

My father's offices are in Century City. I wait around for him in the large, expensively furnished reception room and hang out with the secretaries, flirting with this really pretty blond one. It doesn't bother me that my father leaves me waiting there for thirty minutes while he's in some meeting and then asks me why I'm late. I don't really want to go out to lunch today, would rather be at the beach or  
5 sleeping or out by the pool, but I'm pretty nice and I smile and nod a lot and pretend to listen to all his questions about college and I answer them pretty sincerely. And it doesn't embarrass me a whole lot that while on the way to Ma Maison he puts the top of the 450 down and plays a Bob Seger tape, as if this was some sort of weird gesture of communication. It also doesn't really make me angry that at lunch my father talks to a lot of businessmen, people he deals with in the film industry, who stop by  
10 our table and that I'm introduced only as 'my son' and the businessmen all begin to look the same and I begin to wish that I had brought the rest of the coke.

My father looks pretty healthy if you don't look at him for too long. He's completely tan and has had a hair transplant in Palm Springs, two weeks ago, and he has pretty much a full head of blondish hair. He also has had his face lifted. I'd gone to see him at Cedars-Sinai when he had it done  
15 and I remember seeing his face covered with bandages and how he would keep touching them lightly.

'Why aren't you having the usual?' I ask, actually interested, after we order.

He smiles, showing off the caps. 'Nutritionist won't allow it.'

'Oh.'

'How is your mother?' he asks calmly.

20 'She's fine.'

'Is she really feeling fine?'

'Yes, she's really feeling fine.' I'm tempted, for a moment, to tell him about the Ferrari parked in the driveway.

'Are you sure?'

25 'There's nothing to worry about.'

'That's good.' He pauses. 'Is she still seeing that Dr. Crain?'

'Uh-huh.'

'That's good.'

There's a pause. Another businessman stops by, then leaves.

30 'Well, Clay, what do you want for Christmas?'

'Nothing,' I say after a while.

'Do you want your subscription to *Variety* renewed?'

'It already is.'

Another pause.

35 'Do you need money?'

'No,' I tell him, knowing that he'll slip me some later on, outside Ma Maison maybe, or on the way back to his office.

'You look thin,' he says.

'Hmmm.'

40 'And pale.'

'It's the drugs,' I mumble.

'I didn't quite hear that.'

I look at him and say, 'I've gained five pounds since I've been back home.'

'Oh,' he says, and pours himself a glass of white wine.

45 Some other business guy drops by. After he leaves, my father turns to me and says, 'Do you want to go to Palm Springs for Christmas?'