

The Duke of Deception

Screenplay
by
Steven Zaillian

Based on the Book
by
Geoffrey Wolff

2nd Draft
September 25, 2000

INT. AIRPLANE - IN FLIGHT - DAY

Clouds part beyond the windshield of a single-engine plane, revealing a city down below. Inside the cockpit a 4-year old boy sits in the copilot's seat, mesmerized by all the gauges while his father flies.

DUKE

Look, we're right above our house. I bet Mommy's looking up at us, let's say hello to her.

Duke wags the wings, not quite expertly, jostling his son in his seat before steadying the plane again.

GEOFFREY

How high can we fly?

DUKE

How high do you want to fly?

GEOFFREY

Can we fly straight up?

DUKE

No, we'd stall?

GEOFFREY

What's that?

Duke ponders how he might try to explain the aerodynamics of it, which he may not completely comprehend himself.

DUKE

Here, I'll show you.

He pulls back on the stick and the plane begins a steep climb. His face remains calm, even as the plane reaches the pinnacle of its ascent and begins to shudder and free fall. As the sky swirls away at an alarming speed and pitch -

GEOFFREY V/O

I recollect things -

INT. BEDROOM - REDONDO BEACH - DAWN

Small hands investigate items on a bureau. Watch, ring, silver cigarette case and lighter, hip flask and cuff links.

GEOFFREY V/O

A gentleman's accessories. Things made of silver and gold that sparkled and shone. Things made of burnished oxblood leather -

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The hands try on the ring, a weighty piece of business several sizes too big, with etched lions and heraldic fleur-de-lis.

GEOFFREY V/O

He despised *black* leather. Black leather shoes and belts, he said, were for bankers and lawyers: look-before-you-leapers. He owned nothing black but his dinner jacket and umbrella.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LONG BEACH - DAY

Duke strolls along the street looking like a displaced Englishman with a tweed racing cap atop his head and a black furled umbrella doubling as a walking stick.

GEOFFREY V/O

I knew before I knew any other complicated thing that, to my father, none of his things were *just* things.

Duke peers in a window at a sparkly display of jewelry. The proprietor appears in the window and Duke points to a gleaming fountain pen resting on a small bed of velvet.

GEOFFREY V/O

He chose them with care and took good care of them, polishing those things that required polishing to retain their luster - oiling those that needed to be oiled.

INT. HABERDASHERY - DAY

A salesman eases Duke's foot into an oxblood loafer using a tortoise-shell shoehorn. He walks around in the shoes on the soft carpet, pausing at one point to admire a display of gold cuff links, tie clasps and money clips.

GEOFFREY V/O

A gentleman's accessories mattered because they followed a gentleman through life, which according to my father was an inventory of small choices that together formed his character -

Duke, at the counter, purchasing several items.

SALESMAN

Cash or charge?

DUKE

Charge.

INT. WOLFF HOUSE, REDONDO BEACH - DAY

Duke tries out an expensive new fishing reel in his living room, snapping his wrist to test the action. A collapsible pup tent he will probably never use sits nearby. The place looks like a set in a Orvis catalog.

GEOFFREY V/O

He loved his things. So much so that my mother would say, half-joking most of the time - dead serious once - he loved them more than us.

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - DAY

With fine kid-leather racing gloves enveloping his hands, Duke speeds along the cliffs in an MG with Geoffrey in his lap, "driving."

GEOFFREY V/O

My father, called Duke, taught me skills and manners. He taught me to drive fast, and to read respectfully, and that the world was divided in two between a few us's and many them.

INT. REDONDO BEACH HOUSE - DAY

Duke reads *Captains Courageous* to Geoffrey in bed.

GEOFFREY V/O

They were basically uneducated and lacked imagination. We worshipped education and had imagination to spare.

INT. STUDY - REDONDO BEACH - DAY

A Billie Holliday 78 turns on a record player. Drifting from a framed photograph on the wall of Duke at 17, looking very studious in wire-rim glasses, surrounded by other boys in identical dark suits, posing outside a prestigious New England prep school -

GEOFFREY V/O

He was schooled at Groton, then passed along to Yale. And while he was proud to have been among the chosen few tapped for *Skull and Bones*, he never boasted of it.

The room is almost a cliché of a gentleman's study. Ample leather-top desk, cloth-bound books, rack of briar pipes, a Turkish scimitar hanging on the wall amidst photographs.

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GEOFFREY V/O

Gentlemen didn't boast. Gentlemen kept their promises. Gentlemen did and didn't do a lot of things. They never lied.

Fingers, one of them wearing the gold signet ring, tap at typewriter keys in syncopation to the music as Duke creates one of many unlikely histories -

Curriculum Vitae
Arthur Saunders Wolff, III

Education:

Groton School, Class of 1926, Honors List, Fraternity Lamda Phi, Swimming Squad, Chess Club; Yale University, Bachelor of Science Aeronautical Engineering, 1930. La Universite de Sorbonne, Paris, France, Ecole Aeronautique, 1933.

INT/EXT. NORTH AMERICAN AVIATION - DAY

We're moving in the dark somewhere, then slowly toward a vertical sliver of light. As it widens, it blinds us before our eyes begin to adjust, and we are just able to make out several ghostly figures in the bright sunlight outside.

GEOFFREY V/O

After graduating Yale summa cum laude with a degree in Aeronautical Engineering, my father married my mother and moved to Southern California.

The congregation of people are applauding. A band begins a fanfare. As we move closer to the gathering of families in the sun, we see that some of the men are in coveralls, some in suits, some in shirtsleeves with pencils behind their ears, all of them looking at us.

Duke's wife Rosemary, and Geoffrey, stand beside him. We move in closer on the boy's face, and only then are allowed to see what he and the others see - a prototype of a P-51 Mustang rolling out of the hangar.

EXT. TARMAC - LATER

The plane, just a speck in the sky at first, growls toward the crowd. Geoffrey holds his father's hand, then squeezes it tighter as the plane thunders overhead.

GEOFFREY V/O

When the war came, he went to England.

INT. MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

A newsreel showing planes and explosions flickers on the screen. In the audience, perhaps imagining his father at the controls of one of the planes, sits Geoffrey and his mother.

GEOFFREY V/O

There he distinguished himself first as a pilot with the Eagle Squadron, then with the O.S.S. fighting alongside the partisans in Yugoslavia, then as a sapper with the Resistance, parachuting into Normandy just before the Invasion.

EXT. HOUSE, REDONDO BEACH - DAY

Geoffrey, sitting on the lawn, tries to explode a bullet with a hammer and nail.

CAREFUL VOICE

Put the hammer down, Geoffrey.

The boy looks up. Squints into the sunlight at the silhouette of a figure in civilian clothes, standing on the sidewalk with a suitcase.

GEOFFREY V/O

A pretty history for a respectable American Clubman. Its only fault is that - apart from marrying my mother - it's all untrue.

Geoffrey rushes to his father, the hammer falling to the grass on the way, and is gathered up in Duke's arms.

GEOFFREY V/O

My father was a con man.

EXT. SAN PEDRO - DUSK (1960)

A bog of leaves and two feet of murky rainwater at the bottom of a swimming pool. Wet newspapers on a dead lawn. Faint, echoing sounds of racing engines, perhaps from a speedway not too far away.

Moving toward the porch of a small clapboard house, the racing sounds grow louder, as if the cars could somehow be circling a track on the other side of the front door.

INT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - DUSK

Someone raps on the door. Inside, beneath it, lies weeks-worth of mail - bills and catalogs - reaching for the slot.

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CREDITOR O/S

Mr. Wolff?

Drifting through the rooms reveals unwashed dishes and dirty laundry, old magazines and overflowing ashtrays, empty liquor bottles and prescription medicines.

CREDITOR O/S

Mr. Wolff, open the door. I know you're in there, I can hear the racket.

The racket comes from the hi-fi, an album spinning on the turntable. *The Sounds of Sebring*. Other LP's lie scattered across the floor: *Bessie Smith*, *The Sounds of Le Mans*, *Duke Ellington*, *Train Whistles in the Night*.

CREDITOR O/S

I'm not kidding, Mr. Wolff. I'm going to turn this over to a collection agency. Your credit will be ruined.

A laugh and a cough at that, very close by. A night table drawer sliding open revealing a pearl-handled Colt .45 on top of pile of junk. A ring-less hand picks it up.

CREDITOR O/S

I'm not coming back again, Mr. Wolff. It'll be the police next time.

The hand sets the gun down, at least momentarily, to return to the drawer to fish out a snapshot: Duke and a boy, about 14 years old, arms around each other on the deck of a ferry.

CREDITOR O/S

I'm leaving now, Mr. Wolff.

The racing sounds and *Sebring* announcer's voice fade along with the footsteps. The hi-fi arm ejects, swings back, sets down again on the scratchy outer bands, and the race begins anew. The hand sets the snapshot aside and picks up the gun.

EXT. SAN PEDRO - DAY (1956)

A roar of cars blurring past, allowing only intermittent glimpses of a small iron-gated pawn shop across the street.

INT. PAWN SHOP - DAY

The histories of people's lives hanging on the walls and resting under glass inside coffin-sized cases. Watches and necklaces, violins and trumpets, silverware and guns.

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Duke Wolff, mid-50's, watches as a pawn broker on the other side of a cage sifts through a glittering pile of watches and rings and flasks and lighters.

PAWN BROKER

Can you prove ownership?

DUKE

Of course. Now let's not play games.
What'll you give me?

The pawn broker peers through his eyepiece at the signet ring with the lions and flora, sets it on a jeweler's scale and makes a notation.

PAWN BROKER

Will you reclaim it soon? Because if you don't really need it - if you'd sell it - we're talking more money. Almost four times what I'd loan you.

DUKE

What would you do with it, sell it?

PAWN BROKER

Melt it down.

Duke hesitates at that. These are heirlooms. His wedding band is in that shining pile of metal somewhere. He takes a etched cigarette case from his breast pocket and from it the last of the gold-tipped Balkan Sobranies, tosses the case onto the other items like wood into a bonfire.

PAWN BROKER

That's a nice item.

The lighter in Duke's fist. Silver.

DUKE

Dunhill. English. Just the right weight in your hand.

Duke hands it over. The pawn broker likes that it lights on the first try, sets the flame under Duke's cigarette.

PAWN BROKER

They don't make 'em like this anymore.

DUKE

No, they don't. Take it.

The pawn broker sets the lighter on a jeweler's scale and counterweights it. As the beam seeks its balance -

EXT/INT. IVORY & EBONY CLUB - N.Y. - NIGHT (1936)

A doorman in a greatcoat with gold epaulets tips his hat to us as he holds open the door. We step inside - hear a blues singer working through Bessie Smith's "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out" - and snake across the dark, crowded, smoke-filled nightclub.

We drift past waiters, cigarette girl, a long bar and tables, a clientele that is mostly black, eventually settling on the same silver cigarette case and lighter as in the pawn shop, resting on a white table cloth.

Hands open the case, take out a Balkan Sobranie and light it with the Dunhill. Keeping his other arm entwined in his date's, Duke, 30, hands the cigarette to another girl at the table, and confides -

DUKE

I like you. I'd like to see you.

ROSEMARY

You're looking right at me. Can't you see me?

He studies her, likes what he sees, holds her look for the long moment it takes her to decide to accept the cigarette, and even after that, as she glances away to the stage.

DUKE'S DATE

That is one singing nigger.

Duke's eyes shift from Rosemary to the girl he arrived here with, and stay on her, staring hard.

DUKE'S DATE

What.

(Duke disengages his arm from hers and looks away)

Well, excuse me if I was rude.

DUKE

You're excused. Can you find your way home?

Everyone at the table now - Rosemary and her college girlfriend, Duke's friend Rip and his date - stare at them. The girl eventually gets up and traipses off, upsetting the table on her way out of the booth, knocking over a drink. Duke calmly rights it.

DUKE

Can I see you tomorrow?

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ROSEMARY

Why?

Duke glances to the stage, distracted by a particularly imaginative key change, then finally back to her.

DUKE

What did you say?

ROSEMARY

(annoyed with him)

You asked if you could see me tomorrow.
I asked why you want to.

DUKE

I might want to marry you.

She considers him and the remark coldly. Perhaps if she wasn't attracted to him it wouldn't matter.

ROSEMARY

Don't joke with me like that.

DUKE

Who's joking?

ROSEMARY

Because it's not funny.

She takes a drag from the cigarette he lit for her, sets it in the ashtray. He picks it up then, takes a drag, considers the lipstick on the filter -

DUKE

Rosemary, is it? If there's one thing I know, Rosemary ... it's that nothing is funny.

The song ends. The singer takes a bow. As the applause begins to wane, Duke steals a glance back at Rosemary to see if she's smiling or not. She is.

INT. SPORTING GOODS STORE - DAY (1946)

Geoffrey, 8, stands in front of a mirror wearing a Cub Scout uniform with the tags still on it. He turns around so he can see the back of it. His mother, Rosemary, smiles.

INT. SPORTING GOODS STORE - LATER

His father's son already, Geoffrey is drawn to accessories, peering in at them under glass: hunting knives and binoculars and compasses. He motions to point to something, but before he can ask his mother for it -

ROSEMARY

No.

She's purchasing the uniform he's wearing and a Cub Scout handbook, and that's it. Only there seems to be a problem even with that. A salesman shows her a payment card.

SALESMAN

Mrs. Wolff, I'm sorry but there's the matter of Mr. Wolff's unsettled account.

ROSEMARY

What? Oh. What did he buy? I'll pay cash for it.

SALESMAN

(reads from the card)

Golf clubs, bag and cart, tees, balls, gloves and shoes, squash racket, field glasses, pup tent, camping stove, knife, lantern, bowling ball, dart board, fly reel, lures and a canoe.

Rosemary stares. Of course she's noticed at least some of the stuff as it's come into the house, but had no idea it was *this* much. Finding her voice -

ROSEMARY

How much of that does he owe?

The man, a father himself, gestures her aside so they can speak without the boy hearing.

SALESMAN

Mrs. Wolff. He owes all of it. And what with him losing his job, I doubt I'll ever see it. So I really don't see how I can let you take the -

ROSEMARY

What did you say? He has a job. At Lockheed. A good job. Project Manager on the -

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SALESMAN

Ma'am, I tried to attach his salary.
I was told: *Get in line.* I got in line.
When I got to the *front* of the line they
told me they fired him.

ROSEMARY

What are you talking about? *When?*

SALESMAN

When? Months ago.

She's *stunned*. And, looking at her, the man is sure she had no idea. She glances over to Geoffrey, blissfully unaware he will have to take the uniform off and put it back on the rack. The salesman glances over at him, too. Then -

SALESMAN

Listen. I'll let you take the uniform.
And the handbook. But please - *please* -
speak to your husband. Have him come in
and see me.

ROSEMARY

I will. You're so, so kind. Thank you.

SALESMAN

It's a good thing, scouting. Teaches a
boy responsibility.

EXT. REDONDO BEACH - DAY

Geoffrey and Rosemary emerge from the store. As they walk along the sidewalk toward their car, he squints at something.

GEOFFREY.

There's Dad.

ROSEMARY

What? Where?

Geoffrey points to a new Packard parked outside a department store across the street.

ROSEMARY

That's not his car, Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY

Well, that's him *in* it.

Is it? She squints. She can't tell if it is or not. Geoffrey lets go of her hand and starts across the street without looking.

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GEOFFREY

Dad!

ROSEMARY

Geoffrey!

She chases after him. Both make it to the other side safely, but she grabs his hand as they approach the Packard.

ROSEMARY

Look before you cross.

They reach the car. Geoffrey was right; it is Duke inside.

DUKE

Hey, you're wearing a Scout uniform.
Very handsome.

ROSEMARY

What are you doing here? Who's car is this?

DUKE

Mine. I just bought it. Got a good deal on it, too. You like it? Climb in.

Geoffrey climbs in and onto his father's lap, but Rosemary doesn't; she stays outside.

ROSEMARY

Why aren't you at work?

DUKE

I was buying a car, Rosemary. They can get along without me for an afternoon. Climb in.

ROSEMARY

I was just at the sporting goods store. They said you -

DUKE

Yeah, I know, I bought a couple things, they want their money, climb in.

ROSEMARY

How much was this?

DUKE

Wait till you see how this baby drives. It's worth every penny. Climb in.

(CONTINUED)

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She doesn't; to accept a ride in this car somehow tacitly condones his buying it. He laughs, but it's strained.

DUKE

Rosemary, for Christ's sake, get in.

She gets in. Duke slides Geoffrey off his lap and shifts into gear. The car pulls away.

VOICE

Duke! Duke, where are you going?

Duke ignores the voice. Rolls up his window. Geoffrey and Rosemary look back, though, through the back window, and see a pretty young woman clutching a couple of department store shopping bags, struggling after the car in high heels.

BETTY

Duke! Duke!

Duke groans to himself. Knows at this juncture he can do one of two things: Make a run for it or stop and deal with it. To his credit, he steps on the brake instead of the gas and pulls the car to the curb.

The woman arrives out of breath and opens the door before she sees who's inside. When she does, she claps a hand over her mouth in horror.

BETTY

Oh, my God.

Everyone looks at one another for several uncomfortable moments. Then Duke climbs out, comes around to the other side and offers Rosemary a hand out.

DUKE

Stay in the car, Geoffrey.

Geoffrey has no idea anything's wrong and slides back in front of the steering wheel. The adults step away from the car to discuss this unfortunate situation like adults.

DUKE

Betty, this is my wife, Rosemary.
Rosemary, Betty. Betty works at the
plant.

BETTY

(mortified)
How do you do?

(CONTINUED)

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DUKE

Betty, I think maybe I'll just give you cab fare home if that's all right.

That's fine with her. She takes the money and hurries off as quickly as possible. To Rosemary, lamely, as she goes -

BETTY

It was nice meeting you.

Once she's gone, Duke seems at a loss how to proceed.

DUKE

So, I guess, uh -

ROSEMARY

Take Geoffrey home.

DUKE

All right. That sounds good.

She walks away. He watches after her.

INT. WOLFF HOUSE - LATER - NIGHT

Duke sits with Geoffrey in his lap, reading aloud from the Cub Scout handbook -

DUKE

Personal Management: Talk over with parents or guardian how family funds are spent to meet day-to-day and long-term needs. Prepare to tell Scoutmaster how important credit and installment buying are to the economy. Find out and tell what you must do to establish a good credit rating.

Duke and his son exchange the blankest of stares.

DUKE

Well, I can help you with that, but is it really worthy of a merit badge?

(he turns a page)

Here we go. Morse Code. Leather-work. First Aid. This is more like it. Pioneering. Forest lore. Felling of trees. Construction of fires -
Oh, look, Mom's home.

Rosemary walks past them without a word. Duke glances back down at the book. Then closes it.

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DUKE
We'll read this later.

EXT. BACKYARD - LATER

Geoffrey on a metal swing set in the backyard, trying to shut out the argument coming from inside the house -

DUKE O/S
Goddamn it, Rosemary, I love you,
you know that.
(a door slams shut)
Rosemary? Rosemary, *open the door.*

The legs of the swing set begin lifting and slamming back into grass as Geoffrey pumps higher. The chain, going slack at the apogee, snaps back tight again with each arc -

INT. COCKPIT - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The clouds spin as the plane tumbles. Suddenly the earth rises up, then quickly falls away again as Duke wrestles with the controls. Finally the horizon line appears and steadies as Duke rights the plane, its engine growling back to life -

INT. GEOFFREY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Geoffrey stares up at a model airplane swaying from his ceiling on strings. Duke's perched on the edge of the bed.

GEOFFREY
Please don't fight anymore.

DUKE
We won't. Everything's okay. Where's
it hurt?

Geoffrey touches the blanket where his stomach would be. Duke touches the spot with a little more pressure and the boy grimaces.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Duke comes in carrying Geoffrey in his arms.

DUKE
I'm taking him to the hospital.

ROSEMARY
Oh, for God's sake, Duke, not again.

DUKE
Something's wrong.

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CONTINUED:

ROSEMARY

He has a *stomach* ache.

DUKE

You coming?

ROSEMARY

No.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Duke runs alongside a gurney as it's rushed down a corridor, holding onto his son's hand.

