

JOE Ohhh, David! David David David David David David David David David David David David David David David David David David David David!

DAVID Are you talking to me, Dad?

JOE Yes . . . but *who* are you? Who *are* you, David? Do you know? Because I don't. I don't know who you are. Do *you* know who you are, David?

DAVID Just casually. I've seen me around the house.

JOE *That's* who you are . . . Quick with a flippanant answer. Fresh, disrespectful, unambitious, lazy, no interests, no principles, no beliefs, no scruples, a drunkard, a gambler, a playboy, a lover, a bum, a television watcher and a lousy guitar player, that's who you are.

DAVID (*Smiles*) Ah, gee, Dad . . . you remembered!

JOE Last week I tried to make a list of all the things you do that make me proud . . . I didn't even take the top off the fountain pen. In high school, remember the Father and Son Picnic? I went alone. And what makes it so painful to me is that you're the smartest one in the family. You're the smartest one in *anybody's* family. Three college degrees, finished first in your class, and you didn't even show up for your senior year. So why do you throw it all away, David? Why do you drink so much?

DAVID To overcome this terrible condition I have.

JOE (*Concerned*) What condition?

DAVID Soberness! I get it a lot in the mornings. It's terrible—the room stands still, I can see everything clearly, I get single vision. And then I see the most

frightening things in this house . . . Money, money, money, money, money, money, money, money . . . (*This breaks DAVID up*)

JOE Then why do you stay? Why don't you pack your bottles and leave this house?

DAVID I have tried on six separate occasions. But it's such a Goddamn long driveway, I never could make it to the gate . . . Sorry about the God reference.

JOE So you resent all this, is that it? You resent this house, my business, your mother's jewelry, our paintings, the furniture, the swimming pools, is that what you resent?

DAVID Don't forget our own Baskin-Robbins in the playhouse.

JOE Your sister likes ice cream—is that a crime? Is it a crime to be rich? Is it a sin to want only the best for your family?

DAVID I think a man is entitled to whatever he earns in this life. I do, however, think ninety-seven flavors is unnecessary.

JOE This house could go up in smoke tomorrow, I wouldn't blink an eye. I'll tell you something . . . There was a time in my life when the holes in my socks were so big, you could put them on from either end . . . I grew up in a tenement in New York. My mother, my father and eleven kids in one and a half rooms. We had two beds and a cot, you had to take a number off the wall to go to sleep . . . My father was five foot three, weighed a hundred and twenty-seven pounds. He had a bad heart, bad lungs, bad liver and bad kidneys. He was a piano

mover. He died at the age of thirty-two from an acute attack of everything . . . My mother had to take a job in a sweatshop working six days a week, fourteen hours a day. At night she washed floors at Madison Square Garden, and on Sundays she sold hot sweet potatoes on the corner of Fourteenth Street and Broadway. What she didn't sell was dinner for the rest of the week. Sweet potatoes every night. On Thanksgiving she'd stuff the sweet potato with a little white potato . . . The clothes we wore were made out of rags she found in the street, or a pair of curtains somebody threw away . . . You know what it is for a young boy growing up in a tough neighborhood in East New York to wear *curtains*? Can you picture that? *Fairies* used to beat me up . . . And through all those freezing winters and hot, hungry summers, through all the years of scrimping and scrubbing, through sicknesses without doctors or medicines—one winter we all had the whooping cough at the same time, eleven kids throwing up simultaneously in one and a half rooms—my mother nursed us on roller skates . . . through all that pain and heartache and suffering, she never complained or cried out against the world, because she knew it was God's will. That was the lesson my mother taught us. "What God has given, God can take away. And for what God has given you, be thankful" . . . When I was fourteen years old I went to work for the Schreiber Corrugated Box Company. A rotten man who made a rotten box. No matter how you packed it, the minute you shipped it, it fell apart. It didn't hold up under any kind of weather—including sunshine. Because Schreiber was interested in a quick profit, not workmanship, not quality. When I bought the business from him in 1942 with six thousand dollars my mother saved,

I started to make quality boxes, strong as steel. In the first three months I lost my mother's six thousand dollars. "It's God's will," she kept telling me. And then suddenly business began to pick up. From nowhere, from *everywhere*, people were buying my corrugated boxes. It was like a miracle. The money kept pouring in. I couldn't find banks fast enough to keep it . . . My mother never lived to enjoy my success . . . On the day I made my first million dollars, she died peacefully in her sleep on the BMT subway. Her last words to the conductor were "If God wanted me to live, I would have taken the bus today" . . . All I wanted for my wife and children was not to suffer the way I did as a child, not to be deprived of life's barest necessities. But such riches, such wealth? I never asked for it, I never needed it. But when I ask myself, "Why so much? Why all this?" I hear the voice of my mother say, "It's God's will" . . . I give half of what I have every year to charity, and the next year I make twice as much. Wealth is as much a responsibility as poverty is a burden. I'll accept whatever is given to me and ask for no more or no less . . . Can you understand this, David? Does anything I've said to you tonight make any sense at all? (DAVID *snores*) He's sleeping! Why do you torture me? Why do you twist my heart around like a pretzel? Where is your faith, David? Have I brought you up without faith, or have you just lost it?

DAVID If you want, I'll look in my closet in the morning . . .

JOE I would give away everything I have in this world if I could just hear you say, "Dear God in heaven, I believe in you."