

Cranky Buddha

or

My First Five and Three-Quarters-and-a-Half Years

An [Imagined] Autobiographical Account
Culled from the [Imagined] Diaries of the Oh-So-Young
Daniel David Borodin
[Who Resembled The Buddha, but Cranky, as an Infant]

"by"

Daniel David Borodin
(i.e., "with" his father, David Borodin)

176 Pages

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Cranky Buddha

Daniel David Borodin

By the Same Author

Motorcycle!

Hey, I Gotta Idea!

I Wannit, Motorcycle!

You Wannit, Motorcycle, Too?

What's That, Mommy, A Motorcycle?

I Ha' Glubs Too! Motorcycle Glubs! You Do?

I Can' Ride It, Motorcycle... 'Cause It Too Big for Me?

I Ha' Motorcycle Glubs But I Not Ha' Motorcycle...But I Want One!

Hey, I Gotta Idea! Come! Let's Talk About It: I Wanna talk 'bout Motorcycle!

Can We Go Buy Motorcycle Now? 'Cause I Wannit, Preeeze, 'Cause...'Cause...Can We?

Hi Daddy! You're Home? Good, 'Cause Mommy Said We Go Buy Motorcycle You Come Home!

Cranky Buddha

or

My First Five and Three-Quarters-and-a-Half Years

Dedicated to

his Mother

Suvi Borodin

on the Occasion of her 43rd Birthday

May 8, 1996

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First and Last American Edition

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Cranky Buddha

August 1, 1990. Woke up this morning feeling as if my existence had preceded my essence or something. (If free will does exist in man, why do I find myself crying even when I don't want to cry?)

Well, I suppose that while the momentous events of my first few weeks of life out here are still fresh in my mind, I should take the opportunity to set them down as best as I can remember them. For, if I don't, Dad will. And that can only mean hyperbole exacerbated by bad spelling. So here goes:

I arrived late, according to the doctors. (Actually, I was born precisely when predicted by Jeanette McLaughlin, our neighbor on Allens Lane. Jeanette was not a doctor. My Dad had bumped into her on June 24th, the eve of my official due date, and told her of his excitement, and Jeanette suggested he relax because the full moon was still two full weeks away and nothing was going to happen in the way of child-birthing until then. Sure enough, two full weeks later, early in the morning of July 9, 1990, like Jeanette predicted, I took the plunge.)

I had not come out willingly, I am told. In fact, I had to be pulled out with forceps. My own recollections of it all are fuzzy, but I do remember being in the birth canal and entertaining something of a general indifference as to precisely which direction I was to go. (After being two weeks late already, it was hard to see how an hour or two more would really make much difference.)

Anyway, prompted by the subtle incentive of forceps clasped upon my skull, I submitted to popular demand and gave up the rather tight quarters I had come to think of as "my room." What was really weird now was that after all that time in there – when day and night were one and tomorrow was just like yesterday – all of a sudden now I had become aware of, well, events. I mean things began happening, one after the other, and rather quickly too. And I remember thinking to myself, *this is an event*. It is distinguishable from other stuff, unlike the stuff that happened back in there. (It's sort of like being out to sea, surrounded only by tranquil water for as far as the eye can see and for as long as you can remember, and then suddenly you're docked in port and standing in front of a customs inspector who's asking you something unintelligible about your luggage, or something.)

Anyway, I came on out, cried like hell, bonded with Mom and Dad and immediately took a good long nap. This was at about 7:00 a.m. on the morning of July 9th, 1990. I'm sure I woke up a few hours later and cried some more, etc., but quite frankly, I don't remember any of it. In fact, I cannot recall leaving the hospital, coming home, or anything.

I was already strong enough by this time to turn my head from one side to the other while on my stomach. Upon seeing me do this stunt, Daddy immediately jumped into bed to see if he could do the same, but was asleep before he hit the mattress. (This was a typical cheap ploy to recapture some of the sleep lost at night when he and I were obliged to burn the midnight electricity, rocking back and forth to the flickering and shouting of opera on video).