INT. HOSPITAL - LATER - NIGHT

Rosemary, in a car coat, finds Duke waiting on a bench outside an operating room. Before she can ask how Geoffrey is, a doctor emerges and Duke gets up, completely ignoring his wife.

DOCTOR

Acute appendicitis. But we got to him just in time. Even a half-hour later, I don't think he would have made it.

(to both of them)

You saved his life.

The doctor misreads the look Duke gives Rosemary, shakes both their hands and leaves. Long silence. Finally, calmly -

DUKE

Don't tell me anything again.

An orderly wheels Geoffrey out on a gurney to take him to a room. Duke follows after it so he'll be there when he wakes up, leaving Rosemary standing alone in the corridor, knowing the marriage is doomed.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Duke, spending the night, has climbed onto the hospital bed, is under the covers with Geoffrey, who listens to the purr of his father's voice reading softly to him from a book -

DUKE

The crow, seeing the well-fed pigeons in the aviary, whitened his feathers and joined them to share their food. So long as he stayed silent, the pigeons took him for one of their own and approved of him as he mingled among them -

EXT. WOLFF HOUSE - DAY

A tow truck driver hitches up the Packard as a sheriff stands by. Oblivious to what's happening, Geoffrey rides his bike on the sidewalk as his father signs the repo-papers.

DUKE V/O

But then, for just a moment, he forgot himself and let out a cry. Upon hearing the unfamiliar voice, the pigeons chased him away -

EXT. WOLFF HOUSE - ANOTHER DAY

The furniture is being carted away, piece by piece, as Rosemary signs the papers.

DUKE V/O

Returning to his own kind, he found the other crows didn't recognize him because of his changed feathers -

INT. DUKE'S MG - MOVING - DAY

Geoffrey, on his father's lap, is "driving" again.

DUKE V/O

Making an awful racket they demanded he leave at once and forever. Which he did.

INT. OLD PONTIAC - MOVING - DAY

Rosemary, alone, tries to keep the MG up ahead in view.

DUKE V/O

Having desired the food of both, he now had neither.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The two cars, and no others, cross a landscape so vast it almost seems possible the Wolffs could be the only inhabitants of America.

EXT. OLD LYME, CONNECTICUT - DAY

A sign welcomes anyone who happens to pass it - even the Wolffs - to Old Lyme. As the two cars approach the quaint town square, a trash truck rumbles past.

EXT. GROTON SCHOOL - DAY (1922)

A boy in the passenger seat of a Packard - Duke, age 14 - peers out at groups of students taking their lessons under the shade of elm trees.

YOUNG DUKE

What if I stutter?

His father parks, climbs out, and without a word to his son, lets him carry his own suitcase on the way to the ivy-covered administration building. As they disappear inside -

GEOFFREY V/O

What if I stutter?

EXT. OLD LYME SCHOOL - DAY (1947)

Duke leans against the fender of the MG parked outside a public elementary school as his son watches other kids, who all seem to know each other, entering the building.

DUKE

What if you do? People will just pay closer attention to what you have to say.

GEOFFREY

I don't want people to pay attention to me.

DUKE

Sure you do. Always. Here, I have something for you.

Duke produces a small box from his pocket and gives it to Geoffrey. Inside is a beautiful wrist watch. A chronometer with a black face, three sub-faces, and luminous numerals.

DUKE

It's water and shockproof and not only tells you the time - it tells you about time zones, and tides, and the moon. This is a grown-up watch.

Duke slips it onto his son's wrist and adjusts the expandable metal strap for him. Geoffrey puts it to his ear and listens. They both smile.

DUKE

You know, someday we'll be standing together like this, only I'll be seeing you off to Princeton or Yale, and it'll be the proudest moment of my life.

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They hug. Duke kisses him. Geoffrey walks off with his notebook and new watch. Just before entering the building he glances back and sees his father waving to him.

DUKE

I love you, Geoffrey. Be good.

EXT. OLD LYME SCHOOL - DAY

Recess. Some kids playing, some talking, a few reading. A thin-boned boy comes over to Geoffrey and stands next to him for several moments. Finally -

MARION

My father drives a Studebaker.

Geoffrey nods to himself as he admires the watch on his own wrist. Absently -

GEOFFREY

My father says the problem with Studebakers is you never know if they're coming or going.

Marion isn't sure if he's been insulted or not. Geoffrey notices some tough kids approaching.

MARION

You think Marion is a girl's name, don't you. It isn't, or isn't only. It's like Lee. Or Leslie. Or Lynn.

The tough kids arrive and look the two new boys up and down.

JIMBO

Let me see your watch, Wolff. Is it waterproof? Mine is. Water and shock-proof.

GEOFFREY

So's mine.

JIMBO

Prove it.

GEOFFREY

I don't have to prove it, my dad says it is. It's the best watch made. He knows.

JIMBO

What does he know? I saw him kiss you. Right on the mouth.

(MORE)

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JIMBO (CONT'D)

Maybe he's not your father. Maybe he's your boyfriend. *Your watch is the best, Honey.* Let me see it.

Geoffrey is sharp enough to know he shouldn't actually hand the watch over. Instead, he twists the band so the tough kid can read what it says on the back, *if* he can read.

JIMBO

It's shock resistant - not proof.

GEOFFREY

Same thing.

JIMBO

Want to bet?

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - LATER

A small crowd has gathered to witness the watch contest. Geoffrey and Jimbo hold their watches by the straps over a railing, high over cement.

JIMBO

Count-a three. One ... two ... three.

Geoffrey drops his watch. It hits the cement, shattering the crystal and, no doubt damaging the insides beyond repair. Jimbo, wisely, didn't let go of his, and walks away with it and his friends, laughing.

JIMBO

You're as dumb as you look, Wolff.

Marion appears down below, attempting to pick up all the little shards of glass as if perhaps they could somehow be glued back together. He picks up the watch itself then, puts it to his ear, looks up to Geoffrey, and shakes his head, no.

INT. FURNITURE STORE - DAY

As Rosemary checks the price tags on furniture, Duke and Geoffrey wander into a full-scale replica of a salt-box house complete with Early American maple and pine, hooked rugs, pewter mugs and Currier and Ives paintings.

SALESMAN

May I help you, sir?

DUKE

Yeah. I'll take it.

SALESMAN

Take what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUKE

The whole ball of wax.

Confused, the man looks around. Geoffrey eyes a pair of crossed Turkish scimitars hanging above the fake fireplace.

SALESMAN

The whole house?

DUKE

(patiently)

No, just the furniture. Put it on my account. I'd like to open an account.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - NEXT DAY

Jimbo's watch lies intact and ticking on the cement. Whimpering, he kneels over it holding a big rock. Geoffrey stands over *him* with one of the curved Turkish scimitars, its tip resting against Jimbo's ear.

GEOFFREY

It's very sharp. It can chop off heads, so it should easily go in one ear and out the other.

JIMBO

Okay, okay, okay -

As Marian and the other kids stand around watching, Jimbo crushes his watch with the rock.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

The Red Sox training on a minor league field to the delight of a hundred or so fans, Duke and Geoffrey among them in the stands. Ted Williams finishes batting practice and comes off the field, distant and slope-shouldered toward the dugout and the group of kids gathered there in hopes of getting his elusive signature, yelling, "Ted, Ted."

Miraculously, of all the kids, Ted accepts Geoffrey's new Spaulding baseball and ballpoint pen.

GEOFFREY

Ted, would you put, To Geoffrey, from Ted Williams, the Splendid Splinter?

Ted scrapes the pen against the rawhide a few times to get the ink flowing, scribbles something quickly and tosses the ball and pen back.

INT. GEOFFREY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Geoffrey, as he has done countless times, studies the ball and the pen-skipped - *Te Wi li m* - written on it. He takes a pen, not quite the same color as the other one, closes the gaps in the signature and adds, *To Geoffrey, A Great Kid, Ted Williams, The Splendid Splinter, Batter Up!*

EXT. ROAD, OLD LYME - DAY

A flat-bed truck carrying kids in Little League uniforms, approaches. Up ahead, Geoffrey, also in a uniform, waits by the side of the road with a glove, bat and the Ted Williams ball. The truck stops and Geoffrey hurries to it to climb aboard, anxious to show the others the ball -

MR. CARVER

Geoffrey.

(he comes around to the
driver's side)

Listen, I don't think I'm going to need
you today. Maybe next week. Okay?

Geoffrey fights not to look at the other boys in the truck.

GEOFFREY

Okay.

The truck drives away. Geoffrey watches after it even once it's gone, his Phil Rizutto glove dangling from his hand. He turns and hurls the Ted Williams ball into somebody's field.

EXT. WOLFF HOUSE - LATER

Duke, having somehow conned a salesman into letting him take a home-movie camera setup out of the store on credit, aims it at Rosemary, her back to him as she waters the lawn.

DUKE

Come on, Rosemary, turn around and say
something.

ROSEMARY

(turning to face the camera)
Take it back.

Geoffrey comes up the walkway with his glove.

DUKE

Geoffrey! How was the game?

GEOFFREY

Fine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUKE

Wait, say it again. I have sound here.

Duke tries to capture the moment on film, but Geoffrey doesn't oblige, continues into the house.

INT. GEOFFREY'S ROOM - LATER

Duke appears at Geoffrey's door - without the camera - and finds him on his bed leafing through an old boating catalog.

DUKE

What's wrong?

GEOFFREY

Nothing.

He turns to a dog-eared page with a drawing of a smiling father and son floating along a lake in a small motorboat. Duke comes in and sits down at the desk.

DUKE

Is that the Evinrude catalog? That 5-horsepower Fastwin's nice, isn't it?

GEOFFREY

Uh-huh.

He turns another page, and another, not looking at them.

DUKE

Nothing wrong, huh?

This time, hard as he tries not to, Geoffrey gasps for air as he starts to cry.

EXT. ROAD / MG - MOVING - DAY

Duke's MG flies down the same tree-lined road Geoffrey was left standing on by his coach. Duke down-shifts into a hard turn and Geoffrey holds on.

GEOFFREY

Dad, maybe we should just -

DUKE

I'm just gonna talk to him.

EXT. PARK - DAY

The Little League game. Geoffrey's team up. Mr. Carver, coaching third, going through the signs. Distracted by the sound of an engine, he glances away to the outfield -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The MG hurtles off the road and onto the playing field, across the grass along the right foul line, past the almost-empty wooden bleachers and, charging the plate like an amok runner stealing home, comes to a sliding stop just outside the batter's box.

Stunned silence as the dust begins to settle. Duke climbs out and heads for Carver. Geoffrey looks mortified.

DUKE

Put my son up.

Carver tries to calm Duke with reason -

MR. CARVER

There's a batter already at the plate,
Mr. Wolff -

DUKE

I want him up *now*.

MR. CARVER

Listen -

Carver makes the mistake of touching Duke's shoulder in another attempt to calm him and Duke cocks a fist. Geoffrey sinks a little lower in the MG.

MR. CARVER

Let's just try to calm down.

Duke turns away from him and strides toward the boy with the bat, who *throws* it to him and runs all the way out of the park. Geoffrey feels himself being pulled from the car and pushed to the plate.

DUKE

All right! Batter up! Play ball!
(to Geoffrey)
Swing for the fences.

Geoffrey glances over to his silent teammates on the bench. The pitcher looks over to *his* teammates and coach who shrugs, *pitch, I guess*.

Duke stands just outside the box. Geoffrey steps in, digs his cleats into the dirt, lifts the bat to his shoulder and looks to the fence deep in center.

The rattled pitcher winds up. Geoffrey grips the handle of the bat. The pitcher hurls the ball, Geoffrey starts his swing, the ball hits him square in the face and he goes down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DUKE
Man on first!
(to Carver)
Put in a pinch-runner.

Duke lifts his son off the ground, sets him in the car, climbs in and drives away.

INT. MG - MOVING

Nursing his eye with a grease rag, Geoffrey glances to his father who seems entirely pleased with the outcome of their day at the ballpark. He looks over and smiles.

DUKE
We showed them.

EXT. PRATT & WHITNEY - DAY

Duke stands around with a clipboard in his hand. It's a much more modest operation than the big aviation companies out in California. Someone is shouting at him, but he can't hear a word of it over the noise of the planes and shrugs to say as much. The engineer shouts it again, but Duke still can't make it out. Finally, the man swings an invisible golf club and Duke nods enthusiastically. Yes, he plays golf.

EXT. COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

The engineer drives a ball 270 yards straight down the fairway. Duke, also dressed in expensive golfing attire, accepts a wood from his caddie.

LESTER
Pinchot here is a Yale man, Duke.
Skull and Bones, too.

DUKE
Is that right.

PINCHOT
When were you there, Duke?

Duke doesn't answer. Lines up his shot.

LESTER
Duke, what year did you gradu -

DUKE
I'm trying to hit the ball, Lester.

Geoffrey watches as his father concentrates, takes a mighty swing and slices the ball deep into the woods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LESTER
Oh, tough break.

THE WOODS - LATER

Like a search party looking for a clue to the kidnapping, everyone hunts around the woods for Duke's ball.

DUKE
You're not looking for the ball,
Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY
What about the weekend after that?

LESTER
What's he going on about?

DUKE
He wants me to take him up to McCook
Point.

LESTER
Well, that's easy enough. Charter a
powerboat and take him out.

DUKE
A powerboat? Boating is sailing, period.

JACK
I didn't know you sailed, Duke.

DUKE
Of course I sail.

PINCHOT
Take mine out. I got a 30-foot racing
sloop sitting at the yacht club.
(to Geoffrey)
How'd that be?

LESTER
(stooping down)
Here it is. No, I think this is someone
else's ball, it has moss on it.

EXT. HARBOR - DAY

Geoffrey smiles as his father mans the outboard motor, using it to navigate Pinchot's mahogany sloop along the Connecticut River to the sea.

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - DAY

As other sailboats glide around majestically, the Wolffs' boat continues up the coast under motor power.

GEOFFREY

When are we going to sail?

DUKE

Not here. These winds are going to turn treacherous any minute.

Geoffrey looks out at the other boats gracefully arcing across the water in the perfect breeze. A kid about his age waves as the wake of *his* father's sailboat gliding past jostles the Wolffs' chugging sloop.

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - LATER

Geoffrey at the tiller. Duke trying to figure out how to raise the sails.

DUKE

Bad news. The halyard's broken.

EXT. HARBOR YACHT CLUB - LATER

Pinchot waves as the Wolffs slowly motor toward the dock. Geoffrey does what he's supposed to - throws the rope - but Duke, try as he might, miscalculates the angle of approach and bangs into the dock, nearly tossing Geoffrey overboard.

PINCHOT

Whoa. Watch it there, Duke.

Pinchot cinches the rope to a cleat and expertly ties a knot.

PINCHOT

How'd it go?

DUKE

Great. This is one beautiful boat.

PINCHOT

Isn't it? She really flies.

INT. DUKE'S MG - LATER

Duke and Geoffrey driving home.

GEOFFREY

Why didn't you tell him about the halyard?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUKE

I fixed it, Geoffrey.

They drive a little while more in silence. Then -

GEOFFREY

Why didn't we sail after you fixed it?

DUKE

I fixed it just before we pulled into port.

Another silence as they drive along.

GEOFFREY

Oh.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

A silent tableau. The 4th grade class facing front in their normal seats and clothes. Marion, though is wearing a Superman costume.

MISS MUELLER

Marion, I wonder if we could retire the costume, seeing as how Halloween was a week ago.

MARION

I can't do that, Miss Mueller.

MISS MUELLER

Why not?

MARION

This is what Superboy, son of Superman, wears. And since I am Superboy, this is what I wear. In other words, it's not a costume, as you call it, it's my normal clothes.

Some titters from his classmates which Marion seems not to notice or care about.

MISS MUELLER

I see.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - LATER

Marion produces a pair of thick-lensed horn-rimmed glasses and passes them around for all to see.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARION

These belong to my father. As you can see, they're the real thing.

JIMBO

You're a real idiot, Marion.

GEOFFREY

(more kindly)

Marion, this doesn't prove your father is Clark Kent. It only proves he wears glasses. My father wears glasses, too, sometimes, when he reads.

Marion takes the glasses back and tries to think of some other way to prove it.

EXT. MARION'S HOUSE - LATER

The kids have gathered on Marion's front lawn and are all looking up at the roof - only no one's there.

GEOFFREY

Marion!

VOICE FROM ATTIC

My name isn't Marion!

GEOFFREY

Marion, forget it, none of us really wants to see you do it.

JIMBO

I want to see him do it.

They all keep watching but nothing happens. Finally -

JIMBO

He's not going to do it, let's go.

The elementary school 'lynch mob' begins to break up.

INT. ATTIC - SAME TIME

Marion, hunched up in the attic in his costume, summons the nerve to stand.

EXT. MARION'S HOUSE - CONTINUED

All but one of the kids are walking away.

GIRL

Wait. Look.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Marion is crawling out a dormer window. With some difficulty then, a little interference from the cape, he climbs to the ridge line, three stories above the ground, inches along it to the edge, stands, teeters, and announces -

MARION

Now, I'm not going to fly *far*. Just far enough to prove a point. Are you ready?

They are. In fact, they're mesmerized by the sight of Marion standing up there so high, his cape billowing in the wind.

GIRL

(to herself)

Fly, Marion.

Marion leaps from the roof like he's doing a swan dive and in less than a second hits the lawn below.

INT. BARBER SHOP - DAY

As Duke gets a haircut, Geoffrey waits his turn, thumbing through a boating magazine.

DUKE

He said he was going to fly and he did. He's got spunk, I admire that. Don't you do it, though. Don't be bullied into dares.

GEOFFREY

Everybody signed his cast. And they wrote nice things, too. His parents are making him go to a new school, though, I don't know why.

INT. STUDY, WOLFF HOUSE - DAY

Duke sorts through the mail, a cornucopia of bills mostly. These go directly into the wastebasket while the Abercrombie & Fitch and Orvil and W.J. Sloane catalogs are given priority space on the desk.

ROSEMARY

You know where I bought groceries today? Guess. *New London*. I have to keep going further and further out of town where no one knows us.

DUKE

What am I doing, Rosemary? I'm paying the bills. Leave me alone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSEMARY

You're not. You're throwing them in the trash and I'm the one who has to deal with these people when they come to the house. Like that little man from the, the - umbrella store.

DUKE

(to himself)
Haberdashery.

ROSEMARY

I can't show my face at PTA meetings anymore. We owe them all money. I can't go to Geoffrey's troop meetings -

DUKE

Well, you *shouldn't* be going to those, he doesn't need you there.

The phone rings. Neither of them makes a move to answer it, but somehow Rosemary's voice can be heard saying -

ROSEMARY V/O

I'm sure the check is in the mail -

INT. STUDY, WOLFF HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Rosemary is alone in the study on some earlier day, picking up a ringing phone -

ROSEMARY

I'm sorry, I wouldn't know anything about that -

Another day. Another ringing phone.

ROSEMARY

He's not here. He's in the hospital -

Another day. Another ringing phone.

ROSEMARY

He just left for New York -

Another day. Another phone.

ROSEMARY

I'm not prepared to give out that information. How do I know you're who you say you are?

INT. STUDY, WOLFF HOUSE - CONTINUED

The first ringing phone. Duke waits for Rosemary to get it.

ROSEMARY

Don't look at me, I'm not going to get it. It's probably the *haberdashery* man.

Duke finally answers it, and very officially at that -

DUKE

Duke Wolff.

He listens, nods to whatever the caller is saying to him, says, "thanks," and hangs up.

ROSEMARY

I don't even want to know.

Duke's look to her is grave; not the look of a man like Duke troubled by something so petty as a creditor. It scares her.

ROSEMARY

What is it? Is it Geoffrey?

DUKE

My father just died.

They stare at one another solemnly. But then, first him, then her ... they smile.

EXT. HARTFORD - DAY

Cars parked in front of a chapel.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

Geoffrey moves along the line filing past an open casket. Inside he glimpses an old man he's never met wearing a suit. He'd like to take a longer look but the line keeps moving and he misses the opportunity.

INT. LAW FIRM, HARTFORD - DAY

Joe Freedman, the Wolff Family attorney for as long as Duke can remember, carries an old wooded box over to his desk and sets it and himself down.

FREEDMAN

How you been, Duke?

