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Father

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Father

by A. Page Spiegel

Yea, I'm going down to the Ice Cream Store. I want a milk shake. I want a strawberry milk shake. They taste good after a game of golf. Would you give me a ride? Thanks, dad. I can see you came from the club too. You've got those chalkcolored tennis shorts on. I hope you remembered to pull up that fly. You look pretty funny playing tennis when your fly is down. Mom doesn't like that. She laughs and ridicules you for it. Anyone would. Yes, and I can see you're hot and sweaty from the game. Your glasses are fogged up. I hope you can keep your eye and mind on the road. I never feel safe driving with you. How do your knees feel? How's your back, elbows, wrists, ankles, neck, knuckles? You look pretty funny, do you know that? You've got wrist braces, knee braces, ankle braces, elbow braces. You look like a

mummy. Look like you're in traction. Are you sure you're all right? This certainly is a nice car. Aren't you the head of the sanitation department in this area? Is that why you can afford a lime colored Mercedes with a red interior? And I really like this sun roof. You won't buy a car unless it has a sun roof. That's an extremely important feature. Yes, it sure is running well, isn't it? Sounds beautiful. This car purrs. I didn't even have to turn around when I was on the road. I knew it was you. I could tell by the varoom of the engine. That's my father coming, I said to myself. Sounds like a jet. Looks like a spaceship. And my father's the pilot. A Mercedes in lime with a red interior. A gorgeous machine. Well, thanks for picking me up. I jsut played golf and am now going to get a milk shake. What's that you're doing? Squeezing an orange fuzzy ball. That's a paddle ball, isn't it? Building up that forearm of yours, eh? Good for the tennis, good for the squash, racquet ball, paddle ball. You sure are a racquet man, aren't you? It all started with your father and his championship handball. They're all good games, I admit. But I like golf. I'm hooked on golf. George, you know who George is, don't you? My brother. Your son. Good guy, George. Dad, why do you keep squeezing that damn thing? Captain Queeg. Hell of a man, Captain Queeg, Humphrey Bogart. So how many miles do you have on this baby? Fifty thousand. You're kidding? You haven't even had it for a year. I guess you really like driving. I know I would if I had a car like this. What's that I hear? Sounds like ice jingling in a glass. Why, it is ice jingling in a glass. Smells like scotch. You drink Dewars,

don't you? I'm not going to tell you, but I went into the cabinet one night and stole a bottle. Tasted terrible. Not like a milk shake. Milk shakes don't make you vomit either. So after tennis you like to get a little Dewars on the rocks and drive home with the top down and squeeze a fuzzy orange ball. Your idea of ecstasy. What are you doing now? You've got to be kidding. You got a drink, a fuzzy ball, sun pouring down onto your grey hair, braces on every conceivable joint in your body, and now you're lighting up a cigar. Dunhill, Havanah? Can I have the ring? My knuckles are too big. People shouldn't wear paper rings. Big cloud of smoke in the car. Your glasses are fogged up. Air rushing around. How can you possibly do fifteen million things at once and still drive? You're getting cocky. Someday you'll get into an accident. I'm just the tiniest bit nervous. Anyone would be. Well, it's a beautiful day, isn't it? Yes, but I think it's clouding up. Getting a little chilly, almost. Would you call this a squall? Yes, it's a beautiful view. You can see white caps, can't you? And a few sail boats. This is a nice part of the country, isn't it? The wind is getting stronger. Look at the trees thrashing around. I wouldn't like anywhere else. What the hell are you doing now? Exercises? Facial exercises. My god! In the car! George told me about you doing that. Said he once saw this strange man in a car contorting his face into awful expressions. George was horrified. The guy was opening his mouth as far as it would go and sticking out his tongue. Then he would close it and change to a gigantic smile stretching from one ear to the other. His eyes looked

like planets. George thought the guy was a monster. That monster was you. Amazing. And you do eye exercises too, don't you? You look as far as you can to the left and then to the right and then down and then up. You roll them around in circles, don't you? Stretches the eye muscles. And you do those in the car too. Aren't you ever afraid of getting into an accident? Please, keep your eyes on the road. We're drifting over into the other lane. God, maybe I should ask him to let me out. Keep squeezing that ball, puffing on that cigar, drinking your Dewars, exercising that face. Keeps the wrinkles away, right? You'll stay young until you're eighty. But your hair is getting grey. And look, you got braces all over your body. How do you manage to stay in such good shape? Tell me, where are you going? On the way to the eye doctor's. That's funny. What for? Afraid you need bifocals. Well, it happens. On the way to the doctor's in your tennis whites? Nice touch. The doctor will appreciate that. You say they've got these new bifocals that look just like monofocals. Amazing. That's science for you. So how was the tennis? God damn wife is grating on your nerves, eh? She'd grate on mine too. Never leaves you alone. Why can't a man have his habits? She doesn't let you breathe. Doesn't like the mess you leave in the kitchen after you've made your special health breakfast. To tell you the truth, I don't either. You're a mess. Sloppy as sin. You leave puddles of coagulated yeast solution on the counters and blankets of protein powder on the floor and windows. You never clean the blender. Molasses drooling around all over the place. Off

your face. Lemon rinds discarded in peculiar places. You suck on those damn things, don't you? Good for your hair. Prevents it from turning grey. Well, I got news for you. Your hair is grey. So the lady never leaves you alone. You played tennis with her today? Did you win? Too bad. She kept telling you to concentrate. Got mad when you double-faulted. I wouldn't want to be told that my fly was down either. I can see how she feels. Don't be too hard on her. It sure is getting chilly in here, don't you think? Can I roll up my window? Jesus Christ, you almost hit that guy on his bike! Will you watch it, please? Now let me go over this again. You've got a cigar in one hand, a fuzzy ball in the other, and a drink in the same hand as the cigar, and a steering wheel in both. You're a marvel. How do you do it? I don't know about you, but I'd feel safer if you had three or four hands. But tell me, how's the sanitation department business these days? Making a lot of money. That's good. Did you see that, lightning? Sky is getting dark. Looks like it's about to rain. Feel sorry for the guys sailing. I'm shivering. Hey dad, it is raining! Do you realize that? It's a down pour. The sun roof. Close the sun roof, will you? We're getting wet. Yes, these storms sure do some up suddenly. Thank you. And to think just fifteen minutes ago it was a bright, sunny day. The anomalies of nature. You'll never cease to be amazed. Me neither. Where am I going? To the Ice Cream Shop. And you're going to the eye doctor's. Yea, it's just up around the corner. This sure is a bad street, isn't it. You've got to be patient. Seems like an endless stream of traffic. Jesus! Why

are you so impetuous? Did you hear that guy's horn? He's a god damn bastard, isn't he? Yea, that's right, tell him to shut up. Way to go. Not as easy to see when it rains, is it? Even a Mercedes fogs up on occasion. Hey, dad, you can just let me out here. Yea, it's all right. Thanks. Hope the doctor's appointment goes well.