By the time he and Mommy finally did get the opportunity for a full night of unconsciousness, they didn't quite know what to do with it all. I remember it vividly, as retold to me later by Dad:

It was the night of Sunday, July 29, 1990. The sky was clear, the dehumidifier humming, not a Hare Krishna could be heard, and once again I had drunk myself silly. But this time I remained asleep for a whopping and unprecedented 6 1/2 hours, during which time you would imagine that the two tiredest people in America might have caught up on their own sleep. But noooo! By this point they were so used to my waking up every two hours that they just didn't know what to do when I didn't. They just stood there-no, hovered-over my crib, frightened that maybe everything wasn't all right if I wasn't crying. (You see, until now the most terrifying sight imaginable to these tired folk was that pair of eyes, big as silver dollars, staring up at them out of the bassinet at 11:30 p.m., 1:30 p.m., 3:30 p.m., etc. Now, when there was time for all of us to mind our own business, I had two pair of eyes, big as silver dollars, staring down at me.)

The next day mommy decided to give up drinking cow's milk after having read of the gaseous effects it often has on breast-fed infants. Even though I was beginning to sleep through the night already, I was still troubled by the inexplicable, which for the time being we shall refer to as factor x. (Those with any experience in life usually fall back on the time-tested equation: $x = \text{GAS}$.) Well, sure enough, Mommy's dietary change seemed to have helped our hero (me) in his time of need, but I was still redolent of a foul odor, inexplicable to my parents.

It seems I had taken on the smell of a little lump of garbage left out in an alley in August. And this was clearly not the smell of dirty diapers. Rather, it turned out to be a matter of a certain stump of umbilical cord which did not want to fall off. Mommy and Daddy now had another big event to wait for and to discuss. Friends of the Borodins just couldn't wait for each new installment of the *Saga of the Stump of Rotting Flesh*..

When it did fall off, finally after about two weeks, I took my first bath. Mom and I got in the tub and I fixed my stare upon a spot on the ceiling while attempting to label all the new sensations I was experiencing. Primary among these was the sensation of being wet and not knowing what it was exactly that one was feeling.

August 4, 1990. Today, finally, I was considered old enough to see my first Shakespeare play. It was a production by Shakespeare in the Park, held at Pastorius Park in Chestnut Hill. I sat through about three-quarters of something called *The Tempest*, right up to the point where the ugly little hunchback says something inaudible to the old guy with the magic wand. Overall, I think it safe to say I was the best behaved man of his age who had bothered to attend. Short bouts of impatience with the story credibility (I mean, really!) were easily quelled by short walks around the park.

August 6, 1990. I discovered a remarkable and little-known sport: couch surfing . This is Dad's term for the very difficult and dangerous art of laying flat on one's back in the middle of a sofa and still maintaining perfect balance (i.e., neither flying straight up in the air or standing upright by accident), all managed by the careful choppy movements of the raised arms, the twisting of the trunk, and the change of imaginary weight from foot to foot, just like a surfer, and all in the attempt to maintain the difficult horizontal position that adults somehow take for granted.

Couch surfing is tiring, and always leads to crying-as does everything, eventually. But it is great fun (in the beginning, as is everything). Sometimes the busy surfer can acknowledge the return of his prodigal Dad from work, but other times he is necessarily far too busy maintaining the horizontal, and must concentrate his stare just above wherever Dad is, and to the right slightly. (It is as if Dad was wearing a new kind of hat

that had some bug-eyed fuzzy fish on it bouncing from the end of a long wire off the side of it.)

August 7, 1990. My first restaurant experience. Didn't taste a thing. Just watched everybody else eat. Great fun! Whoppee!

