

# **The Art of Voice Acting**

**by James R. Alburger**  
**www.VoiceActing.com**

## **Audio Book Narration**

### **Know Thy Neighbor**

(used by permission)

**Author: Anton Scheller (AntonScheller.com)**

**Narrator: Lynne Darlington (LynneDarlington.com)**

**Additional Voice/Engineer: Jeff Clement**

I don't usually talk much to my neighbors. There are just three apartments in our house, but I can't remember the last time I talked to Jude and Stella. I wasn't exactly surprised that they moved out. And it's not like I expected them to invite me to their farewell party, but couldn't they at least have left a note?

Well, anyway, now there is Ken. From the glance I got into his apartment, he even kept most of their furniture. The only new thing was a painting. It was leaning against the old sofa when I peeked in. It looked like an ancient map, composed of ochre and beige patches that seemed to be marking countries. Thinking about it, he didn't just keep the furniture; Ken even dressed a bit like Jude.

It's strange that I never really got to know Jude and Stella. It was one of those weird neighbor relationships where we greeted each other in the hallway. Occasionally we even promised to meet up for a beer. But somehow I never made the first step – and neither did they.

Ken is different. He came right on the first night, but I was already going out on a date. Actually, he came nearly every night. But as things often are when a new relationship starts, what with the dating and the usual stress at work, I always had a reason to decline.

In the beginning, Ken came frequently to ask for stuff. With a big grin on his face, he would stand in my doorstep and ask for scissors or packing tape. He even borrowed my kitchen utensils "to prepare food for a few weeks." From the smell of it, he must use a camping cooker – maybe the gas company didn't connect him yet?

I offered to let him use my kitchen, but he always declined. Such a polite man.

But even though Ken is nice, I have to say he is a bit too persistent. Since around the middle of last week, he comes every night once or twice, or even thrice. He always invites me to come down to his apartment. First he asked me to watch sports, but I told him that would bore me. He looked a bit sad and tried again a few hours later, but by then I was too tired to even be polite.

But his reasons kept getting weirder. He invited me for a movie, but I thought that was a bit too intimate for a new friend. Then he asked to cook me a meal, but I had other plans. And, to be honest, I got uncomfortable because he asked so often. Maybe he was just lonely and looking for new friends in a new town?

"Go down the street," he said, "and when you can see the face of the fat cashier, turn left."

He continued.

“When you get past the poster for the strip club, the one that all the men shyly glance at, turn right. The shop is the only one with two people behind the counter; the married woman and the young man that is laughing eagerly at her jokes.”

His descriptions weirded me out. But when I actually walked along the street, his words still ringing in my ears, I saw it all happening. The moment the fat cashier came in my view, there was a narrow path between two houses – a shortcut I had never noticed before.

I could see how all the men were glancing at the poster, their faces slightly more red than usual. And the young man was laughing at her jokes. Just like Ken had said.

Are people really that predictable? Do those people always do that? Is the butcher’s cashier always standing at exactly the same spot?

Ken has been more persistent since then, as if he noticed that he was losing my trust. Yesterday he came three times. Once, he asked me to come and help him with something, but I was just about to go in the shower, and afterwards I forgot about it. Then he came again, asking whether I wanted to play Scrabble. At first I thought he was joking, but he had this weird, serious stare. I just let it slide and said I was expecting a phone call.

The third time was when I was just going to bed, and somehow I had the impression that he was trying to get in my apartment. He still was polite and friendly, but somewhat pushy. He even asked if he could take a picture of me. “For my collection,” he said. I might have been a bit rude when I refused, but I was just too tired to put up with a strange neighbor.

The last time he came was today, just a few minutes after I came home. I was cooking, so for a while I suspect I was oblivious to the sound of his knocks on my door. I only heard him when he started banging against it. He was calling my name. He sounded panicked and angry at the same time. I didn’t hear everything he said, and I remember even less, but some things got stuck in my head.

“Come on, you need to help me finish it.”

“I just need one more helper.”

“I know you are in, come on.”

I’m not sure why I didn’t open the door. But the more he went on, the happier I was about that decision.

“Please, I really need you.”

“You have to; there are not many others with the right color.”

With every sentence his voice got more furious.

“I don’t have much time.”

“You have to help me, whether you want to or not.”

Just when I decided to call the police, I heard the sirens. I was strangely frozen in place, as if I was watching a bad movie; at the same time present and mentally somewhere else. I was frozen while the sirens got louder, and my door started to shake from the impact of a body running up against it.

Then I heard shouting at the front door, the doorbell ringing repeatedly. I think I even pressed the buzzer to let them in, but I am not sure anymore.

Next I heard the shouting and cursing, right in front of my door.

I even heard the policeman, listening as he told me about the murders.

But I didn’t hear anymore after he started to speak about the pieces.

Pieces of skin.

“A map,” I said silently to myself. “It was just a normal map.”