

Abby turned and looked at the kitchen window. "Do you hear the phone?" she asked walking away. Mr. Rice pointed to his hearing aid.

She said goodbye and ran to the house. The phone stopped when she lifted the receiver. It was eight-thirty, almost dark. She called the office, but no one answered. Maybe he was driving home.

5 An hour before midnight, the phone rang. Except for it and the light snoring, the second-floor office was without a sound. His feet were on the new desk. The rest of the body slouched<sup>1</sup> comfortably in the thick leather executive chair.

10 He slumped to one side and intermittently exhaled the sounds of a deep sleep. A file was strewn<sup>2</sup> over the desk and one formidable-looking document was held firmly against his stomach. His shoes were on the floor, next to the desk, next to a pile of documents from the file. An empty potato-chip bag was between the shoes.

After a dozen rings he moved, then jumped at the phone. It was his wife.

"Why haven't you called?" she asked, coolly, yet with a slight touch of concern.

"I'm sorry, I fell asleep. What time is it?" He rubbed his eyes and focused on his watch.

15 "Eleven. I wish you would call."

"I did call. No one answered."

"When?"

"Between eight and nine. Where were you?"

She did not answer. She waited. "Are you coming home?"

20 "No. I need to work all night."

"All night? You can't work all night, Mitch."

"Of course I can work all night. Happens all the time around here. It's expected."

"I expected you home, Mitch. And the least you could've done was call. Dinner is still on the stove."

25 "I'm sorry. I'm up to my ears in deadlines and I lost track of time. I apologize."

There was silence for a moment as she considered the apology. "Will this become a habit, Mitch?"

"It might."

"I see. When do you think you might be home?"

30 "Are you scared?"

"No. I'm not scared. I'm going to bed."

"I'll come in around seven for a shower."

"That's nice. If I'm asleep, don't wake me."

She hung up. He looked at the receiver, then put it in place.

John Grisham, *The Firm*, 1991.

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<sup>1</sup> slouched: *avachi*.

<sup>2</sup> strewn: *éparpillé*

**I - GENERAL COMPREHENSION**

**Write down the correct answer.**

1) Abby and Mitch are:

a) brother and sister

b) husband and wife

c) mother and son

d) friends

2) Where's Abby?

a) first in the garden then at home

b) first at home then in the garden

c) at her office

d) at Mitch's office

3) Where's Mitch?

a) at home

b) in a traffic jam

c) at Abby's office

d) at work

4) Mitch hears the phone

a) in the morning

b) in the afternoon

c) at lunch time

d) at night

5) Mitch calls Abby

a) once

b) twice

c) three times

d) four times

**II - DETAILED COMPREHENSION**

**A – Right or Wrong? Justify each answer with a brief quotation.**

1) Abby hurried home because she had heard the door bell.

2) The scene takes place in the morning.

- 3) Mitch had not had anything to eat at the office.
- 4) Mitch did not answer the phone immediately.
- 5) Working overtime is just routine in Mitch's firm.
- 6) Abby had prepared a meal for Mitch.
- 7) Mitch plans to go home in the morning.

**B – Write down three elements showing that Mitch had a lot of work to do.**

**C – Write down the equivalents you find in the text for the following words or expressions:**

- 1) a dossier
- 2) adjusted his eyes
- 3) it's required
- 4) a custom
- 5) she put the phone down

### **III – EXPRESSION**

*in about 50 to 70 words*

Abby writes a letter to a friend in which she complains about her husband's job.