August 8, 1990. Graduated from couch surfing to knee surfing. This daredevil sport is typically practiced precisely in the manner of couch surfing, but vertically and upon someone's knees. And it helps if that someone just so happens to be holding the practitioner up under the armpits to keep him from toppling over during both the surfing and non-surfing portions of this sport. The challenge of keeping the head up and in the middle of the shoulders was the most rewarding pastime a man of my age could hope for. Whenever the god of good mood would start losing ground to the god of grumpiness during the eternal battle between these well-known deities, one trick that seemed never to fail for at least a minute or two was that of sitting or standing up to practice knee surfing. My body would stiffen immediately, head to toe, knees locked tight, (and toes curled underneath for that inexplicable extra support), arms like balance bars before me, all the while drawing in a deep, raspy snort of a breath before lowering my head in front of me, chin near chest, to watch my supporter's face with big eyes, allowing the powerful anti-smile muscles a moment's repose (in just enough time for the mouth to curl open and release a long cooing noise reminiscent of a well-fed dove). By now the prophetic hints of smiles gleaned as early as my third week were undeniably legitimate smiles. What used to be merely the effect of a released gas bubble was by this time a state of mind.

August 16, 1990. Spent the entire day yesterday shopping with Mom. I had to laugh when I heard her report to Dad that we "were shopping today at the mall." We? I was strapped to the torso of someone who was shopping, trying only to keep my eyes focused on her chin or her nose or anything that would not float away the moment I had it in view.

August 18, 1990: It's becoming more and more difficult to find a moment's peace for diary entries. This woman is so nosy that she has now stooped to leaving a walkie-talkie in my bassinet with which to spy on me when she goes to the laundry room. I'm going to have to have Dad find me some quieter pencils. Another curious thing: she gets all excited when I play with or suck on my blanket. It must mean to them something above and beyond what it denotes to me-boredom.

August 19, 1990. Spent the day at Uncle Brian's housewarming-in August he needs a housewarming?-with a lot of unruly kids. Big fireworks display of territorialism, jealousy, greed-things I have not yet felt myself but have seen plenty of on T.V. But worse than all of this was the cigarette smoke.

August 19, 1990. Visited Dad's Cousins Bea & Morris. They sure as hell look more like aunts and uncles (or even great aunts and uncles) than cousins, but I think there's some technicality behind it all. I spent most of the time on the floor as they fed their faces, the four of them. This is becoming a trend. They eat, I amuse myself with the, well, figure

in the carpet. The only way to remind them of my plight is to insinuate myself on their sense of smell, but this is no bed of roses for me either. The only part of the conversation I understood seemed to indicate that Mom and Dad are interested in purchasing these folks' house. I hope not. There's not a toy in the place!

August 20, 1990. Today, for the first time, I realized that the mackerel-colored pillow on the leather sofa is actually a wind-up toy of some sort, evidently meant to entertain me. I know I saw it move today, although out of the corner of my eye. Better keep closer tabs on it from here on in.

August 21, 1990. I know it sounds crazy, but that blanket really does taste good! I never yet felt this uncontrollable urge to squeal with delight until I realized (I think yesterday) that my taste buds are not playing tricks on me. Mom and Dad seem to have known about the phenomenon for some time now (though, come to think of it, I have never seen them suck on a blanket), because they laugh that "Oh, he finally caught on" kind of laugh every time I indulge.

August 22, 1990. When is she going to get it through her head that I'm not going to suck on some piece of plastic when I can have the real thing any time I want? When you've got a mom with boobs like mine has, you gotta be a darn fool to settle for a bottle! Fingers maybe, but plastic is out. (At least fingers are warm and fleshy. As a matter of fact, I'm beginning to find a certain amount of pleasure in fingers in their own right—especially my own—although they'll never replace Mom.)

August 23, 1990. Dad held me up to confront the mirror face to face today, and I'm afraid that what they've been saying is undeniably true. I do look like Tweety Bird when I concentrate on keeping my head straight! Worse yet, a sort of inebriated Tweety Bird. How can someone who looks so much like Robert Redford in the changing table mirror look so much like Tweety Bird in the bureau mirror? And can there be any truth at all in Winston Churchill's immensely unsettling statement that all men my age look like him?

August 27, 1990. I think I drank too much again last night. Feel a bit bloated. I'll bet I'm 12 lbs. by now. I'm going to have to diet soon if I don't watch myself. Maybe I'll just limit myself to one breast before bed and save the other one for an early morning pick-me-up. I've got to remember to ask Dad if there are any calories in fingers.