DUKE

Just swell, Joe, you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FREEDMAN

Recognize this? He didn't mention it specifically in the will but I'm sure he would've wanted you to have it.

Freedman opens a file folder, peruses the papers inside it, shuffles them around and peruses them some more.

FREEDMAN

You know, we all think we know our fathers. But we don't really. My father had to die before I got to know him. I think that's pretty common.

DUKE

Get to it, Joe. Nothing you can tell me about my father will surprise me.

FREEDMAN

All right, well ... basically he left everything to you. All together it comes to about a hundred thousand dollars.

Duke doesn't even try to hide his glee. He *is* surprised by this. By the large amount of the estate, and by the lack of complication. But -

FREEDMAN

Unfortunately, he mortgaged the entire equity he had in the house, almost fifty grand, and spent it traveling around the world the last couple of years.

(Duke's smile is gone)

The cash and the securities and all the rest will just about cover it. In other words, all that's left is this.

The box. Freedman slides it over. Duke doesn't open it.

FREEDMAN

Sorry, Duke.

INT. BENTLEY - NIGHT

Duke behind the wheel, Rosemary across from him, Geoffrey perched over the front seat, driving home in silence. Every once in a while, Geoffrey glances from the passing headlights to the mysterious box sitting next to his father.

INT. HOUSE, OLD LYME - NIGHT

Geoffrey has waited patiently to see what's in the box. As Duke lifts the lid, light reflects off whatever is inside and shimmers across his son's face.

DUKE

He made these himself.

Surgical instruments, hand-forged of silver: scalpels and lancets and trepans and clamps - all nested in worn velvet.

DUKE

I used to watch him late at night in his study, sharpening and cleaning them.

He picks up a deadly-looking trepan that has probably cut through many bones and hands it to Geoffrey who inspects it closely.

DUKE

His name was Arthur, like me, but everyone called him The Doctor. I called him The Doctor. As instructed. Never Dad or anything like that.

Geoffrey sets the trepan down and carefully picks up a scalpel. Duke watches him ...

DUKE

Geoffrey, a time may come when you look at me and don't like what you see. When that happens, try to remember I've always been proud of you, I've always loved you, and that I'd ^{do} anything for you.

Geoffrey doesn't know what his father is talking about. He loves his father.

GEOFFREY

That'll never happen.

Duke nods; he knows it'll happen someday. Geoffrey carefully places the scalpel back in its velvet nest.

EXT. OLD LYME - MORNING

An old guy on a ladder strings Christmas lights across Main Street. Snow blankets the town.

EXT. WOLFFS' STREET - MORNING

Waiting on the porch steps for the school bus, Geoffrey watches a trash truck stop at the house on one side of his, and the other, but not at his.

INT. STUDY - MORNING

Duke is rewriting his resume, embellishing what is already wild fiction: *Club Memberships: Racket Club, New York; Piping Rock, New York; Fence Club, Yale; Skull and Bones, Yale.*

GEOFFREY

Dad?

DUKE

Hmmm?

GEOFFREY

I was wondering if you could pay the trash man.

DUKE

He's on the list.

GEOFFREY

I was wondering if you could pay him now.

Duke stops typing. Looks over at his son. Waits for the rest. There has to be more.

GEOFFREY

I'm in love with the trashman's daughter.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Geoffrey composes a note with great care to Margaret Dean, the trashman's daughter: *If you come to my house to visit me you won't be sorry.*

MISS MUELLER

When the carols are over, we'll come back here and exchange our gifts. These should cost no more than 25 cents. It's the thought that counts, remember -

As a box with slips of paper circulates around the room, Geoffrey touches Margaret Dean's arm. She pretends not to notice. He touches it again and she turns around, annoyed.

MARGARET DEAN

What.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He presses the note on her. She reluctantly takes it, reads it, then looks him straight in the eye. Firmly -

MARGARET DEAN

Please.

This delights him. The bell rings.

INT. SHED - EVENING

Duke switches the plates on the MG and another car while Geoffrey stands outside the shed's open doors looking out at the darkening sky and no Margaret Dean.

INT. WOLFF HOUSE - EVENING

Geoffrey dials a number, listens to it ring and connect.

GEOFFREY

Margaret? It's Geoffrey Wolff.

She hangs up.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

As Margaret Dean takes off her mittens and coat and hangs them up in the cloakroom, Geoffrey does the same as he tries to read her.

GEOFFREY

Yesterday you said "please" to me.

MARGARET DEAN

I meant - "please" - as in please leave me alone. I don't like you.

As she walks away, he steals her mittens.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Women's Apparel. Geoffrey hands over three dollars for a pair of girl's mittens.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Toy Department. Geoffrey sets a top-of-the-line Gilbert "Atomic" chemistry set - full of test tubes and powders and liquids - onto the counter, and hands over 17 dollars.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Geoffrey sets a small elaborately wrapped present - the mittens - next to Margaret Dean's coat in the cloak room.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - DAY

7th and 8th graders playing football. The coach blows his whistle and the boys leave the frozen field. Geoffrey comes down off the bleachers and approaches one of them.

GEOFFREY

Are you Margaret Dean's brother?

WALTER DEAN

Yeah.

Geoffrey hands the older boy the large wrapped present.

GEOFFREY

This is for you. I love your sister.
Make her love me back.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Duke and Geoffrey sit on the Yale side of the stands watching a game against Harvard. Duke is sporting his old Yale jacket and counseling his son.

DUKE

Sometimes when a girl says she doesn't like you it doesn't mean she doesn't like you.

GEOFFREY

What does it mean?

DUKE

It means she does like you.

Geoffrey groans as the crowd around him cheers. What's he supposed to do if nothing means what it means?

GEOFFREY

How do you find out which it is?

DUKE

Sometimes you don't. But in either case you should take it easy. Go slow. Give her some elbow room. Not so many notes.

Duke pulls a silver flask from his jacket pocket, turns slightly away from Geoffrey as if that would hide it from him, and takes a long drink.

INT. MORY'S SALOON, NEW HAVEN - LATER - NIGHT

Yale's mascot, Handsome Dan the English bulldog, sleeps in a corner of the crowded tavern. Around him, the walls are covered with oars and footballs and bygone-team photographs.

DUKE

Wasn't that a bully game?

Duke's arm is around Geoffrey's shoulder as they sit at the bar nursing their drinks.

GEOFFREY

Did you play football when you were here?

DUKE

Oh, I played. In the line, though, no heroics.

The bartender, somehow knowing it's not true, smirks to himself as he pours another drink in anticipation of Duke ordering it.

DUKE

Proprietor! You know what I need? Another hot-battered rum. Just to seal the occasion. Bring Christmas home, as it were.

The bartender sets the drink down.

BARTENDER

Didn't know you people celebrated Christmas. Another Coke for the kid?

Geoffrey cocks his head. What does that mean, "you people?"

DUKE

Go play some pinball, Geoffrey. I'll bring you the Coke.

He drags some coins off the bar and hands them to Geoffrey, but the boy doesn't immediately run off.

DUKE

Go.

Geoffrey wanders off. The bartender fills a glass with Coke and sets it down next to Duke's drink.

BARTENDER

Here you go, Baldy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Duke calmly sets his cigarette in a full ashtray, beckons the bartender closer with a crook of his finger, reaches out and grabs him and empties the ashtray down the front of his shirt. The man howls jumping back, slapping at the embers burning his chest. Duke downs his drink in one gulp, throws some bills on the bar and picks up the Coke.

BARTENDER

Get out! And never come back, you Hebe deadbeat!

Duke waves casually with his back turned as though waving to an old chum he'll see again in half an hour. He puts his arm around Geoffrey, hands him the Coke, leads him to the door.

DUKE

Let's get our tree.

EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE LOT - NIGHT

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer plays from a little radio by the sales trailer. Duke and Geoffrey wander among the picked-over trees, all small and unimpressive.

GEOFFREY

What's a Hebe?

DUKE

Damned if I know.

A guy who looks like an ex-con with an elf's hat saws at the base of a sickly-looking tree.

DUKE

Sir! Where are your *good* trees?

EX-CON

This is all that's left.

DUKE

This is *it*?

These trees are so small Duke can see over the tops of them. None of them will do. The Christmas song continues over -

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Duke's trunk opens revealing fine mechanics tools and a leather-handled hatchet. He takes it out, turns away from Geoffrey for the second it takes him to swallow another sip from his flask, then leads the boy down the road.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUKE

This is the East. No one gets their tree from a lot; that's California. When I was a kid, we always chopped down our tree in the wilds.

EXT. SPRUCE GROVE - NIGHT

Duke whacks at the trunk of a 15-foot spruce. The area around it looks too well-tended to be a forest. It isn't. It's somebody's large private estate with a big house sitting on a knoll in the distance. Geoffrey watches a light blink on in one of the upstairs windows.

GEOFFREY

Dad?

The tree, not quite cleanly severed, bends halfway to the ground. Duke struggles to twist it free.

EXT. ROAD - LATER

Duke and Geoffrey walk along the road carrying the fine blue spruce. Now and then, a car picks them up in its headlights and they stand the tree in the snow as if were growing there and pretend to lean against it.

INT. WOLFF HOUSE, OLD LYME - LATER - NIGHT

Geoffrey lies in bed studying his boating catalog, listening to his parents argue in the living room.

DUKE O/S

I am not drunk.

ROSEMARY O/S

Oh, come off it. You come in here in the middle of the night, carrying a tree that came from you can't remember where, letting Geoffrey see God knows what -

DUKE O/S

Ask him. He'll tell you. Maybe one drink.

ROSEMARY O/S

I can't tell you anything anyway, can I? I'm not allowed. Ever again. I'm going back to bed.

DUKE O/S

It's Christmas, Rosemary. We have to trim the tree.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Geoffrey hears his mother's footsteps approaching and quickly snaps off his lamp.

ROSEMARY

Geoffrey? Are you awake?

He keeps his eyes shut tight, even as his mother comes in and touches his hair.

ROSEMARY

Good night.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

Duke teeters drunkenly atop a step ladder trying to crown the decorated tree with a silver angel. The 6-foot piece he had to lop off to fit the spruce in the house lies on the floor.

DUKE

(mumbling to himself)

Hebe deadbeat? Who you calling a Hebe deadbeat? Who you calling a Hebe? Don't you know who I am? Doesn't anybody know who I am ...

Geoffrey, in his pajamas, watches unseen from the hall as his father loses his footing and topples off the step ladder, bringing the tree and glass ornaments crashing to the floor with him -

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT (1916)

Duke, same age as Geoffrey, sits next to his mother at a piano playing *Come All Ye Faithful*. On the piano rest small framed photographs of severe-looking German Jews. Young Duke sees his father striding into the room and immediately stops playing the song.

THE DOCTOR

The nuns at the hospital aren't bad enough, I have to listen to their idiotic Christmas music in my own house. I'm trying to work, for God's sake.

Young Duke looks on terrified as his father grabs the tree his wife bought and decorated and drags it angrily out of the room and out the front door, slamming it behind him.

EXT/INT. WOLFF HOUSE - DAY

Christmas morning. Framed by the front window, the Wolffs can be seen inside, in their robes and pajamas, opening presents. Lots of presents.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Duke hands Geoffrey a big one which turns out to be the same Gilbert chemistry set he bought Walter Dean.

Rosemary looks up from her gifts. She's noticed something going on outside. She gets up. The others follow and look out the window at:

Margaret Dean's trashman father has brought a truckload of garbage from the dump and is scattering it all over the Wolffs' front yard.

Duke emerges from the house and stares from the porch. The trashman ignores him, keeps dumping the filthy debris on the snow-patched lawn.

Neighbors, whole families, come out of their houses and watch. Rosemary and Geoffrey emerge from theirs and Duke instinctively holds an arm out as if shielding him from a bad car accident.

The trashman sees the humiliated family standing on the porch, but continues to return their garbage with dogged determination. Duke finally comes down the steps to try to reason with him. Keeping his voice low -

DUKE

You've made your point.

The trashman works around him. Staying calm -

DUKE

I said that's enough.

The neighbors are all staring as if they knew this day would come. Duke pulls out his wallet.

DUKE

Here. Here's your money. It wasn't right I didn't pay you. How much is it?

TRASHMAN

I don't want your money.

DUKE

Please take it.

The man doesn't. He ignores Duke and his money, carries a full trash can up to the porch and dumps it at the deadbeat's wife's and son's feet. Geoffrey glances off to Margaret Dean sitting in her father's truck. With the slightest trace of a smile, she pulls off the mittens he gave her and tosses them out the window onto the garbage-strewn yard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A jazz version of *Hark, the Herald Angels Sing* begins and carries over -

EXT. NIAGARA FALLS - DAY

Geoffrey and his mother are among the tourists riding on the *Maid of the Mist* in the spray of the crashing Falls.

INT. GENERAL BROCK HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Duke types a new resume in a nicely-appointed suite.

INT. NIAGARA FALLS MUSEUM - DAY

Geoffrey and Rosemary consider black and white photographs and films of daredevils crossing the Falls on tightrope wires and plunging over them in barrels.

EXT. GENERAL BROCK HOTEL - NIGHT

The Falls glow phosphorescent behind the dark silhouette of the grand General Brock Hotel.

INT. GENERAL BROCK HOTEL - NIGHT

Half-awake and in his pajamas, Geoffrey pads after his parents down a back staircase, past the hotel kitchen and out a back door.

INT. ROOMING HOUSE - BUFFALO NY - NIGHT

This is the worst place yet. Dark and dingy. In the small bathroom, Geoffrey can see his own reflection in the medicine cabinet mirror as his father shaves with a straight razor.

DUKE

I used to like to watch my father shave, too.

Geoffrey does enjoy it. He likes the sound the blade makes as it scrapes at the whiskers, like skis on snow.

DUKE

One day he was shaving and he realized he wanted to pull the razor right across his throat and be done with it. He never used it again. Gave it to me.

Duke stands still for a long time, looking at himself and the razor in the mirror.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUKE

I've mailed out three hundred job applications and no one has answered.

Duke sets the razor against his neck and gives it a slight pull. A rivulet of blood surfaces through the shaving foam and snakes down. Duke smiles.

DUKE

Look, it's nothing.

Geoffrey isn't sure if *it's nothing* means *it's not a bad cut*, or *it's not hard to just be done with it*.

INT. PERSONNEL OFFICE - DAY

A personnel manager in an office overlooking an aircraft factory sorts through his morning mail, opens an envelope marked *RUSH, URGENT COPY, EXPEDITE*, skims the resume inside which is professionally printed on heavy cream paper -

Employment Record: Northrup Aviation, Aircraft Designer, 1938-40. Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, Plant Manager, 1940-41. Pratt & Whitney Aircraft, Designer of -

The man crumples it up and tosses it into his wastebasket.

INT. PERSONNEL OFFICE - DAY

Another personnel manager in another office is reading -

Languages: French, Italian, Turkish, Croatian, Portuguese -

The man balls up the elegant resume and throws it in his wastebasket.

INT. PERSONNEL OFFICE - DAY

Another man throws the resume in a wastebasket.

INT. PERSONNEL OFFICE - DAY

Another throws the unopened envelope in the wastebasket.

INT. ROOMING HOUSE - DAY

Rosemary moves along the common hallway to a ringing phone and answers it.

ROSEMARY

Hello.

INT. PERSONNEL OFFICE - DAY

Another personnel manager is looking at Duke's ash- and coffee-stained resume. Obviously he has some kind of employment emergency and has fished it from his wastebasket. Out a window be glimpsed old hulking B-36 bombers next to a hangar.

PERSONNEL MANAGER

Is this Mrs. Wolff? May I speak with your husband? What do I want? I want to speak to him about a business matter. He's in the hospital? I'm sorry to hear that. I was calling about his resume. He just *returned* from the hospital? He's on his way *home* from the hospital right now? How fortunate for both of us.

EXT. BUFFALO STREET - DAY

Rosemary hurries excitedly with Geoffrey in tow to where she knows Duke will be - a bar. She has Geoffrey wait outside and pushes in past the Naugahyde door.

INT. BAR, BUFFALO - DAY

It takes a moment for her eyes to adjust. When they do she sees Duke in a corner, necking with another woman.

EXT. NIAGARA FALLS - LATER - DAY

The *Maid of the Mist* again. Geoffrey always enjoys it, but Rosemary just stares out blankly at the thundering water.

INT. ROOMING HOUSE - EVENING

A portable heater warms the bathroom. Duke soaks in the tub with a glass of melting ice cubes resting on his stomach and a wet Levenson catalog in his hands. He listens. Hears someone coming into the house and calls off -

DUKE

Rosemary? Honey? Could you bring me a fresh drink?

Rosemary comes into the bathroom. Duke offers up the glass without looking at her.

DUKE

Could you freshen this up for me?
Thanks, sweetheart.

She takes it from his hand, but doesn't leave.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUKE

Oh, and could you bring me my robe? And get a towel down for me?

She does neither. Just stands there.

DUKE

Oh, and there's a new Abercrombie & Fitch catalog on the desk, maybe you could bring that in? And my cigarettes? They're on the desk too. And my lighter?

She sets the drink down on the washing machine, walks over to the portable heater and picks it up.

ROSEMARY

How about I put this heater in the tub with you?

Duke looks up at her for the first time. She comes closer with the heater and stands over him with it, the glowing red coils throwing heat waves across her unsmiling face ...

INT. DRUGSTORE FOUNTAIN - BUFFALO - DAY

A waitress carries an armful of plates - hot turkey with gravy on white bread, roast beef and soup - to the booth Duke shares with Geoffrey. As she sets them down -

DUKE

Please keep my main course until I finish my appetizer, please.

The waitress stares as if perhaps not understanding one or more of the words.

WAITRESS

You mean the soup? Whatever you say, Your Highness.

She gathers up the roast beef plate and leaves. Geoffrey considers his turkey plate absently while nervously tapping his knife against the Formica. His father gently reaches over and stills it, placing his hand on his son's.

DUKE

Soon as I get settled, I'll send for you and Mom. I'll find us a good house and a good school. It won't be long, I promise.

GEOFFREY

I want to come with you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUKE

I don't know where I'm going, Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY

I could keep you awake on the road. I could read the maps.

Duke smiles lovingly but shakes his head, no. Geoffrey looks down at his lap, feeling his life shutting down like a vice, terrified where this separation will lead. His father gets up and comes around to sit next to him. Puts an arm around his shoulder to comfort him.

DUKE

I know how you feel.
(Geoffrey begins to cry almost silently)
I felt the same way when my father would drive me to Groton and say goodbye. Felt the same way leaving home for Yale.

Geoffrey steals a glance at the waitress, hands on her hips, watching them with another waitress and trying not to giggle out loud.

GEOFFREY

Can't I come with you, please?

Duke just hugs him tighter, trying not to cry himself. The waitress seizes the moment to deliver him his now-cold roast beef and the check. Once she's gone again -

DUKE

Geoffrey, if I don't leave now, I'm going to cry, too, and believe me, you don't want to see that.
(takes out his wallet)
Here's a tenner. You can pick up the tab, figure the tip and spend what's left on a movie.
(getting up he extracts himself from Geoffrey's grasp)
I love you. Be good.

And then so fast Geoffrey can't even say goodbye, Duke is walking away. Geoffrey watches the door to the place swing closed, watches Duke through the window getting into his MG piled high with suitcases, watches him drive away.

His breathing steadies. The sniffing stops. He looks to the waitresses and waits for them to turn away and, once they do, his father's son, he picks up the ten and walks out.

EXT. BUFFALO STREET - MOMENTS LATER

He's running, perhaps to get away from the waitress or the cops she may have called, or perhaps in hopes of catching up with his father's car. He slows then, catches his breath and listens to the distant whine of the MG pulling onto the Interstate. Then notices he's standing in front of a gift shop.

INT. SOUVENIR SHOP - LATER

He browses at Niagara Falls souvenirs. Settles on a wooden alligator. Takes it and the ten dollar bill to the counter.

INT. ROOMING HOUSE - LATER

Rosemary, using an instruction guide to teach herself to type. Geoffrey comes with the wooden alligator and sets it down next to the typewriter. Hardly looking at it -

ROSEMARY

What's this?

GEOFFREY

Dad got it for you. Before he left.
It's a present.

Rosemary regards it bitterly, then almost laughs.

