy, still baby fat face
and the sorry way he stands.
But why does he have to be only eight years old
and the snow all melted?

6

It is the first day of winter,
at least that's what it says on the calendar
that's hanging on the yellow kitchen wall,
with its dates lined up in boxes
and pictures of different ducks.