



The Twelve Houses of My Childhood

E. Reid Gilbert

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By the time E. Reid Gilbert graduated high school, his family had lived in twelve different houses, each of which provided experiences that would ripple throughout the rest of his days. Second house. Two-year-old Reid toddles down the middle of a busy highway to join the gypsies who camp behind the Colvard's General Store. Though his mother retrieves him before he reaches his destination, she can't extinguish his desire for exploration and adventure. Fourth house. Reid proposes to Nancy, a neighbor. She accepts, then marries another just weeks later. Turns out that women -- even those who share banana-and-peanut butter sandwiches -- tend not to get permanently involved in a romance with four-year-olds. Sixth house. Horrified to discover that the state of Virginia won't let him attend until he reaches his sixth birthday, he rectifies this injustice by enrolling in school the next year and staying for the rest of his life. Twelfth house. World War II ends. For the first time since the fifth grade, Reid can plan for a future that doesn't involve fighting overseas. The open road to various careers, people and experiences now lies ahead. Twelve houses, twelve lifetimes. Through a humorous, but empathic, glimpse into the past, Reid reveals the numerous ways an adult self is shaped by the seemingly ordinary events of our early years.

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