ROSEMARY

Another present. This time a stupid one.

Geoffrey looks down to the floor as his mother pulls at typewriter keys to disentangle them. Eventually -

GEOFFREY

When do you think we'll join Dad?

ROSEMARY

(tap, tap, tap, tap)
Never.

INT. HOUSE, HARTFORD - DAY (1922)

Tap, tap, tap. Duke's father, the Doctor, types at his desk.

THE DOCTOR V/O

Dear Arthur, you may easily understand
my unhappiness that you've fallen behind
in your studies -

INT. GROTON OFFICE - DAY (1922)

Tap, tap, tap. Groton's headmaster types at a letter -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEAN BOYDEN V/O

Dear Dr. Wolff, I think it's important to try to keep things in perspective in regard to Arthur's work here at Groton -

THE DOCTOR V/O

My disappointment is so great it is difficult to put into words what I feel.

Beautiful young voices singing a Christmas carol rise under the clacking typewriter keys and continue over -

EXT. GROTON ACADEMY - EVENING (1922)

Light snow falls as a group of students and their masters, all with snowshoes and scarves, trudge away from the ivied walls of Groton.

DEAN BOYDEN V/O

Your son's academic standing has fallen, it is true, but only from "Very High," to "Medium High" rank -

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - EVENING (1922)

Holding candles now, the boys sing their carol to an adoring assembly of villagers.

THE DOCTOR V/O

Your mother and I are sick with heartache. You have brought shame upon the family and the family name -

Young Duke, 15 years old, is among the boys, with candle and lyric sheet, appearing quite angelic as he sings.

DEAN BOYDEN V/O

Also, he has no disciplinary marks against him, and eagerly participates in many sports and extra-curricular activities -

The angelic voices continue over -

INT. GROTON DORMITORY - DAY (1922)

Duke and his classmates getting dressed in suits and ties.

THE DOCTOR V/O

You should not return home for the holidays; you are not welcome. In fact, you should not return home.

INT. GREAT HALL, GROTON - DAY (1922)

The young men of Groton are graduating.

DEAN BOYDEN V/O

The *only* blemish on his record, in fact, is the large unpaid bill at the Tuck Shop. He is rather too fond, it seems, of fine men's wear.

Drifting across the assembly of teachers and parents gathered in the Great Hall, seated beneath portraits of Great Men -

THE DOCTOR V/O

From this moment forward, Arthur, you are on your own. That is as plain as I can say it. You are on your own ...
Alas, Your Father.

Reaching the back of the room, a window, beyond which Duke stands, outside looking in. He watches for a moment with a look that is at once insouciant and longing, his classmates receiving their diplomas, then turns and walks away.

EXT. NIAGARA FALLS - DAY

Water thunders over Horseshoe Falls.

INT/EXT. GEOFFREY'S BEDROOM - DAY (1952)

A postcard of a cathedral in Mexico, dog-eared from being handled and read and reread for years. Pulling back reveals it to be thumb-tacked next to several others, from places like Texas and California and Lima, Peru.

The bedroom is a different one, and no longer the room of a boy interested in things like baseball and comic books and model airplanes. It's the messy room of an older boy.

Geoffrey, 15 now, moves through it and through the house, a different house, smaller and with cheaper furniture, past a policeman's gun stuck in a holster hanging from the back of a chair, past the policeman himself, smoking a cigarette and drinking coffee in his boxer shorts, past his mother reading the paper in her nightgown.

He moves past it all without a word to them, or they to him, walks out the front door and across the front yard of a different, smaller house to the mail box, opens it and sifts through bills and ... another postcard.

INT. TRAVEL AGENCY - BUFFALO - DAY

A sleepy agency advertising vacations to the Bahamas, primarily. Geoffrey comes in and sits across from the agent.

TRAVEL AGENT

Where to today, Geoffrey?

GEOFFREY

Seattle.

TRAVEL AGENT

Train or bus or plane?

GEOFFREY

All of them, I guess.

The travel agent, as he has done many times before for the boy, pulls a file to check the fares and times of departure for a trip Geoffrey will never take.

EXT. BUFFALO - DAY

Geoffrey steers his bike across railroad tracks separating "Good Buffalo" from "Bad Buffalo." Up ahead in the distance, growing from the weeds, stands a derelict trailer park.

INT. TRAILER - DAY

Ernie Delessandro, a 14-year-old who is only 4-feet tall, rummages through a drawer in his father's trailer and fishes from it an old deck of playing cards printed with thumb-worn photos of naked women, held together with a rubber band.

EXT. TRAILER - DAY

Ernie and Geoffrey smoking and playing Gin (and hookey).

ERNIE

Your old lady got a boyfriend?

Geoffrey glances over coldly as he tosses down a card.

ERNIE

What. I'm just asking 'cause my old man says she's a real piece.

GEOFFREY

Shut up.

They play in silence a few moments before:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ERNIE

Why do you talk to me like that? We're friends. You chose me and I chose you.

GEOFFREY

We didn't choose. The others chose. We were what was left after the others chose.

They keep playing but their interest is waning rapidly.

ERNIE

Want to shoot guns?

EXT. EMPTY LOT - LATER

Geoffrey fires a rifle at a tin can set up on a fence post. Ernie is aiming in another direction - at a passing car - and fires, shattering its back window.

ERNIE

I hit it.

They run.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Across the principal's desk sit Geoffrey and his mother. She's wearing a Dairy Queen uniform; her son, a bored smirk.

PRINCIPAL

You see, Mrs. Wolff, we really cannot have this kind of behavior. True, this is a public educational facility, but we do have our rules and limits. Now, young Geoffrey has missed, for whatever reason, and there have not always or even usually been proper excuses on file, twenty-two of the first sixty days of school.

The principal ticks off on his fingers Geoffrey's many offenses as recorded in the file on the desk, enunciating each syllable as if speech itself is a small miracle to him -

PRINCIPAL

He has been unruly - obstinate -
disruptive - lazy - disrespectful -

He runs out of fingers on his right hand and looks at his left as if were a thing not attached to him -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRINCIPAL

And he's been fighting after school.
And using very bad language routinely -

ROSEMARY

I work, Mr. Gardner -

PRINCIPAL

Gradner.

(taps the nameplate on his
desk)

Perhaps his father could have a word
with him. Perhaps that would be a good
idea.

ROSEMARY

His father isn't here. His father is -
somewhere. And our home life is not easy
with him gone. Money is tight. Geoffrey
is on his own much of the -

The principal, bored now that he's through talking, makes a
steeple with his fingers, which she stares at.

ROSEMARY

Look, we'll try harder. Won't we? Won't
we try harder, Geoffrey?

Geoffrey offers no more of a promise than a shrug, which does
little to endear him to either of them. Rosemary throws up
her hands. Her conciliatory tone disappears -

ROSEMARY

I can't manage him. I can't. I'm
trying to earn a living for us, working
behind a counter, working all the time.
What do you suggest?

Now the principal shrugs, which really infuriates her. She
screams at him -

ROSEMARY

Just what, goddamn it, do you suggest?

INT. ROSEMARY'S CAR - MOVING - EVENING

Christmas lights hanging over the street reflect in the
car's windshield. Rosemary and Geoffrey are driving home in
silence. She doesn't want it to be like this between them.
She wants to be able to talk to him. She tries -

ROSEMARY

What do you want for Christmas?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

If he speaks to her it'll be the first time in weeks ...

GEOFFREY

A 5-horsepower Evinrude outboard and
my father.

Another long silence as the colored lights twinkle in the
windshield. Finally, more to herself -

ROSEMARY

I can't afford either one of them.

EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE LOT - DAY

Rosemary wanders among the trees, frowning at the price
tags and slowly realizing she's the only lone buyer there.
The others are families, every one of them with a father,
every one of them happy.

INT. HABERDASHERY - SAME TIME - DAY

Geoffrey wanders around browsing at men's accessories -
silver and gold and leather - all of it reminding him of his
father, all of it he'd like to take home.

EXT. CHRISTMAS TREE LOT - CONTINUED

As a tree-lot guy tries to balance a small spindly fir on
its wooden base for Rosemary, she counts again the bills in
her wallet, wrestling with what she's about to do.

ROSEMARY

Excuse me. Sir? I think I want that
other one instead.

She points to a pair of trees, one tall and majestic and
Duke-like, the other small and squat.

TREE GUY

The one next to the tall one?

ROSEMARY

No. The tall one.

INT. HABERDASHERY - CONTINUED

Geoffrey considers an oxblood leather shaving kit he won't
be able to use for another year or so. Touches it with his
fingers like he used to touch his father's. He looks around.
Puts it under his coat. Heads for the door. Feels a hand on
his shoulder the moment he steps outside the store.

EXT. BUFFALO - LATER - DAY

Rosemary's car, buried under the big, expensive Christmas tree twined to the roof, drives across a bridge.

INT. ROSEMARY'S CAR - MOVING

The radio plays a Christmas song. Rosemary hums along with it and smiles at the thought of Geoffrey's face when he sees the tree.

Something zings. A piece of twine slaps against the windshield. The tree appears briefly in the rearview mirror before it sails over the rail of the bridge into the river.

She slams on the brakes. Leaps out of the car. Runs to where the tree went over. Stares at it floating downstream. Stares at it sinking under the dark water.

Her life sinks with it. She steadies herself against the railing and sobs uncontrollably to the sounds of horns bleating indignantly at her driverless, treeless car.

INT. POLICE CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Geoffrey sitting in the back. His mother's boyfriend, the policeman, driving. The lights of passing cars raking across their unsmiling faces.

INT. DAIRY QUEEN - LATER - NIGHT

Rosemary and Geoffrey sit at a booth not unlike the one he sat at with his father the day he went away. She's wearing her uniform with the paper hat, eyes still red from crying.

ROSEMARY

I don't want you crossing the country
alone on a bus or a train. We'll have to
find out when there's a plane out, what
it costs and -

GEOFFREY

Delta out of Cleveland at seven p.m.
There's a layover in Chicago at Midway,
Northwest to Bismarck, Great Falls and
Spokane, arriving in Seattle at four
the next day.

She studies him for a long moment. Then -

ROSEMARY

Fine.

EXT. SEATTLE AIRPORT - DAY

Wearing a coat and tie and dress shoes, Geoffrey descends the steps of a Northwest plane to the tarmac and scans the faces of the people at the arrival gate for his father.

INT. SEATTLE AIRPORT - NIGHT

Sitting alone on a bench with his suitcase at his feet, Geoffrey watches a janitor dragging a wide broom across the linoleum.

INT. SEATTLE AIRPORT - MORNING

Curled up on the bench with some newspapers for a pillow, Geoffrey glimpses his father, finally arriving to pick him up, appearing like a vision moving through the crowds of travelers, dressed in casual yachtsman khakis.

The boy leaps from the bench to meet him, and they stay locked in an embrace for a long time as people with suitcases veer around them on either side.

INT. HARBOR RESTAURANT - DAY

A fancy place, etched crystal and silver, view overlooking the water. No other kids here but Geoffrey, still dressed up but feeling out of place, sipping from an iced tea as his father nurses a Bloody Mary.

DUKE

Your mother told me on the phone you guys lied and said you were eleven to get a half-price plane ticket.

GEOFFREY

(proud)

Yeah.

DUKE

I don't approve of that.

GEOFFREY

(pause)

She really couldn't afford -

DUKE

Worse, she told me she paid *cash* for it. What was she was thinking?

Geoffrey studies his father to try to see if it's a joke. It isn't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUKE
Never lie to me, okay?

GEOFFREY
I won't.

DUKE
I can forgive anything but a broken
promise or a lie.

GEOFFREY
I'll never lie to you.

Duke nods. Geoffrey nods.

DUKE
Been doing well in school?

Geoffrey is just about to lie, but catches himself.

GEOFFREY
No.

DUKE
You have to, Geoffrey. It's important.
You do well now, you can make it into any
college in the country. You do well
there and the world is yours.

GEOFFREY
I want to do well. So I can go to Yale
like you.

Geoffrey watches his father sort of drift off thinking. A
waiter appears with two bone china plates and sets them down.
New York steak for Duke, poached fish for Geoffrey.

DUKE
Thank you.

The waiter leaves. Duke takes a bite. Notices Geoffrey,
doesn't.

DUKE
What's the matter?

GEOFFREY
Is this what I ordered?

DUKE
You ordered fish.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GEOFFREY

This isn't fish.

DUKE

Geoffrey, that's a fish.

GEOFFREY

It doesn't look like the fish Mom cooks.

DUKE

Those are fish sticks. That isn't fish.
That's fish.

Geoffrey stares at the fish, doesn't cut into it.

DUKE

Want something else? *Waiter!*

GEOFFREY

No, it's all right, I'll try it.

DUKE

No, send it back, get what you want.
Get a steak.

(to the waiter)

Take this fish back. Bring my son a New
York steak. Rare.

Duke dismisses the man by looking away from him, but the
waiter doesn't leave.

WAITER

Is there something wrong with the fish,
sir?

DUKE

Excuse me?

WAITER

Is there something wrong with the fish?

DUKE

It's not what he thought he ordered.

WAITER

What did he think he ordered?

Duke's sigh is followed by silence. Geoffrey watches as
he calmly takes a sip from his drink and sets it down. He
recognizes the look, even if the waiter doesn't. It's the
same one Duke had driving to the Little League game.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DUKE

Let me explain something. I just picked my son up at the airport. I haven't seen him in almost four years. I want to talk to him. I want to know how he's doing. Instead I'm talking to you.

WAITER

Sir, I'm just trying to understand about the (fish) -

DUKE

Bring him a fuckin' steak! You understand that?

WAITER

Yes, sir.

The waiter takes the fish away. Conversations, halted by Duke's outburst, begin to resume.

DUKE

Geoffrey. Never forget. Always get what you want. Don't settle for anything less. You are entitled in life to get what you want. Okay?

(Geoffrey nods)

Okay. Send your ice tea back.

GEOFFREY

What?

DUKE

And don't give him any explanation. He doesn't have a right to know.

GEOFFREY

But I like my ice tea.

DUKE

So get a fresh one.

Geoffrey looks around for the waiter, sees him emerging from the kitchen.

GEOFFREY

How should I get his attention?

DUKE

You call him by his name. You call him "Waiter."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Geoffrey tentatively calls out, "Waiter." The man comes over again. Geoffrey hesitates. Duke prompts with a roll of his fork, *Go on, tell him.*

GEOFFREY
I'd like a fresh ice tea.

WAITER
Right away, sir.

The waiter politely takes the glass and walks away.

DUKE
Just like that. See?

Geoffrey is sort of amazed at how easy it was, even though, as he sits there, he realizes he has nothing to eat or drink now.

GEOFFREY
Why are we entitled?

DUKE
What?

GEOFFREY
Why are we entitled?

DUKE
Because we're different ... We have imagination.

EXT. MARINA BOATYARD - DAY

A 5-horse Evinrude, exactly like the one in Geoffrey's catalog. As a guy hitches the trailer it sits on to the back of the MG, Duke signs for it.

EXT. LAKE WASHINGTON - DAY

Duke lounges in the runabout with a beer as Geoffrey mans the little outboard motor pushing them along at a graceful couple of knots.

INT. DUKE'S BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

In bed together, propped up on pillows in their T-shirts, Duke reads to Geoffrey from *Treasure Island* -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUKE

How that personage haunted my dreams.
On stormy nights when the wind shook the
four corners of the house, and the surf
roared along the cove, and up the cliffs,
I'd see him in a thousand forms, with a
thousand diabolical expressions -

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Sitting at his desk, Geoffrey studies the quarter-profile
of a pretty girl two rows up and over, more than he does the
lesson on the board. The girl turns and looks at him briefly
- giving nothing away - turns back. He smiles to himself.

INT. DUKE'S BATHROOM - DAY

Geoffrey buffs a pair of oxblood loafers. Puts on some
cologne selected from Duke's extensive collection. Works the
back of his hair into a duck-ass. He doesn't notice - outside
the window - his father switching license plates again, this
time from the MG to his other car, a Cadillac. Jazz music
plays over -

INT. DUKE'S CADILLAC - NIGHT

The girl from class sits between Duke and Geoffrey in the
front seat, not embarrassed in the least, it seems, to be
chaperoned.

DUKE

You like this music?

GIRL

I'm not allowed to listen to jazz music.
None of my friends' parents approve of it
either.

DUKE

But do you *like* it?

GIRL

Yes.

Duke turns it up.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

Duke jams on piano with the band. Geoffrey, sitting at a
table with the girl, is amazed. He had no idea his father
played. The girl glances over to Geoffrey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GIRL FROM SCHOOL
Your father is very cool.

Geoffrey smiles proudly. The song continues over -

EXT. LAKE WASHINGTON - CONTINUED - DAY

Duke still lounging in the runabout, finishes his beer.

DUKE
Why don't we see what she can do?

GEOFFREY
What?

DUKE
Give it some throttle. Wait, let me get ready. All right, let her rip.

Geoffrey guns the motor, and -

A CLASS-A MERCURY

blurs past, followed by several other racing boats.

Geoffrey is behind the steering wheel of the Mercury, somewhere in the middle of the pack. Duke and a few other devoted spectators watch the race from a dock as the boats run the last of a hundred laps around Mercer Island on Lake Washington. A checked flag goes up, Geoffrey finishing in fifth or sixth place.

EXT. LAKE WASHINGTON - LATER

Geoffrey pulls the boat up alongside the dock. Duke grabs the bow line.

GEOFFREY
I can win with a lighter hull.

A CLASS-D HYDROPLANE

blurs past, ahead of the pack. But it's not Geoffrey steering it. He's on the dock with his father watching a real race where the boats exceed 200 miles an hour.

The driver in the lead - *Elgin Gates* it says it right on the hull - smoothly negotiates a turn around a buoy and then guns the Rolls Royce engines until they scream.

INT. BOAT SHOP - DAY

Geoffrey peers into a shed at Elgin Gates, looking less like a world-class racer than your average mechanic covered in grease, working on an engine.

ELGIN

Yeah, what do you want?

Geoffrey takes a few tentative steps inside the garage.

GEOFFREY

I was wondering if I could get you anything.

ELGIN

Like?

GEOFFREY

Hand you a tool or something.

ELGIN

What do you know about tools? Or anything else?

GEOFFREY

I race boats.

Elgin smirks. Takes a swig from his beer.

ELGIN

You race boats. You know boats.

GEOFFREY

Yes, sir.

ELGIN

All right. Let's see if you know what a valve puller is.

Geoffrey goes over to the work bench, picks up a valve puller without having think about it and holds it out to Elgin.

ELGIN

Don't give it to me, I don't want it. I want to see you take the valves out of this boat and put them in that one.

Geoffrey sets about the task.

INT. BOAT SHOP - LATER

Elgin and Geoffrey washing their hands with Lava soap.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELGIN

The bosses always screw the working stiff. I sweat and the man upstairs drives a Caddy. Get an education, kid; hand me that beer.

Geoffrey hands him the bottle. Elgin takes a swig.

ELGIN

Want a sip?

GEOFFREY

Sure.

Geoffrey takes a long drink from the greasy bottle.

ELGIN

I said a sip not the whole goddamn thing.

GEOFFREY

Shit, Elgin.

ELGIN

Don't cuss around me. You don't know shit from shine about anything but boats and don't know all that much about them neither.

He dries off his hands on a rag.

ELGIN

This is what I'm talking about.

(hold out his hands)

A knife can't get the grease out from under my nails anymore.

EXT. BOAT DEALER - DAY

Duke, Geoffrey, Elgin and a salesman walk along a row of used racing boats.

INT. BOEING PLANT - DAY

Moving across draftsmen working on schematics of wing and fuselage assemblies, and arriving eventually on one making changes to drawings of a boat as Duke looks on.

The boat itself is down on the hanger floor surrounded by planes. A guy in paint-splattered coveralls approaches it with a spray gun.

EXT. LAKE WASHINGTON - DAY

The checkered flag waves as Geoffrey powers his Boeing-re-designed-and-painted boat across the finish line well ahead of the others.

EXT. FERRY - DAY

Geoffrey, trophy in his hand, stands with his father at the railing watching the shore recede.

DUKE

Bet you a dollar someone misses the boat.

GEOFFREY

If the boat's gone, how are we going to know?

DUKE

We have to see them miss it.

(pause)

I'll go you one better. Someone has to miss the boat *and* be so goddamn mad he shakes his fist at us, jumps up and down and throws his hat on the ground.

GEOFFREY

I'll take it.

DUKE

If he throws his hat on the ground *and* jumps up and down on it, you owe me two bucks, all right?

GEOFFREY

K.

The boat slides into the channel; the Wolffs watch the shore.

DUKE

Look.

He points. A car is racing along the road to the dock. It comes to a hard stop and a man leaps out, shouts at the boat, grabs his hat, throws it on the ground ... and jumps on it. Geoffrey looks over at his father who smiles.

DUKE

Elgin -

Duke waves Elgin over and hands him his camera, puts his arm around Geoffrey and poses for a picture.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A gentle sea breeze blows at their hair. Wispy clouds lace the sky behind them. The shutter snaps, freezing the perfect image.

INT. DUKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Sunday morning, lounging around in their boxer shorts, drinking coffee, both Duke and Geoffrey, reading boating catalogs and listening to recorded racing car engines, *The Sounds of Sebring*. A couple other records in their sleeves lie amidst the general rubble of their bachelor pad: *The Sounds of Le Mans*, and *The Sounds of Monaco*.

Outside, a small sailboat drifts lazily in the distance. A sudden rogue gust, though, first exciting the wind sock just beyond the window, hits the main sail of the boat, capsizing it and throwing two figures into the water.

EXT. OCEAN - LATER

Geoffrey steers his father's Chris-Craft Riviera toward the capsized sailboat.

GEOFFREY

Tach's on the blink again.

DUKE

Get the marina to put a new one in.

GEOFFREY

They won't put anything more on the cuff.

DUKE

We'll have to change marina's then, won't we.

As Geoffrey throttles down, Duke throws a line to the downed sailors in the water - who turn out to be two fully-clothed laughing girls, 17 or 18 years old.

EXT. DOCK - LATER

The Chris-Craft and towed sailboat bob against the dock.

INT. DUKE'S HOUSE - DAY

The needle on the record player arm bumps repeatedly against the *Sounds of Sebring's* label as Geoffrey watches the girls shivering and dripping water on the floor. Duke emerges from his bedroom with dry men's clothes and towels.

DUKE

Here we go. You can change in here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GIRLS

Thanks.

They disappear into the bedroom. Duke glances to Geoffrey.

DUKE

Not bad looking.

INT. DUKE'S HOUSE - LATER

Jazz music playing now as Duke drops tea bags into four coffee mugs of hot water. The girls, wearing the Bermuda shorts and large polo shirts given to them by their host, sit on the sofa. Geoffrey clearly finds them attractive, and so keeps his distance, just watching them. Outside, their wet clothes billow next to the wind sock.

GIRL 1

What's your name?

GEOFFREY

Geoffrey.

GIRL 1

Can I use your phone, Geoffrey?

He points to it on the desk. She goes over and dials a number. Duke comes in with the tea on a tray.

DUKE

You girls going to need a ride home?

GIRL 2

My friend's calling.

Duke pours a shot of rum in his tea. Sips at it.

GIRL 2

Can I have some of that in mine?

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Geoffrey works at his hair, more Vitalis, twists the tufts in back to a point. He can hear through the closed door his father playing *In a Mist* on the piano. Uncaps one of Duke's bottles of cologne.

INT. DUKE'S HOUSE - LATER

Geoffrey emerges from the bathroom to find one of the girls sitting next to Duke at the piano - drinking straight rum now - and the other one on the phone again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GIRL 1

No, it's okay, we'll get a ride home
when our clothes are dry.

(pause)

He's a father, Dad.

She hangs up, pours herself a shot of rum from the bottle, glances over to Geoffrey and smiles, confirming to him that what he thought was happening here, is happening. Duke sees the smile, too, but it's unclear what he thinks of it. Geoffrey strolls over to the piano.

GEOFFREY

Can I crack open a beer?

Duke stares disapprovingly at his son for a long moment.

DUKE

May I crack open a beer.

Geoffrey gets one from the wet bar fridge, returns with it, and reaches for his father's silver cigarette case resting on the high-octave keys. He takes out a Balkan Sobranie, lights it with the Dunhill, and takes a practiced drag.

Duke's glance finds the girl on the sofa smiling over at Geoffrey, and suddenly Duke is up off the bench, startling them all. He slaps the cigarette out of Geoffrey's mouth.

DUKE

This is too much. The party's over,
ladies. My son has forgotten his manners
and his age.

INT. DUKE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Lying on the bed, confused and mortified, Geoffrey listens to car doors opening and closing outside. There, by the dock the girls, in their not-quite-dry clothes, are being picked up by one of their parents.

Duke finishes securing their sailboat to its trailer and heads back toward the house as the car drives away. He comes into the bedroom and sits on the bed. A silence before -

GEOFFREY

The grocer called again about the bill.
And the guy who painted the Caddy. What
was wrong with the old paint?

DUKE

It didn't satisfy me. It was enamel.
I prefer lacquer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Another silence before Duke tries to tackle the real subject.

DUKE

It wasn't right what was going on there, Geoffrey. I realized it just as you were taking my cigarettes (and) -

GEOFFREY

I'm sorry I did that.

DUKE

No, I'm sorry. You are too young to smoke, though.

Duke lights himself a cigarette.

DUKE

Things aren't going so well at work. I quit for one thing.

This is news to Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY

When?

DUKE

While back.

GEOFFREY

Where do you go every day?

DUKE

Listen, any time you want to go back to your mother, you just tell me. It'll break my heart, but I'll understand.

GEOFFREY

I don't want to go back.

DUKE

If you ever do.

Les Paul and Mary Ford singing *The World is Waiting for a Sunrise* begins and continues over:

EXT. DUKE'S HOUSE - DAY

The Cadillac is being repossessed under a sheriff's supervision, hitched up to a tow truck and driven away.

EXT. SEATTLE - DAY

Geoffrey behind the wheel of the old workhorse, the MG. He's not in his father's lap this time. He's learning how to drive for real with Duke, out on a deserted highway.

EXT. DUKE'S HOUSE - DAY

The sheriff is back again, this time helping a boat dealer take back the 17-foot Chris-Craft Duke never paid for.

EXT. SEATTLE HIGHWAY - CONTINUED

Geoffrey's coming into a turn, his father tapping on the stick to indicate he should down-shift. Geoffrey does it expertly. Duke smiles proudly.

INT. DUKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Duke pours himself a couple fingers of Scotch. Geoffrey thumbs through a boating magazine. Neither pays attention to the sheriff supervising the repossession of some furniture.

EXT. LAKE WASHINGTON - DAY

Another hydroplane race. Duke and Geoffrey on the dock watching the big inboard airplane-engine-powered boats thundering around the markers.

DUKE

Look away.

Geoffrey, of course doesn't. He looks out at one of the powerboats hobby-horsing.

DUKE

He's pushing those Allisons too far.
They can't take it.

GEOFFREY

Elgin knows what he's -

DUKE

That's all she wrote.

In the next instant, the boat is gone, disintegrated. Duke looks over at Geoffrey, perhaps imagining him in it. The few sticks that are left floating down onto the water.

INT. CANLIS'S RESTAURANT - DAY

A maitre d' leads Duke and Geoffrey through a fancy restaurant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Up ahead, a woman ten years older than Duke, aristocratic in dress and manner and speech, rises from her table and greets Duke with a light kiss and Geoffrey with a light handshake.

ALICE

You must be Geoffrey. Geoffrey Wolff, the famous racing boat driver I've heard so much about.

GEOFFREY

Yes, ma'am.

ALICE

The first thing I have to know, Geoffrey, is *where on earth did you get that shirt?*

It's a Hawaiian number with islanders at play under palm trees. Geoffrey smiles; he hates her already.

THE RESTAURANT - LATER

Geoffrey is aware of Alice watching him trying to decide which of the three forks by his plate to use on his salad.

DUKE

So, Geoffrey, Alice and I are thinking about getting married.

ALICE

Duke! Duke, you're impossible! Give the child time, for God's sake, the salad has only arrived.

Geoffrey stares at them both, then back down at the forks.

ALICE

The small fork, dear. Save the bigger implements for your prime rib.

Geoffrey keeps staring down at the silverware, still reeling from his father's announcement.

ALICE

You have to be wondering how this is possible. Actually your father and I have been friends for some time. Since before you came to Seattle.

She makes a deliberate show for Geoffrey of picking up her salad fork. He sees it, as she meant for him to, but deliberately picks up a different fork. In a casual tone, then, as if the subject were the weather.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEOFFREY
Getting married?

DUKE
What would you think of that?

GEOFFREY
Fine with me.

Geoffrey forks two asparagus spears and puts them whole in his mouth. Alice smiles pleasantly. This is war.

EXT. SEATTLE - DAY

Rain pours down on a little chapel.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

Alice and Duke getting married, just them and Geoffrey and a minister. Geoffrey's wearing his Hawaiian shirt under his jacket. Duke compliments his jacket with a blue and white striped tie - Yale colors. Geoffrey hands his father an expensive ring which he slips onto Alice's finger.

EXT. ALICE'S HOUSE - DAY

Two very different classes of people mill around the manicured grounds of Alice's lake front house - her rich friends, and Duke's more Bohemian jazz pals and mechanic buddies. One of them sucks in a whistle as he takes in the spread.

RIP
Little bit of all right, this, Duke.
What's the scam?

DUKE
No champagne for you, Rip, it's too good
for you. Have some punch.

Duke hands him a cup of punch and spikes it with a splash from his flask. Geoffrey sips from a flute of champagne.

RIP
Which one is she?

Duke gestures to Alice across the vast lawn, talking with the minister. Rip considers her a moment and shrugs.

RIP
Nice-looking broad.
(thinking he should say more)
Honest face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She sees them all looking at her and comes halfway over, beckoning to Geoffrey.

ALICE
Geoffrey, darling, come here. The bishop has a boy at Groton and can tell you all about it.

GEOFFREY
My father can tell me all about it.

ALICE
Things change, dear. Come.

INT. ALICE'S HOUSE - LATER

The guests have all left except for Rip. He's got a tumbler of black rum pooling on the grand piano, and is riffing on it rather harder than Alice would like. Too sweetly -

ALICE
Is the piano in tune?
(pause)
Because I just had it tuned.
(pause)
Perhaps you could touch the keys a bit more gently.

Rip abruptly stops playing. Looks at Duke and shakes his head to say, *I don't think I could stand this if I were you.*

ALICE
Oh, please don't stop. It is entertaining to listen to. Isn't it Geoffrey? Just - softer maybe.

Geoffrey glances from one to another of them, trying to figure out the dynamics. Alice uses a napkin to wipe up the water under Rip's glass, and sets it back down on a coaster.

RIP
I think I'll be going now.

INT. MEN'S STORE - DAY

Alice has brought Geoffrey to the Prep Shop at Frederick & Nelson to replace those awful Hawaiian shirts with something more appropriate for a young man.

She seems to be speaking to herself as she holds up for her own approval a couple of navy blue blazers with brass buttons stamped with a crest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE

I bought my son all his clothes here.
He's in Boston now. And doing just fine,
thank you. How's it going in there?

Geoffrey emerges from a changing room in a preppie shirt and pair of slacks. Alice slips a blazer on him and turns him to face a mirror, brushing at the shoulders. Regarding his own reflection, the clothes and the hair that has been trimmed and combed, Geoffrey grimaces.

ALICE

That looks nice.

INT. LEGION HALL - DAY

Geoffrey looks stiff in his new outfit, outside a ballroom looking in at boys in suits, and girls in dresses and white gloves. Across the foyer, Alice signs him up for Cotillion.

ALICE

There we go, Vera.

She hands over the completed card and a check. The woman behind the table doesn't immediately file it but rather keeps looking over at Geoffrey. Quietly -

WOMAN

He isn't Jewish, is he?

ALICE

Who? My stepson? Don't be silly.

The woman feels silly asking, but he does sort of 'look' Jewish to her.

INT. LEGION HALL - LATER

Geoffrey does his best to follow the Cotillion Master's instructions as he dances with a girl three years younger than him. Alice smiles from the sidelines.

INT. ALICE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Duke and Geoffrey and Alice eat at the formal place settings she has set out, even though it's not a special night. Duke looks ruffled.

ALICE

A man should always wear a tie to
dinner, Duke, whether it's a restaurant
or his own house.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He gives her a brief withering look before glancing away.

ALICE

Look at Geoffrey. Look how nice your son looks in his tie at dinner.

Duke looks at Geoffrey, still in his Cotillion clothes and doing a pretty good job not laughing.

DUKE

Very handsome.

GEOFFREY

And I will wear a tie to dinner every night, Alice, just to make you happy.

ALICE

Thank you, Geoffrey. See there? Your son has manners, if not great expertise with the utensils just yet. By the way, I don't see *his* elbows on the table.

Duke notices that his are indeed there, but doesn't remove them.

ALICE

I swear, how a man of your upbringing and education, Duke, has gotten away with such table manners for so long is a mystery to me.

GEOFFREY

That's right, get your elbows off the table for God's sake.

Geoffrey expects his father to laugh, it was *supposed* to be a joke, but he doesn't. He just lifts his Scotch and takes a long drink, looking at his son.

INT. BUICK DEALERSHIP - DAY

A salesman leads Duke and Alice across the showroom floor to a Buick Roadmaster Estate Wagon with wood trim. He opens the driver's door for the gentleman, but Duke doesn't climb in.

ALICE

Get in, Duke.

CAR SALESMAN

I think you'll find it very comfortable, sir. It's our most popular model.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Duke just looks at the man. There's no way he's going to belittle himself by even sitting in a station wagon.

CAR SALESMAN

Ma'am, perhaps you'd like (to) -

ALICE

Indeed, I would.

She gets in. Puts her hands on the steering wheel. Slides over then and pats the seat.

ALICE

Come on, Duke, it's nice.

Duke looks around - perhaps to see if anyone he knows is watching - then sighs and climbs in, slamming the door shut like a trap on the gallows.

EXT. ALICE'S HOUSE - DAY

Duke and Geoffrey sit inside the MG, up on blocks in the driveway, staring out at the Buick Roadmaster, all shiny and new and awful. Long silence. Then -

GEOFFREY

Are we Jewish?

Duke does such a slow turn, it almost doesn't happen.

DUKE

What? Why would you ask that?

GEOFFREY

People ask me.

(pause)

Are we?

DUKE

Of course not.

GEOFFREY

What about Mom?

DUKE

No.

That's one of the more ridiculous things he's heard.

GEOFFREY

What are we then?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUKE

Well, I'm a confirmed Anglican. My mother was Dutch. Van Zandt. Lutherans. My father. Atheist.

GEOFFREY

I wasn't asking about religion. I was asking what I *am*.

DUKE

For Christ's sake, Geoffrey, we're not Jewish. If we were I wouldn't be ashamed to admit it. But we're not.

Geoffrey remains unconvinced, but nods. Silence. Then -

GEOFFREY

Are we broke?

DUKE

Far *from* it.

GEOFFREY

But you don't work anymore.

DUKE

I don't have to work. Only if I feel like it. Only if it interests me.

Geoffrey studies him in a way he never has before, and it makes Duke uncomfortable.

DUKE

Remember when we went to Hartford for my father's funeral?

GEOFFREY

You inherited his surgical tools.

DUKE

I inherited his surgical tools and almost five hundred thousand dollars.

GEOFFREY

(wanting to believe it)
Really?

DUKE

Why would I lie to you?

EXT. POLO FIELD - DAY

Duke sits perched atop a combination shooting stick/umbrella planted in the grass, bored with the match, sipping from his flask. He's immaculately dressed, as is Geoffrey, who stands nearby. Alice and an effeminate gentleman with an ascot at his neck emerge from a crowd.

GENTLEMAN

Where? *That* one, darling? On that silly little stool? He looks just like the last one.

Duke wasn't meant to hear it; or maybe he was. They arrive.

ALICE

Duke, this is Farley. Farley's one of my oldest and dearest friends.

GENTLEMAN

Duke, is it? The Duke of what, dear girl?

ALICE

Duke is his *nickname*, goose.

GENTLEMAN

Then the Duke of Nothing, actually.

The man smiles wickedly at Duke, as if they share some secret, then gestures to the little portable seat -

GENTLEMAN

Tell me, what do you do with your throne when it rains? Do you sit and get wet or stand and stay dry?

DUKE

I stick it up a fairy's ass.

INT. ALICE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Duke sits alone in the big, darkened living room, drinking a Scotch and watching the smoke curl up from his gold-tipped Balkan Sobranie -

THE DOCTOR V/O

What do you believe in?

INT. THE DOCTOR'S STUDY - NIGHT (1922)

The Doctor, in his laboratory-like study, is sharpening pieces of his surgical tool set.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Young Duke, 14, knows he's not being asked to answer the question honestly, but rather repeat what he's been taught.

YOUNG DUKE

Not God.

THE DOCTOR

What do you place your faith in instead of God?

YOUNG DUKE

Education.

THE DOCTOR

Because -

YOUNG DUKE

Education leads to greatness.

He knows his father likes to hear that. He knows because he's heard him say it all his life. But his father doesn't smile or nod, just keeps working.

THE DOCTOR

I called you in here to tell you your grades are awful, you're lazy and you're beginning to seem stupid. This is a prominent family you're part of, not a gang of Johnny-come-lately refugee immigrants with shabby accents and cheap clothes. I don't expect miracles. I don't expect you to ever be your brother. But I do expect more from you. I'm sending you away to school.

YOUNG DUKE

(pause)

When?

THE DOCTOR

Tomorrow.

INT. GEOFFREY'S BEDROOM - LATER - NIGHT

Geoffrey stirs. Sees a figure in the dim light, breathing heavily as it lightly touches his Cotillion suit that hangs neatly on a wooden valet stand.

GEOFFREY

Dad?

Duke looks like some kind of monster looming over the bed in the dark. Geoffrey can tell by the sway that he's been drinking hard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEOFFREY

What is it?

Very quietly as he touches the clothes -

DUKE

Did this whole goddamn thing for you.

GEOFFREY

Did what -

DUKE

Think *I* wanted this?

GEOFFREY

I don't know what you're talking about.

Duke lights a cigarette, illuminating for just a second his awful, drunken face, before it disappears back into the dark.

DUKE

You know all right. Just don't have the guts to take responsibility.

GEOFFREY

Just tell me one thing I've done.

DUKE

(mocking whine)

Just tell me one thing I've done.

(pause)

Nothing. And you never *will* do anything, either. Except go to fucking Groton.

GEOFFREY

I don't understand. You want me to go there.

Duke touches the suit one more time before stumbling against the wall on his way out. To himself -

DUKE

Ah, *fuck* it.

INT. ALICE'S HOUSE - DAY

Duke refreshes a Scotch and glances over to Geoffrey who's been summoned for a family meeting by Alice, struggling with a folding road map.

ALICE

I'm tired of having rain pour on my head every time I step outside.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE (CONT'D)

They can give Washington back to the
Chinooks for all I care.

GEOFFREY

Moving where?

ALICE

Connecticut, dear. Let me show you on
the map.

GEOFFREY

I know where Connecticut is.

ALICE

The town, Geoffrey. Greenwich. Do you
know where *that* is? Here.

She pokes her finger at a Connecticut map and her bracelets
jangle.

ALICE

Some of my friends have arranged a job
for your father at a place called -

She forgets the name; looks to Duke.

DUKE

I don't know what it's called.

ALICE

Something-Engineering. Something to do
with wind tunnels though I can't begin to
tell you what, and neither probably can
Duke.

DUKE

They test things with them.

ALICE

They test things with them. Okay.
Anyway, I thought we'd make a proper road
trip of it. See America. All together
in the Buick.

Geoffrey could try to imagine something more horrifying, but
knows it would be too hard.

GEOFFREY

What about the MG?

ALICE

What about it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GEOFFREY

What about my boat?

ALICE

We'll ship it. If that's the right word.

Do you ship things over land?

(Duke nods)

Of course you do. We'll ship your boat.

And the silly MG.

She takes out more maps. Geoffrey notices his father pouring another drink.

ALICE

Now, I've worked out an itinerary.

First, we'll drive south - out of this wretched climate -

EXT. ALICE'S HOUSE - DAY

Rain pours down on Alice's head as she runs across the front yard with her overnight case. Duke throws it in the back of the idling station wagon, already piled high with suitcases and Geoffrey somewhere in there. He closes it up and they jump into the front seat. Duke floors it and they're gone.

INT. BUICK - MOVING - DAY

The wipers slap at torrential rain. Duke can hardly see out. Alice isn't trying; reading a map instead. Geoffrey, in back, stares out a side window.

EXT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL - DAY

The grand facade of the Ambassador, back when it was grand.

INT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL - DAY

Duke checks them in and seems happy doing it, perhaps because he knows he won't have to sneak out in the morning.

INT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL ROOM - LATER

It's a lovely suite. Even Geoffrey is impressed, lounging on a big overstuffed chair and inspecting the fine stationery and pen in a leather portfolio. In the adjoining room, Alice is sitting in front of a vanity putting on make-up as Duke, just out of the shower, towels his hair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE

I've managed to live 59 more-or-less-happy years without setting foot in Inglewood. I have no desire to do so now.

DUKE

Then don't. I'll take Geoffrey, you can stay in, order room service and soak your feet.

ALICE

Actually, Geoffrey said he'd like to see the Coconut Grove.

DUKE

He'll want to go with me.

ALICE

Geoffrey? Darling - ?

She leans back to afford herself a glimpse of him in the other room dropping ice cubes into a glass with silver tongs.

ALICE

Your father doesn't want to go to the Coconut Grove. He wants to go down to Inglewood to one of those, those -

DUKE

Jazz clubs, Alice.

ALICE

Jazz clubs. What do you want to do?

INT. COCONUT GROVE - NIGHT

Nat King Cole and an orchestra on stage. Geoffrey, down at a table with Alice, watches a girl dancing with a boy a year or so older than himself.

ALICE

Try it. Just say it once.

GEOFFREY

I can't call you Tootie, Alice.

ALICE

Sure you can. All my friends call me Tootie.

GEOFFREY

I know. I just can't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE
Shall I call you Jeff?

GEOFFREY
No.

ALICE
Tootie and Jeff? No? Okay, Alice
and Geoffrey. You're right, it's better.
Let's dance.

She pulls him up and onto the dance floor. He knows how to dance now, thanks to her and Cotillion, better, in fact, than the other boy. The girl notices, which makes Geoffrey smile and perhaps not hate Alice so much.

INT/EXT. BUICK / TEXAS HIGHWAY - DAY

As Alice sleeps in the back seat, Geoffrey looks over a collection of matchbooks and ashtrays taken from some of the nicer clubs and restaurants they've visited. Duke glances over from time to time, not really liking it. Then -

DUKE
What's this?

Up ahead, Texas troopers mill around a Buick station wagon down in a ditch. Another waves motorists past the crash site and a tow truck at the side of the road. As the *Wolffs'* Buick passes, Duke and Geoffrey peer out at the wrecked car.

DUKE
Pranged that up pretty good.

GEOFFREY
I'll say.

INT. BUICK - MOVING - LATER

Well along the highway, an ambulance, coming the other way, passes. Duke shakes his head and comments, more to himself -

DUKE
Makes you think, doesn't it. Could've
been us. It was even a Roadmaster, just
like this one.

Silence for another tenth of a mile.

GEOFFREY
Actually it was a Super. Only had three
Ventaports.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Another silence for another tenth of a mile.

DUKE

You know, you argue too much. It's getting to be a habit. And you're wrong most of the time.

GEOFFREY

I'm not arguing, I'm just saying it was a Super. It had three airholes. Roadmaster has four. Like ours.

Duke sighs, calmly pulls over to the side of the road, lets it idle.

DUKE

Geoffrey, I love you. I love you because you're my son. But I love you beyond that. I want good things to come to you. I want you to be happy. I want these things for you and most of the time I'd rather be with you than anyone else. But not now. Not these days. These days you know too much and it bores me to death.

(looks at the odometer)

Now we've come twenty miles past that car. If I go back it'll be forty. Forty miles out of our way. An hour out of our lives. It's not necessary. It's not even interesting. I hate Roadmasters and Supers, but that was a Roadmaster.

GEOFFREY

It was a Super. I looked right at it. Three holes.

Duke listens to the idling engine, then shoves it in gear, racks the wheel and turns the car around back the way they came. He pulls down his visor but that doesn't keep the sun from falling across Alice's face, waking her. She squints.

ALICE

What's going on?
(she looks around)
Are we going west?

EXT. TEXAS HIGHWAY - LATER

The Buick roars past, going west.

INT. BUICK - MOVING

Geoffrey is wrapping up the explanation for Alice -

GEOFFREY

- but it wasn't a Roadmaster, it was a Super. Three holes.

ALICE

Oh, you two are *children*. Both of you. I can't believe you're doing this.

EXT. CRASH SITE - LATER

The Buick pulls over to the side of the road where a trooper is measuring skid marks. The ambulance is gone. And the tow truck. And the station wagon.

ALICE

Good, it's gone. Turn around, let's go.

Duke climbs out of the car. Alice groans. Geoffrey climbs out. She groans again and watches as the two of them - what *children* - speak with the trooper, who points off. They return to the car and climb in.

DUKE

Took it to a place fifteen miles down 'yonder' dirt road.

ALICE

Fine. Turn the car around.

Duke puts it in gear.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - LATER

The Wolffs' Buick can only barely be seen amidst all the dust it's kicking up barreling down the dirt road.

INT. BUICK - MOVING

Alice is coughing into a handkerchief.

ALICE

You could've just asked him what kind it was. He would've known. He probably even wrote it down. Why didn't you just ask him?

Duke says nothing, keeps driving.

EXT. CROSSROADS - LATER

The Buick pulls into a gas station at a rural crossroads in the middle of nowhere. As Duke turns the wheel and stops, the tow truck and crashed car swing into view. He lets his son take a long look:

It's a Roadmaster, just like theirs, just like Duke said, four Ventaports on the hood, which he counts out loud -

DUKE

One, two, three ... four.

He looks at Geoffrey. Doesn't smile. Doesn't gloat. Calmly puts the Buick back in gear and drives off.

EXT. GROTON SCHOOL - DAY

The Groton boys still look the same in their linen jackets and white shirts and Anglican faces, sitting under the elms with their books, the stately facades of the buildings to their backs. Indeed, it seems nothing's changed here in forty years except the cars.

INT. OFFICE, GROTON SCHOOL - DAY

Even the face of the man behind the desk is familiar - painfully familiar to Duke. Frank Boyden, Groton's headmaster for more than fifty years now, looks over Geoffrey's transcripts.

BOYDEN

I'll be honest with you, Geoffrey, because I believe in honesty. These are not great transcripts.

DUKE

Transcripts don't always paint an accurate picture of the man.

Boyden, who has grown somewhat hard of hearing in the intervening years, doesn't register the comment; keeps right on talking -

BOYDEN

But I also believe in second chances. I believe in mending boys, not tossing them aside. I honestly can't remember the last time I had to throw a boy out of Groton.

Geoffrey glances down at his father's hands; they're shaking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOYDEN

Tell me, what sorts of activities are you interested in outside the classroom, Geoffrey? Do you enjoy, for instance, music, or -

GEOFFREY

I race boats.

BOYDEN

You -

DUKE

He means rowing. He loves to row. He'd like to try Crew in the spring.

BOYDEN

Ah, rowing. Well, we could always use another good oar.

GEOFFREY

Well, I'd like to be it.

INT. LANGROCK'S MENS STORE - DAY

A pile of shirts and slacks and accessories.

CLERK

Will this be cash or charge?

DUKE

On account. I'd like to open one.

He hands the old clerk some identification. The man transcribes the name to a file card - *Arthur S. Wolff III* - looks at it, and at Duke, as if trying to remember something.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

A pile of books: Faulkner, Fitzgerald, Melville, Hemingway, Mann. And another old clerk taking down Duke's information and glancing over at him.

EXT. GROTON SCHOOL - DAY

Duke slowly paces around the grounds. The only thing he can find to feel good about the place is that Boyden didn't recognize his face or his name.

He's drawn to the sound of singing voices. Wanders over, and peers in a window of the academy's Great Hall, watches a group of young men up on the stage in choir class ... and feels a sense of growing panic.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He turns away. Sees Boyden standing some distance away, looking over in his direction, sort of cocking his head as if trying to remember something, or someone ...

INT. GROTON LIBRARY - DAY

Duke traipses across the library to where Geoffrey's taking Groton's entrance exam and picks up the papers.

DUKE

You're not going to Groton. They don't deserve you. You're better than this. Let's get out of here.

EXT. CHOATE - DAY

Another ivy-walled New England prep school. This time Alice accompanies Geoffrey to the administration building while Duke waits by the Buick.

INT. CHOATE - DAY

Geoffrey and Alice walk along the venerable halls and into the administration offices. Choate's headmaster emerges from his office to greet the woman and her stepson. The man pecks Alice on the cheek and shakes the young man's hand.

INT. ALICE'S GREENWICH HOUSE - DAY

The bedroom Geoffrey's leaving is a shrine to café society. Menus and matchbooks from fine restaurants and clubs all over the country cover the walls like his father's postcards used to. Stolen ashtrays dot the surfaces.

He's sitting in a chair amidst it all, bags packed on the bed, one leg crossed over the other, cigarette in hand, all quite insouciant, studying his reflection in a full length mirror.

He re-crosses his legs, shifts the cigarette to the other hand and checks the mirror to see if this position is more pleasing to the eye than the other.

DUKE V/O

Be careful about friends. The ones who approach you first are the ones to watch out for most -

INT. BUICK - MOVING - DAY

The suitcase in back, Duke and Geoffrey in front.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUKE V/O

Don't run up bills at the Tuck Shop and don't borrow money. Neither a lender nor a borrower be.

EXT. CHOATE - DAY

Duke and Geoffrey leaning against the car, like they do on the first day of school, Duke trying to impart to his son, in the few minutes before he will leave, everything he knows -

DUKE

Dress carefully and neatly. Stay away from black leather shoes. Be polite, but not phony. Everyone hates a phony.

He tries to think. Is there anything else he knows? That seems to be it. Except -

DUKE

Here, I got something for you.

Duke presents Geoffrey with the same silver cigarette case he borrowed and lied about.

GEOFFREY

We're not allowed to smoke here, Dad. They throw you out for it.

DUKE

Oh, right.

He should have thought of that. Now what is he going to give him? It's tradition to always give Geoffrey something on the first day of school.

GEOFFREY

It's okay, you don't need to give me anything.

DUKE

Here. Take these.

His cuff links for the French shirts Geoffrey doesn't have.

GEOFFREY

Thanks.

DUKE

Be good.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Duke hugs him. Geoffrey hugs back more perfunctorily than his father would like and walks away with his suitcase. Duke keeps watching even after his son disappears inside ...

INT. CLASSROOM - CHOATE - DAY

Geoffrey stands at the front of the room with a piece of chalk in his hand and a sentence on the blackboard. Silence as his instructor studies it and him. Finally -

TEACHER

Have you by chance attended school in the past, Mr. Wolff?

GEOFFREY

Yes, sir.

TEACHER

Do you recall if you were offered a course called - *English*?

GEOFFREY

Yes, sir.

TEACHER

And you attended this class once or twice?

GEOFFREY

Yes, sir.

TEACHER

Which? Once? Or twice?

Some of the other students smile as Geoffrey's unease.

GEOFFREY

More than once or twice.

TEACHER

Still you see nothing wrong with the sentence you've written on the board.

(Geoffrey doesn't)

Read it aloud, please.

GEOFFREY

"Many dogs are killed by automobiles roaming around unleashed."

The teacher, and the class, wait for him to realize the problem with his sentence construction, but Geoffrey just doesn't see it, and the teacher finally groans.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TEACHER

Sit down, Mr. Wolff. Mr. Whitlam, would you please come up and show us on the board how *not* to mangle Mr. Wolff's native tongue?

STUDENT

Yes, sir. What he's done is misplace his modifier. The *automobiles* are not roaming around unleashed -
(erasing and rewriting)
- the *dogs* are.

INT. CAR DEALERSHIP - DAY

A salesman opens the driver's door of a Jaguar XK-120 roadster. Duke climbs in, caresses the polished walnut steering wheel and the insignia-encased gear shift knob.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Duke clutches in and yanks the shift into fourth, tachometer dancing, the Jag flying.

INT. THE PLAZA - DAY

Geoffrey has met up with his parents at the Plaza Hotel for lunch. All are dressed appropriately.

DUKE

When we got back from Barbados, I decided to quit my job to start my own business. I said to myself, Why should I give away all my good ideas for a salary?

ALICE

And I said to myself, What good ideas?

DUKE

No, Alice, you said that to me.

GEOFFREY

What sort of business?

ALICE

Exactly, Geoffrey. What sort of business? There seems to be quite a bit more indecision about *that* than the one to quit his halfway decent-paying job.

DUKE

Consulting of some kind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE

Consulting of what kind, one wonders?
How much Vermouth goes into the perfect
martini? Really, Duke, who's going to
want your opinion about anything?

(to Geoffrey)

His toys are driving me into the
poorhouse. Like that ridiculous Jaguar.

DUKE

What do you want me to do, take it back?

ALICE

That or pay for it.

DUKE

I can't drive a Buick, Alice. A man
doesn't drive a Buick.

ALICE

A man doesn't let a woman support him,
but I don't hear you objecting too loudly
about that.

DUKE

My toys, as you call them, give me
something to do with my life.

ALICE

Get a job, Duke.

Duke sighs. Looks to his son for empathy. Unfortunately
Geoffrey's heard this kind of discussion between them so many
times it's hard to have any feeling for either one of them.

WAITER

Dessert?

ALICE

The check.

GEOFFREY

I'll have some Brie if it hasn't been
refrigerated.

The waiter looks to Duke to see if he wants any. Duke shakes
his head no without looking at the man, frowns at Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY

What.

DUKE

Nothing.

INT. ALICE'S GREENWICH HOUSE - NIGHT

The place is quiet. Duke and Alice asleep. Geoffrey creeps into their room, takes the Jag keys off Duke's bureau, slides open a drawer, takes a cigarette case and some money, puts it in his jacket pocket.

EXT. ALICE'S GREENWICH HOUSE - NIGHT

He puts the key in the ignition. Turns it one click to engage the battery and dash lights. Pushes in the clutch. Releases the hand brake. His father, as is his custom, left the Jag facing away from the house, pointed downhill - "no need to work up a sweat should electrical problems unfortunately arise."

With that convenience, Geoffrey can simply roll down the long gravel drive in silence, as he's doing now, and, once he's far enough away from the house, put it in second and pop the clutch.

As he reaches the street the engine rumbles to life. He pulls the Jag onto the pavement, switches on the headlights, revs the engine and takes off.

EXT. THE JAG - NIGHT

Four guys crammed into the roadster. As the radio blares and the boys drink, Geoffrey shows them what the Jag can do out on the open highway.

INT. THE METROPOLITAN - NIGHT

Geoffrey offers his friends *Balkan Sobranies* from the case. They're "like" him, wealthy boys in their Black Watch jackets and narrow ties, the sons of successful fathers whose 16-year-old offspring are poised and pointed already straight toward juvenile hall. They loiter at the edge of the dance floor, hands on his hips, sizing up the talent.

CHOATIE

That's Marion Rockefeller. She'd go for you, Wolff. She goes for everyone.

INT. THE METROPOLITAN - LATER

She's gone for Geoffrey at least to the point of letting him dance with her.

MARION

Are you related to the Wolffs at Lowe, Rhodes?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEOFFREY

Actually, I'm related to the Wolffs at
Wolff, Wolff.

MARION

Your father's a lawyer.

GEOFFREY

No. He designs rockets. But only as
a hobby. What with all the stock he owns
in General Electric, he doesn't really
have to work. Mainly he races boats,
like me.

MARION

You aren't Jewish, are you?

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

His friends are throwing up. Geoffrey's doing all right,
leaning against a wall, watching, taking another cigarette
from the silver case, snapping it shut.

INT. GEOFFREY'S ROOM - MORNING

Alice shakes Geoffrey awake.

ALICE

Where's your father's cigarette case?

GEOFFREY

What?

INT. DUKE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Duke is searching drawers. Alice leads Geoffrey in like a
cop returning a suspect to the crime scene.

ALICE

He says he hasn't seen it.

GEOFFREY

I haven't.

DUKE

If he says he hasn't, he hasn't. End
of story.

Alice looks at Geoffrey, somehow knowing better.

INT. GEOFFREY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The case, of course, is in Geoffrey's jacket pocket. He slips it under his pajama waistband and pads out.

INT. ALICE'S GREENWICH HOUSE - MORNING

Duke is searching drawers in the study now. Alice checking drawers in the dining room. To her -

DUKE

I think you put it somewhere.

ALICE

Duke, I've never touched it in my life.

Geoffrey wanders into the adjacent living room. Loudly opens a coffee table drawer and announces -

GEOFFREY

Here it is.

He waits until both can see where he is standing, picks up the cigarette case and holds it aloft.

ALICE

I just looked there.

GEOFFREY

I just found it here.

ALICE

He put it there, Duke.

GEOFFREY

No, I didn't.

ALICE

You're lying.

GEOFFREY

I don't lie.

DUKE

Geoffrey doesn't lie.

ALICE

He lied just now.

Geoffrey groans at the indignity of her accusation and traipses back to his bedroom, handing the case to his father on the way. The door slams behind him.

INT/EXT. GEOFFREY'S BEDROOM / DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Once inside the privacy of his room, Geoffrey shakes. He's never lied to his father before and it scares him. A soft tap on the door before it opens. Duke comes in.

DUKE

She hates to admit when she's wrong.
Don't be too hard on her. Thanks for
finding the case.

He leaves. Geoffrey hears the front door open and close. Looks out his window. Sees his father, golf bag slung over his shoulder walking toward his car. Sees him stop short of it and stare at it. *It's facing the wrong way.*

Geoffrey wants to die. Steps aside from the window in anticipation of his father looking over in that direction. Which Duke does. But he doesn't return to the house. Maybe he thinks, Geoffrey prays, that he was drunk last night himself and parked the car that way.

Duke sets the clubs in the back seat. Climbs in, turns the car around and drives away. Geoffrey just stands at the window, breathing hard.

INT. LANGROCKS - DAY

The store manager presents the young man with proof of his unpaid account.

GEOFFREY

I honestly don't understand it. I sent
my father the bill two months ago. If he
hasn't paid it, it'll be the first time
in his life he's late paying a bill.

There's a pile of new purchases - clothes and accessories -
sitting on the counter.

GEOFFREY

Can I take these couple of items with
my word of honor to you the balance will
be brought up to date by the end of the
week?

INT. CHAPEL - CHOATE - DAY

As the entire school worships, Geoffrey can be glimpsed -
if one were looking - out the window, walking briskly, then
sprinting away.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - DAY

Geoffrey and the girl he's brought, not Marion Rockefeller, are necking.

INT. OFFICE - CHOATE - LATER - DAY

Summoned to the dean's office, Geoffrey watches as the man reviews his grades.

DEAN

Having a little trouble in Latin.

GEOFFREY

Yes, sir.

DEAN

And Mathematics, chemistry and public Speaking.

He closes the file and smiles. He's always pleasant, Dean Steele, which can sometimes catch you off-guard.

DEAN

Did you worship today, Wolff?

GEOFFREY

No, sir.

DEAN

Do anything?

GEOFFREY

Yes, sir.

DEAN

Tell.

GEOFFREY

Saw a film.

DEAN

Which?

GEOFFREY

The Man with the Golden Arm.

DEAN

Good?

GEOFFREY

Yes, sir.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEAN

I'm glad. You can pack your things right away. No need to finish out the semester, is there?

GEOFFREY

No, sir. I guess not.

INT. DORM - DAY

Geoffrey finishes packing his things, produces his silver hip flask from a jacket pocket, and, like it's in the genes, turns away exactly like his father always does, even though there's no one here to see him, takes a hit and a last look around, and leaves.

INT. LAUNDRY SERVICE - DAY

Duke sent out his resume to Fortune 500 companies, but has ended up as "Consultant" to an apron laundering business. Anticipating the work day buzzer he hangs up his clipboard, turns and takes a sip from his flask, and leaves.

EXT. NOD HILL ROAD - DAY

The old MG speeds past sheep pastures.

Duke's Jag speeds along the same road from the other direction.

Inside the MG, radio playing Dave Brubeck, Geoffrey finishes off the flask, tosses it aside, sets his hand on the stick to downshift into the turn up ahead.

Inside the Jag, radio tuned to the same station, Duke tosses aside his flask and sets his hand on the stick as the same bend comes into view.

Geoffrey throws the shift into third as he comes into the turn. Duke does the same from the other direction, diving into the turn.

They see each other, and that both of their cars are drifting into the center of the road, headed right for each other. Fortuitously, they yank their steering wheels counter to each other, and both cars go off embankments and into opposite ditches.

Rattled but alive, they crawl out of their cars and stumble up the slippery embankments, meeting in the middle of the road, breathing hard. Then Duke laughs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUKE

Jesus, wouldn't that have been something? Alice was almost rid of us both in one spectacular crash. Oh, my God, she's going to be so disappointed.

They embrace.

EXT. NOD HILL ROAD - LATER

The two of them are walking together, each with one of Geoffrey's suitcases in hand, looking like aristocrat-hobos from Huckleberry Finn.

DUKE

You're talking about education.

GEOFFREY

I'm talking about stupid rules and no imagination. That's not for me.

DUKE

What is?

GEOFFREY

I don't know. Racing boats. Or cars. I've gotten pretty good at tennis. Maybe I could be a tennis pro.

Duke just looks at him. He's so disappointed, it hurts.

EXT. CAPE COD - DAY

Eyes closed to shut out his uncertain future, glass of rye occasionally tipped to his lips to further obscure it, Geoffrey suns himself on the beach.

ALICE

Geoffrey?

He squints up at two silhouettes backlit against the sun.

ALICE

This is my son Robert.

EXT. ALICE'S CAPE COD HOUSE - LATER

Robert's in his late twenties. And he *could* be a tennis pro if he wanted. He's got Geoffrey running all over the grass court while he remains planted like a shrub in one spot.

EXT. ALICE'S CAPE COD HOUSE - LATER

Geoffrey, exhausted, drinks down lemonade out on the patio with Robert and his mother.

ROBERT

Hear you had a rough time at Choate.

GEOFFREY

Yeah, well, it didn't really suit me.

ROBERT

Nor you, it, apparently.

(he is his mother's son)

It was the same when I was there, wasn't it, Mother? Didn't take long to find out who would make it and who wouldn't.

Geoffrey glances off to a click-clacking noise behind him. His father emerges from the house in spikes and golf attire.

ALICE

Duke, I swear, you're going to tear up the floors with those shoes. Please take them off before you come into the house.

Duke considers the stranger who is not getting up to shake his hand.

INT. ALICE'S CAPE COD HOUSE - NIGHT

On his way to his room, Geoffrey passes the study. Hearing voices inside, he steps back quietly and peeks in through the crack at Duke and Robert with cigars and brandy snifters, sitting in leather chairs, their backs to the door.

ROBERT

Mother tells me you're a Yale man.
Skull and Bones, too.

Geoffrey sees his father's hand swirling his brandy around in the glass, but didn't catch a response, if there was one.

ROBERT

Let's play a game. I ask you, Which one is Skull and Bones - the Palladian or the Georgian building - and you tell me.

DUKE

Bones men don't discuss Bones.

ROBERT

They do to each other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Duke is silent. Knows where this is going.

ROBERT

No? Not even a guess? How about this?
Which college faces Trumball Street?

DUKE

Saybrook.

ROBERT

No. Saybrook does not face Trumball.

DUKE

Well, it's been a long time. The memory
isn't as good as it was.

ROBERT

The memory can hardly be expected to
recall that which it's never known.

Geoffrey waits for some kind of reply from his father, a rebuttal of some kind that refutes the accusation, but it doesn't come.

ROBERT

Everything about you is a lie, isn't
it, Duke? Which would be irritating even
if you weren't sponging off my mother.

Geoffrey keeps waiting, but his father just won't speak in his own defense.

ROBERT

Let me explain something to you. Her
money was made by my father who worked
for it, and I don't appreciate you spending
it as if you were somehow entitled.
The only thing that makes it tolerable is
knowing you won't get away with it much
longer. She'll come to her senses one of
these days and throw you out. And your
thick-witted son.

Geoffrey leaves them, walks to his room, doesn't hear -

DUKE

Let me explain something. I don't care
what you say about me. It means nothing
to me. If you ever mention my son's name
in a disparaging way again - ?

(his tone is so calm, it's
scary)

I'll kill you.

EXT. JEWISH CEMETERY - DAY (1914)

Young Duke, six years old, stands solemnly beside a grave with his mother, watching his father crying harder than any of the other mourners.

Earth is shoveled into a small grave. The stone marker, resting against the pile of dirt soon to be tamped in place, reads: *Bernard Wolff, 1901-1914*. Above the name of Duke's dead older brother is carved a Jewish star.

EXT. RACE TRACK - DAY

Horses charge out of the gate.

INT. STUDY, ALICE'S CAPE COD HOUSE - DAY

Geoffrey opens a desk drawer. Takes out a sheet of Racquet Club stationery. Dips his father's fountain pen in ink. Hesitates over the paper with it. Begins to write.

GEOFFREY V/O

Dear Mom, I'm sorry it's been so long since you've heard from me. I know, of course, I've not written you a single letter since I left. I apologize.

EXT. RACE TRACK - DAY

In the stands, Duke watches through Leica binoculars.

GEOFFREY V/O

We're living up in Connecticut now. Just me and Dad like always. Summers and weekends we go out to the Cape. We have a place there, too.

EXT. OLD LYME - DAY

Geoffrey has returned to his old house. Considers it from the parked MG. A young family living there now. A boy about nine, flying a gas-powered wire-tethered model plane in circles on the garbage-less lawn.

GEOFFREY V/O

I had a very successful year at Choate. Good grades in all subjects, Dean's List, lots of friends and so on. I can't wait to go back in the fall.

EXT. RACE TRACK - CONTINUED

Duke watches every horse pass his own in the home stretch. As they cross the finish line, he throws away a fistful of tickets.

GEOFFREY V/O

I've been playing the eastern tennis circuit of late, and have a fair chance to advance in ranking if I can sharpen the backhand.

EXT. OLD LYME - DAY

The park. Geoffrey sitting alone in the bleachers watching Coach Carver hit practice to his young team.

GEOFFREY V/O

Unfortunately, squash at the Racquet Club isn't helping with the wrist. Nor is polo at Brandywine. I'm afraid I may have to give up both, much as I enjoy them.

INT. BAR - DAY

Duke, apparently, has gotten unruly, and is presently being unceremoniously thrown out of the place.

GEOFFREY V/O

The social calendar has been quite full of late. I've been dating a girl named Marion Rockefeller. Yes, that's right, Rockefeller, as in Rockefeller.

EXT. OLD LYME - DAY

A trash truck passes Geoffrey parked MG and pulls onto the gravel outside a dilapidated house. The trashman climbs out. Jimbo, of all people, climbs off the back and heads for the porch where Margaret Dean waits with an infant in her arms - neither of whom look happy.

GEOFFREY V/O

They have a swell apartment on Fifth Avenue, and Marion and I go out together as often as our busy schedules allow.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Duke has been pulled over and is now being made to "walk the line" with his eyes closed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEOFFREY V/O

Dad is doing great, too. Chief engineer at an atomic test facility out here, good money and much prestige.

Miraculously, Duke passes the drunk test and is handed back his license.

GEOFFREY V/O

Unfortunately, I can't say more about that since they're top secret government projects.

INT. ALICE'S CAPE COD HOUSE - DAY

Geoffrey pours himself a gin and tonic and wanders around with it. He passes a window outside of which, on the back porch, Alice and some friends are playing bridge.

GEOFFREY V/O

We've been doing a lot of sailing together. You know how Dad loves to sail.

EXT. ALICE'S CAPE COD HOUSE - NIGHT

Duke pulls into the drive. Sets the brake and climbs out. Aims himself in the general direction of the house.

GEOFFREY V/O

We're thinking of taking the yacht all the way down to Key West in August, just the two of us, the Wolff boys alone on the high seas.

INT. ALICE'S CAPE COD HOUSE - NIGHT

Duke comes in and immediately pours himself a Scotch.

He sees the envelope with "Rosemary Wolff" scribbled on it, unsealed, no address. He picks it up.

GEOFFREY V/O

There's so much more to tell you, but alas, I have to close now as I'm late for a dinner engagement at the Stork Club with Marion and her parents.

INT. GEOFFREY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Duke opens the door just wide enough to see inside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEOFFREY V/O

I hope you're doing well. I love you.
Your son, Geoffrey.

Geoffrey's face down on the bed. He's been crying. Duke comes in, envelope in his hand. Geoffrey sees it but seems not to care if his father read it or not. Duke sits next to him. Says nothing for several moments. Finally -

DUKE

Don't know where to send it?

Nothing from Geoffrey.

DUKE

Want me to find out where she is?
(nothing)
Want me to tear it up?

Geoffrey shrugs. He doesn't seem to care about anything. Duke sets the letter down at the foot of the bed.

DUKE

I want to say something. I hope you're listening because it's the most important, and truthful, thing you'll ever hear me say.

It's hard to tell if Geoffrey's listening or not. He certainly doesn't look at his father.

DUKE

Who you are, Geoffrey, is far more interesting than who you're pretending to be.

As true as it may be, it doesn't really help to hear it since Geoffrey doesn't know who he is.

DUKE

I don't like this person.
(in the letter)
I love this one.

Duke rests his hand on his son's back and keeps it there until the trembling stops.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

An unbroken expanse of blue. The Atlantic Ocean from twenty-five thousand feet.

EXT. ENGLAND - DAY

Eastborne School. Suitcase in hand, not knowing a soul, Geoffrey arrives. Teenage boys in their school uniforms dot the lawns.

INT. CLASSROOM - EASTBOURNE - DAY

Geoffrey taps against the glass of an open door to get the attention of a teacher inside grading papers.

GEOFFREY

Professor Blackmur? May I come in?

The instructor gestures, yes. Geoffrey comes in.

GEOFFREY

I was wondering if you've had a chance to look at my short story.

BLACKMUR

This?

He extracts a thick manuscript from a stack of other papers on his desk. It has to be three hundred pages long.

BLACKMUR

This is not a short story, Wolff. If it weighed half as much one *might* be able to call it a novella.

GEOFFREY

There was so much I wanted to say, I admit I had trouble keeping the length down.

BLACKMUR

I'll say.

The manuscript says "Bad Debts" on the title page. Blackmur begins idly leafing through it.

BLACKMUR

Is Freeman based on someone you know?

GEOFFREY

My father.

BLACKMUR

So Caxton, then, I guess, is you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEOFFREY

I guess. I know it could be better.
I was hoping you could give me guidance.
Some advice.

BLACKMUR

Put it in your desk drawer.

Blackmur hands it to him and returns to grading papers ...

GEOFFREY

You mean, put it away for a week or
two to get some distance on it. Then
come back to it fresh.

BLACKMUR

No, I mean, put it in your desk drawer,
lock your desk drawer, and throw away the
key. Only keys are sometimes found, so
my best advice is to set fire to the
desk.

Geoffrey is crushed. Manuscript in hand, he heads for the
door.

BLACKMUR

Wolff?

GEOFFREY

Yes, sir.

BLACKMUR

Do you *seriously* want to write?

GEOFFREY

Yes, sir.

BLACKMUR

Are you willing to work?

GEOFFREY

Yes, sir.

Blackmur studies him, then shrugs, Okay. Geoffrey smiles and
takes a step toward the desk, the manuscript outstretched.

BLACKMUR

No, I told you what to do with *that*. I
don't want to see *that* ever again. We'll
start tomorrow on something a little less
ambitious.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GEOFFREY
Like a *short, short* story.

BLACKMUR
Like a paragraph.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Moving across a sentence diagrammed on a blackboard.

GEOFFREY V/O
Like a sentence - which, it was
reckoned, was all I could handle to
begin with.

The sentence is at the top of the board over twenty others,
which are next to another twenty or so more, the bottom one
of which Geoffrey is now working on with his chalk.

GEOFFREY V/O
I charted fifty a day after school
for weeks on end until I could break them
down like a soldier stripping down his
rifle in the dark.

EXT. EASTBOURNE - DAY

A classmate, in white sweater and pants, hurls a cricket ball
at Geoffrey who swings and just manages to deflect it with
his bat.

GEOFFREY V/O
Then I moved on to paragraphs.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

With a stack of books on the desk, Geoffrey integrates quotes
into an essay he's working on.

GEOFFREY V.O
Then groups of paragraphs. Then entire
essays. And as they began to make sense
to me - so did I.

INT. DORMITORY ROOM - NIGHT

Stones are hitting the window as Geoffrey tries to work.
Outside, some friends are plotting a night on the town and
want him to join them.

GEOFFREY
I can't. I have to finish this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EASTBOURNE BOY

Christ, finish it later, whatever it is.

Geoffrey closes the window.

GEOFFREY V/O

I was becoming what I'd always mocked,
what my classmates mocked now when they
looked at me, what my father would not
mock: a good student.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The friend with the rocks receives a paper back from Blackmur that's so covered with corrections it's difficult to read through to the original text. Geoffrey gets his paper back with just two words scribbled on top: "well done."

GEOFFREY V/O

I even began looking to the future. To colleges I would apply to, and maybe even be accepted by.

INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

An Eastbourne boy answers a ringing phone in the hall, then traipses down to Geoffrey's room where he's filling out an application for Princeton.

DORM MATE

For you, Wolff.

GEOFFREY V/O

I had a goal for the first time in my life. And the belief I might actually have a chance of reaching it. Then -

Geoffrey picks up the phone. It's an overseas connection. His father's voice buried somewhere in the static -

DUKE O/O

Geoffrey - ?

GEOFFREY

Dad? I can barely hear you.

DUKE O/S

Listen, you got to come home.

GEOFFREY

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUKE O/S

See if you can borrow passage from the school. Give them my assurance I'll pay them right back. Come now.

GEOFFREY

What are you talking about? Things are going well here. Really well. You'll never guess what I was doing when you called -

DUKE O/S

Alice left me. I'm in a little trouble. I need you.

EXT. DOWNTOWN L.A. - NIGHT

Through the window of a bail bondsman's office, Geoffrey can be seen presenting paperwork of some kind as collateral.

INT. L.A. COUNTY JAIL - NIGHT

Duke, unshaven and rumped, is taken from a cell and escorted along a corridor.

INT. L.A. COUNTY JAIL - NIGHT

Geoffrey waits on a bench while his father collects his confiscated treasure: his watch and rings and wallet and cigarette case and lighter and flask and pen ...

EXT. IMPOUND YARD - NIGHT

Duke and Geoffrey wait outside the impound trailer.

DUKE

It was that son of hers. We were perfectly happy till he came into the picture, always complaining to her about me. I swear, if I had a son like that, I'd shoot myself. Here we are.

An improbable car pulls up. A maroon Abarth-Zagato coupe. The impound guy climbs out.

DUKE

Thank you, sir.

It's as if the man were a valet and Duke has just finished a nice meal at a fancy restaurant, only no tip.

INT/EXT. DUKE'S CAR - NIGHT

Duke speeds south along the Harbor Freeway.

DUKE

This is going to be great. Like
Seattle when it was just the two of us.
Remember that day on the ferry? The
guy with the hat?

Geoffrey smiles in spite of himself. That particular memory
is his fondest. Duke reaches over and pats his leg.

DUKE

It's going to be just like that again.

EXT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - NIGHT

Soggy leaves and frogs dwell in two feet of rainwater in a
swimming pool. The house itself is a small clapboard thing
that's so unkempt and overgrown it looks like a one-quarter-
scale model of Gray Gardens.

INT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - NIGHT

Duke empties two cans of soup into a pot and puts it on
the stove. The place is a complete mess. Dirty dishes in
the sink, empty liquor bottles and newspapers strewn around,
piles of bills on the desk in the living room where Geoffrey
is wandering around.

GEOFFREY

They turn off the heat?

DUKE

What? Did they? I don't think so.
The stove's working. Come stand next to
the stove.

Geoffrey picks up an electric bill: *Final Notice* in red.

DUKE O/S

Anyway, I got a friend at Sikorsky owes
me a favor. Tomorrow we'll go down there
and apply for jobs.

GEOFFREY

I've applied to Princeton.

DUKE O/S

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEOFFREY

I applied to Princeton and actually might have a shot at getting in. In the spring.

Duke appears in the doorway, completely nonplussed, spoon in hand, apron draping from his neck untied. He grins and comes over and gives his son a long, hearty hug.

DUKE

Geoffrey. Oh, Geoffrey; that's the best news I've ever heard.

GEOFFREY

It costs money.

DUKE

Of course it costs money; it's *Princeton*.

GEOFFREY

Twenty-five hundred dollars a year.

DUKE

Cheap at twice the price.

GEOFFREY

Where am I going to get it? Now that Alice (is) -

DUKE

You'll get it from *me*. Your *father* is perfectly capable of paying for his son's education.

GEOFFREY

Do you have it?

DUKE

Well, not at the moment. Everything's tied up in investments. But I will. Are you kidding?

Duke grins again. He is so proud. Hugs Geoffrey again.

DUKE

My son. My Princeton-bound son.

INT. SIKORSKY PLANT - DAY

A hangar full of helicopters under construction.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUKE

Listen, I'm going to go talk to my friend. There's the Personnel Office. Go fill out an application and I'll catch up with you.

GEOFFREY

Okay.

Geoffrey heads for the office. Duke watches after him, then turns and leaves the hangar.

EXT. HOBBY SHOP - DAY

Duke points to things. The proprietor gathers them and sets them on the counter.

PROPRIETOR

This going to be cash or charge?

DUKE

Charge.

INT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - LATER

Geoffrey comes into the house to find his father trying to assemble an insane network of HO gauge tracks and tunnels and Gordian crossovers and model alpine villages.

DUKE

Hey, how'd it go?

GEOFFREY

What happened to you? I took the bus home. What's with the train?

DUKE

You got the job, right?

GEOFFREY

Yeah.

DUKE

That's because I withdrew my own application. My friend said there was only one position open, so I thought you should have it.

He smiles like, *That was considerate of me, wasn't it*, and pours himself another Scotch from the bottle set down amidst all the pieces and plans.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUKE

Here's how it'll work. I'll take care of the house. Do all the cooking and cleaning and grocery shopping. You keep an accurate record of what you earn and the expenses, and I'll reimburse you in full, right down to the penny, come February. Hand me that X-acto knife.

Geoffrey hands it to him and stares. Eventually -

GEOFFREY

You're not going to get a job?

DUKE

Of course I'm going to get a job. How do you think I'm going to pay you back?

That's what concerns Geoffrey. The Jack Teagarden record ejects and another LP flops down the spindle and begins to play. Bessie Smith. Which continues over:

INT. SIKORSKY PLANT - DAY

Geoffrey's job involves grease and helicopter engine parts, grimy coveralls and Lava soap. Somehow, though, it's not as romantic as when he was thirteen working for Elgin Gates.

INT. SIKORSKY PLANT - DAY

He punches a clock and slips the card under a grate. The young on the other side works on an adding machine, cuts a check and slips it back under the mesh.

INT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - NIGHT

Making sure his father is sufficiently engrossed in the Western on TV, Geoffrey slips twenty into a book and returns it to the shelf, sets a ten on the coffee table for Duke, then sits at a desk to deal with overdue bills.

EXT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - NIGHT

Geoffrey uses a stick like a blind man, flicking it around the crawl space under the house. Hitting something, he hooks it and draws it out. A dead, bloated mole.

INT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - NIGHT

The HO train clicks around tracks past villages that look like they were destroyed in the war.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The little light on the locomotive catches Geoffrey sitting on the floor in the dark, watching his father sleep and snore on the sofa, his dentures in a cup of water, his thumb in his mouth like an infant.

Geoffrey gets up and dumps an ashtray in a wastebasket. Considers the lower drawer of the desk for several moments. Fishes out a set of keys from his pocket, uses one to unlock the drawer, takes out the manuscript he was supposed to burn, and pulls several pencils from an old coffee mug on the desk until he finds one with a point.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Locked in the bathroom in the middle of the night, Geoffrey works on his book, crossing out more lines than he keeps and scribbling notes to himself in the margins.

INT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - MORNING

Christmas lights encircle a scrawny tree. No *Wolff Cornucopia* of presents beneath it. Geoffrey watches his father open the only gift he's getting - which turns out to be a scale-model of a Packard.

DUKE

Look at this. It's just like mine. Wasn't that a great car? Those were the days, huh? Oh, I'm going to have fun putting this together.

GEOFFREY

Little less complicated than the train.

DUKE

This is for you.

Duke produces a small gift from his robe pocket and looks on as Geoffrey unwraps it. Inside is Duke's own gold signet ring with the etched lions and fleurs-de-lis. Geoffrey is confused.

GEOFFREY

This is your ring, Dad.

DUKE

My Groton graduation ring, yeah. I want you to have it.

GEOFFREY

I can't take this, it means everything to you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUKE

You mean everything to me.

Geoffrey really is touched. Slips it onto his finger like he used to do when he was a kid, only now it fits.

GEOFFREY

Thank you.

DUKE

There's more, you missed it, the paper.

Geoffrey hadn't noticed; there's something written on the wrapping paper, which, when he reads it, makes him want to laugh and cry at the same time: *I.O.U. Princeton.*

DUKE

Don't think I've forgotten. I'm going to come through for you, you'll see.

GEOFFREY

Yeah, I know.

Geoffrey knows it'll never happen.

DUKE

Merry Christmas.

EXT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - DAY

Clouds gather as Geoffrey scoops frogs out of the murky pool with a long-handled net.

INT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - EVENING

Buckets catch rain dripping from the ceiling. Hunched over the coffee table covered with tiny metal parts, Duke tries to assemble his Packard model with miniature screwdrivers. He consults the instructions with a microscope. The liquor helps him make sense of it all.

Aproned in the kitchen, Geoffrey has assumed his father's ostensible duties, standing at the sink cleaning up at least some of the dirty dishes. The door bell rings.

INT/EXT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Geoffrey deals with a creditor out on the porch.

CREDITOR

What's wrong with him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEOFFREY

They don't know. They're running all kinds of tests.

CREDITOR

When will he be home from the hospital?

GEOFFREY

I have no idea.

(looks at a bill)

Are you sure this is the same Arthur Wolff?

INT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - LATER

The same Arthur Wolff has given up on the model and is now watching television.

DUKE

It's just greed, Geoffrey. They just want money.

GEOFFREY

They're entitled to their money -

DUKE

And they'll get it. Eventually. Really, Geoffrey, you're sounding more and more like your mother. Didn't I teach you anything? Sit down and have a drink.

(taps at the spot next to him on the bed)

Come on, Rawhide's about to start.

Geoffrey sighs. Doesn't know what to do about all this. Lies down finally next to Duke if only so he won't have to think about it.

DUKE

There. Let's not talk about it anymore.

The theme from Rawhide begins, the whiplash sounds feeling to Geoffrey as if they were meant for him.

INT. SIKORSKY PLANT - DAY

Like Elgin said, even a knife won't get the grease out from under Geoffrey's fingernails.

INT. SIKORSKY PLANT - DAY

The same young woman paymaster cashes Geoffrey's check.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEOFFREY

Thanks.

He steps away. Glances back at her as she cashes the next worker's check.

INT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - EVENING

As Geoffrey puts on nice clothes, Duke, in a rumpled Hawaiian shirt, watches from the doorway.

DUKE

Why can't I come along?

Knotting a tie in front of a mirror, Geoffrey doesn't answer.

DUKE

I promise I won't get in the way.

(pause)

I used to take you and your girlfriends to the movies. We had fun, didn't we?

(pause)

I won't embarrass you -

GEOFFREY

(exasperated)

Okay.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Geoffrey at the ticket booth, paying.

GEOFFREY

Three, please.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - LATER

The teller sits between Duke - enjoying the film and his popcorn immensely - and Geoffrey, slouched low in his seat, wishing his father would just - die.

INT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - DAY

Duke tries to light a cigarette on the stove, but it's been turned off. Rummages through kitchen drawers, then wanders into the living room stepping on sections of railroad track.

He opens a desk drawer. No matches. Tries a lower drawer but finds it locked. That's strange. He finds a screwdriver amidst all the electric train parts and jams it in.

EXT/INT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - NIGHT

Geoffrey comes up the walk to a darkened house. Notes that Duke's car is gone. Opens the door and picks up the pile of new bills the mailman has pushed through the slot that his father has just left there.

Sifting through the envelopes as he crosses the living room, he hesitates at one. It's from Princeton. He tears it open and quickly scans the letter inside. His expression says he's been accepted. But then the smile fades as he notices the open lower desk drawer.

He goes into the bedroom. The TV is on, and a lamp on a night stand. His manuscript is on the bed. On his father's side, in the pool of light, reading glasses set on top. As he moves toward it, the phone rings, startling him.

INT. SAN PEDRO POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Geoffrey has been brought down to the holding cells and peers in at his father through the bars, sitting there in the shadows, not looking at Geoffrey.

DUKE

Did you bring money?

GEOFFREY

We don't have any money, you spent it all.

DUKE

Like someone in a book. Like - *Freeman*.

GEOFFREY

Yeah. Like *Freeman*.

DUKE

So call somebody.

GEOFFREY

Who? We don't know anybody.

DUKE

Then what are you doing here?

GEOFFREY

(pause)

If I somehow can get the money ... Will you promise me you'll show up in court?

DUKE

Just do what you want.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Geoffrey doesn't seem to know, or doesn't know how to say it. Duke glances over to him for the first time, studies him standing there on the other side of the bars.

DUKE

If you're waiting for me to say
I'm sorry, you're wasting your time.

GEOFFREY

Promise me.

DUKE

I'm not promising you anything -

GEOFFREY

If I go to the edge for you, I expect -

DUKE

No, no, no -

GEOFFREY

You're asking me to -

DUKE

I promise you *nothing*, I owe you *nothing*!

GEOFFREY

Goodbye.

DUKE

Goodbye.

Geoffrey turns to leave, gets several steps from the cell before he hears his father's voice echo through the corridor -

DUKE O/S

Geoffrey, come *back*, I'm sorry.

Geoffrey tries to shut out the voice as he keeps walking.

DUKE O/S

Geoffrey, what am I going to do?
They're not going to just let me out this
time. I need you.

(keeps walking)

Geoffrey, I would never leave you like
this. Never.

(keeps walking)

Geoffrey, I love you.

INT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - NIGHT

Geoffrey sits in the dark, smoking, surveying the debris all around him, the wreckage of their lives. He can get out now. He can leave it all behind. He can just go. Let his father rot forever in the San Pedro jail.

Only he can't. He gets up, crosses to the bookshelf and takes down the hardcover that hides his long-saved \$20 bills between its pages - a hundred and twenty of them - twenty-four hundred dollars - his Princeton money.

INT/EXT. DUKE'S CAR - NIGHT

The car speeds along the same stretch of Pacific Coast Highway Geoffrey used to "drive" the MG on sitting in his father's lap. He's driving it now, downshifts into a turn just like his father taught him long ago, as Duke stares out at the sea.

INT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - NIGHT

Duke hunts through his record collection, finds what he's looking for, sets it atop the spindle and switches on the auto-return knob.

He sits down on the sofa next to Geoffrey who has given up. Duke smiles in anticipation as the record drops down and the needle finds its edge. This should make his son feel better about things. This is "their song." *The Sounds of Sebring.*

The race begins. Duke puts his arm around Geoffrey. Hopefully, this will help them recapture that time long ago when things were perfect between them.

DUKE

Listen to that Maserati wind up.

GEOFFREY

You always say that. It's a Bristol.

DUKE

Is it? It's a Bristol?

GEOFFREY

And you always say that.

Duke listens intently to the sound effects record. The only thing it reminds Geoffrey of, is that his life is over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUKE

I've been giving a lot of thought to what I can do. I had an idea. What do you think of this? Law school.

Geoffrey groans and tries to slither out from under his father's arm.

DUKE

Where you going?

GEOFFREY

To bed. It's late.

DUKE

No, come on, sit down.

Geoffrey sits back down. Duke drapes his arm over his boy's shoulder again and listens to the engine sounds. Then -

DUKE

Are you mad at me?

GEOFFREY

God -

DUKE

I really didn't do anything. It's a bum rap. All I did was have one too many drinks down at the Three Bears and -

GEOFFREY

Intoxication, disorderly conduct, drunk driving, assault on a police officer, petty theft, grand theft, failure to appear.

He ticked them off his fingers just like the principal he hated did years ago.

GEOFFREY

All I want to know is are you going to show up in court, or am I out that money? That's a dumb question. Of course you're not. This time I'm stuck with the bill.

DUKE

No, you're not. Tomorrow I'm going to get cracking. I'm going to go out and get a job and pay you back.

Sure. Geoffrey takes the signet ring off, sets it on the coffee table and gets up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DUKE

What are you doing? I gave that to you.

GEOFFREY

I don't want it. It's fake anyway.

DUKE

It's not fake. That's real gold.

GEOFFREY

Fake as in you didn't get it at Groton.
Fake as in you had some jeweler in some
town make it and, I'm sure, never paid
for it -

DUKE

That's not true (Geoffrey) -

GEOFFREY

Fake as in Yale. Fake as in the Eagle
Squadron. Fake as in we're not Jewish.
Fake as in *you* -
(Duke raises a hand to
strike him)
Fake as in *me*.

Duke's fist unclasps, comes down. Geoffrey gets up and leaves his father sitting there, disappears into the kitchen. Duke watches after him, destroyed, then slowly gets up, walks to the bedroom, closes the door.

The racing sounds rise in intensity. Geoffrey is pouring himself a drink when he hears the gunshot. He rushes through the house, reaches the bedroom door and tries to open it. It's locked.

GEOFFREY

Dad?

Another shot. Something shatters. Geoffrey pulls harder at the door. Another shot. Something else shatters.

GEOFFREY

Dad?

He shoulders the door open. Inside the room, his father is sitting on the edge of the bed aiming the gun at Jack Paar on the TV. He fires, blowing out the tube.

GEOFFREY

(very carefully)

Dad?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Duke stares at his own reflection staring back at him in a standing mirror. Geoffrey's is in it, too, standing behind him, looking remarkably like him. Duke aims and fires, the glass and the image shattering, then tosses the gun aside.

All is silent except for *The Sounds of Sebring* coming from the other room. Geoffrey carefully picks up the gun, stares at his father, then leaves him alone gazing blankly at what used to be the mirror.

INT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - DAWN

Geoffrey, asleep on the couch, stirs at sounds coming from the bedroom. He gets up, pads over there and looks in. His father is packing.

DUKE

Take only what you need.

EXT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - DAWN

They emerge from the house - each with one suitcase, Duke with a pillow case in his other hand - set it all in the back seat of the Abarth-Zagato, climb in and drive away -

INT. SAN PEDRO HOUSE - DAWN

They've left a lot behind. The trains and the models, most of their clothes, books and photographs and letters. Geoffrey's Cub Scout merit badge sash.

INT. PAWN SHOP - DAY

Duke dumps the pillow case full of his most cherished possessions on the counter. His watch and rings and flasks and lighters - his gentleman's accessories.

PAWN BROKER

Can you prove ownership?

DUKE

Of course. Now let's not play games.
What'll you give me?

Geoffrey watches from across the shop as Duke discusses the deal quietly, then gazes down into the glass counters at his reflection in other peoples' pawned treasures.

PAWN BROKER

Because if you don't really need it, if you'd sell it, we're talking more money. Almost four times what I'd loan you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUKE

What would you do with it, sell it?

PAWN BROKER

Melt it down.

INT. THE DOCTOR'S STUDY (1911)

Young Duke, 3, watches with fascination as The Doctor forges a scalpel, the steel bending to the white heat. Noticing the boy watching, his father, for the first time ... smiles.

INT. PAWN SHOP - CONTINUED - DAY

The pawn broker sets the flame of the Dunhill lighter under Duke's cigarette, then places it on the jeweler's scale.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - LOS ANGELES - DAY

To the casual observer, it might appear Duke has just robbed a bank. As he peels off several hundred dollar bills from a thick wad -

DUKE

They're just things. They mean nothing to me.

Geoffrey knows better. His father's things - even The Doctor's surgical tools - perhaps them most of all - meant everything to him.

DUKE

Twenty-five hundred dollars. Princeton.

He slides the money across the Formica table to Geoffrey.

DUKE

You got that record of expenses I asked you to keep?

GEOFFREY

I didn't keep one, but it's okay. Half of it was my own room and board anyway.

DUKE

(indignant)

I don't charge my son room and board.

He starts peeling off more hundred dollar bills from the wad.

DUKE

What do you think? About another twenty-five hundred? Here, just take it all.

INT. UNION STATION - DAY

Geoffrey steps up to the ticket counter.

GEOFFREY

One to New York.

TICKET SELLER

Cash or charge.

GEOFFREY

Cash.

EXT. UNION STATION - DAY

Duke and Geoffrey on the platform. Just about all the other passengers are already on board.

GEOFFREY

Where are you going to go?

DUKE

I don't know. Maybe Seattle. I have good memories of Seattle.

GEOFFREY

Me, too.

DUKE

Remember the ferry? The -

GEOFFREY

I still owe you two dollars.

DUKE

That's right.

Duke smiles. How did they ever get from the simplicity of that place and time to this?

DUKE

I know you think I'm an awful man.
I did try to be a good father.

Geoffrey hugs him. Duke feels like he might cry, and certainly doesn't want to in front of his son.

DUKE

All right, that's enough of that.
You should get on the train or it's going to leave without you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But Geoffrey won't let go of him. Which brings Duke closer to tears.

DUKE

Come on, if you don't go, you're going to end up back with me forever.

(Geoffrey holds on)

Geoffrey -

Duke almost has to *push* him to break the hug.

DUKE

All right.

He hands his boy the suitcase and straightens his collar.

GEOFFREY

Write me when you get settled?

DUKE

Oh, yeah.

GEOFFREY

You know where I'll be.

DUKE

Yes, I do.

And he's prouder than he can say.

GEOFFREY

I love you.

DUKE

I love you, too, now go.

Geoffrey turns around and heads for the train. Duke tries to hide it, but watching his son leave *kills* him.

DUKE

Geoffrey -

Climbing the steps, Geoffrey looks back.

DUKE

Be good. But not too good. There's such a thing as too good.

Geoffrey smiles. The train starts to move. From his perspective, it seems as if it's Duke that's moving, not the train, turning at first, then drifting back, and away.

(CONTINUED)

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GEOFFREY V/O

I never saw him again. And I heard from him only once.

EXT. PRINCETON - DAY

Geoffrey walks among other arriving students, carrying his suitcase.

GEOFFREY V/O

He said in his one and only letter he was a bad influence, and always was, so perhaps it would be better if he stayed away and I tried to forget I had such a man for a father. There was no return address.

INT. PRINCETON CLASSROOM - DAY

Geoffrey sitting in an English class, listening to his lecturing professor, taking extensive notes.

GEOFFREY V/O

I only found out later, after he had died, what happened to him. He didn't go to Seattle as it turns out.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - DAY

Duke rides with another man in a Ford Ranchero along residential streets in Inglewood, looking for an address. The car pulls to the curb outside a small dilapidated house. Duke climbs out and approaches a car parked in the driveway.

GEOFFREY V/O

He stayed in L.A. where the banker who held the note on the Abarth-Zagato hired him to repossess other deadbeats' cars. Send a thief to catch a thief, I guess was the logic.

Duke uses a hacksaw blade to trip the door lock of the car and climbs in behind the wheel.

GEOFFREY V/O

So, equipped with a Slim Jim and a set of master ignition keys, my father became a nomad bounty hunter at \$50 a shot.

INT. FIRESTONE LIBRARY - NIGHT

Geoffrey sits at a table covered with books, doing his homework late into the night.

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GEOFFREY V/O

At some point, according to the police records, he was picked up in San Diego in such a disoriented state the cops thought it best to drop him off at a sanitarium.

EXT. SAN DIEGO - DAY

Cops lead Duke from their patrol car to the hospital.

GEOFFREY V/O

There it was determined he had been adding Dexamyl and Doriden to his usual regimen of Scotch and soda.

INT. SANITARIUM - DAY

The cops escort Duke down a corridor.

GEOFFREY V/O

Such highballs, he was informed, would not be allowed here. Here it would be Lithium - neat.

INT. SANITARIUM - DAY

Duke works in an occupational therapy class with several other patients.

GEOFFREY V/O

He stayed there almost a year and from all accounts enjoyed it.

As others make belts, Duke works on a beautiful briefcase.

GEOFFREY V/O

He liked to make things out of leather - always brown leather, or oxblood, a nurse observed - never black - and initialize them in gold leaf.

ASW III in gold on the briefcase, like the name of a plane.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - DAY

Lawyers and clients hang out on the steps of the County Courthouse.

GEOFFREY V/O

But there was still the debt to society to pay -

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Duke sits at a defense table as a judge reviews the voluminous charges against him.

GEOFFREY V/O

Outstanding warrants for a number of bad checks so prodigious it amazed even the judge - who sentenced him to two years at Chino State Prison.

EXT. CHINO STATE PRISON - DAY

Duke steps down from a prison bus with several other new arrivals, looking at the concrete fortress as he might the Ritz Hotel.

GEOFFREY V/O

There, according to his file he was not a model prisoner.

INT. CHINO STATE PRISON - DAY

Below a television bolted to the ceiling, guards struggle to break up a bloody fight that has erupted between Duke and another inmate.

GEOFFREY V/O

He got into trouble often, and once almost had his hand cut off at the wrist in a fight with another inmate over whether to watch "I Spy" or "Run for Your Life" on the cellblock television.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - DAY

A patrol car follows a disheveled man stumbling along the sidewalk.

GEOFFREY V/O

He migrated back to Los Angeles after serving his sentence in full - no time off for good behavior - and was soon picked up again by the cops. This time he was committed to Norwalk State Hospital.

EXT. NORWALK STATE HOSPITAL - DAY

And this time Duke doesn't go quietly. He's kicking and screaming as the cops muscle him toward the hospital doors.

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GEOFFREY V/O

There, his profile stated in part:
"Left arm now healed and functioning normally. Patient suitable for unskilled labor. Long range prognosis for social and economic rehabilitation is poor."

INT. NORWALK STATE HOSPITAL - DAY

Secured to a table, Duke is being administered shock therapy.

GEOFFREY V/O

It went on to say the patient was an irritant on the ward. There were many complaints from other patients and staff of provocative behavior.

EXT. NORWALK STATE HOSPITAL - DAY

Appearing more docile, Duke emerges from the hospital.

GEOFFREY V/O

He was discharged and given \$5 by the hospital and a referral card to the Bureau of Public Assistance.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - DAY

He's no longer repossessing cars, he's stealing them - or one, at least - looking around before slipping a Slim Jim in and reaching under the dash to hot-wire it.

GEOFFREY V/O

I learned all this after he died, alone in a small apartment in Manhattan Beach, with nothing much more than a stack of bills, some empty prescription medicine bottles and a shoe box filled with fake driver's licenses.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Duke is driving the stolen car cross-country past barns and grain silos.

GEOFFREY V/O

No address book. No clutch of letters held together with rubber bands. Nothing to suggest he'd ever known another human being.

Except one photograph. The snapshot of Duke and Geoffrey on the ferry, taped to the speedometer.

INT. PRINCETON - DAY

Geoffrey is graduating, waiting his turn to walk up and receive his diploma.

GEOFFREY V/O

I wish he had called. I wish he had written. I wish I could have seen him one last time.

Drifting away from the stage, past row after row of proud parents watching the ceremony, toward the back of the room -

GEOFFREY V/O

I wish most of all he could have seen me graduate from college, as he never had, as he made sure his son would.

Duke is there, unseen, framed in a window in the back, outside looking in.

GEOFFREY V/O

I think it would have meant a lot to him.

Duke smiles proudly watching his son receive his diploma, then turns and walks away.

FADE OUT