September 2, 1990. Went to Aunt Clara and Uncle Cody's house today for a cookout. (What do I care, really, whether it's a cookout or a cookin, of a cook half-in/half-out, if all I'm ever going to get is milk?! I'm afraid the handwriting is on the wall: the most I can ever hope for is perhaps a hint of garlic in tomorrow's milk. I finally met the other Daniel. I can't see how he could have been named after me when he doesn't look a thing like me! One immediately apparent difference is that his fingers are not eternally wet like mine.

September 4, 1990. Went to another cookout yesterday (this one at Chez O'Shea), and got back too late to write about it. Must have drunk too much: don't remember a thing

about the entire evening except for coming back. Mom tricked me in the car with what I now realize was just a bottle. (In the dark you can confuse such things for breasts if you're really hungry and sleepy.) They seemed quite excited by the prospect of fooling me and I just can't figure it out. Does she or doesn't she want to breast-feed me, anyhow?

September 6, 1990. Writer's block yesterday. Today, the doctor's. Nice woman, generally, but she hurt more than just my feelings when she gave me the DTP and OPV.
September 8, 1990. More of Dad's relatives today, all day. If I see one more new face I'll wretch. And tomorrow it's Nursing Mothers with Mom and all those ugly kiddies-God, I've got to get away by myself for awhile!

September 10, 1990. Glad this day is about over. It was worse than I thought it was going to be. The kiddies were no problem, actually. (Ugly, but harmless.) That hysterical Mexican girl, on the other hand! Jeeze, they ought to make a tape of her when she's hungry or wet and broadcast it to Iraq, they should!

September 12, 1990. My dressing mirror is finally staying in one place when I kick at it. I don't know whether Dad or Mom did something to it or what, but it definitely doesn't jump around anymore when I aim for it.

September 16, 1990. It's been a week of restaurants. In my humble opinion, chasing all over the city just to be served the same blanket and bottle is a waste, not to mention a bore. I guess I can't complain of being unpopular, on the other hand. I do seem to attract a certain amount of attention from the women and the two-year-old set.

September 18, 1990. Another mall! Maybe it was the same one as the last four and we just came in a different entrance. Frankly I don't see how anyone can tell them all apart. Anyhow, it's not so bad. I'm strapped to Mom, so at least I don't have to worry about finding the car. Also, it's remarkably easy to get shut-eye when your bouncing around a noisy crowded place in such close proximity to a warm, familiar body.

September 19, 1990. Mom got me another toy recently, but I think they sold her a bill of goods. She says it's an airplane, but it obviously won't fly. Looks more like a fat puppy with wings stuck in its sides.

September 20, 1990. Got in too late last night to even think about the day. Spent the night at some orchestra conductor's place. Mom, Dad, Uncle Jack and our hosts, the Sternbergs, all had stewed chicken; I had blanket. Tasted pretty much the same as the one I had at Kim's Korean Restaurant, Napoleon Cafe, and everywhere else "we've" ever "eaten." Still, there's no sense in complaining really. All that happens is that Dad picks me up and takes me outside to pace in front of the restaurant until I'm tired of complaining. I really don't enjoy being cynical, but I think it's obvious that this is a form of repression. As long as I'm not complaining I am free to express myself. I can laugh as loud as I damn well please-even when it is entirely inappropriate to the situation-but as soon as I am negative in the slightest, the parental SWAT team swoops in to hush me. What's going to happen from all this is clear to me now: I'm going to grow up to be one of those eternally happy, lobotomized, rosy-cheeked, Norman Rockwell images of well-

balanced blandness, and everyone will love me for it. No way, Daddy boy! Ugh ugh...no more Mr. nice guy!

September 22, 1990. Too strung out to write yesterday. Morning wasn't bad. Went with Mom to her office. It seems I've got that certain something that drives women wild. They simply can't keep their hands off of me. They always drop what they're doing and come running over to me, making excited cooing noises. I just pray I don't fall in love and get in trouble before I'm old enough to understand it all. (Poor Dad. I've noticed that the women just don't act that way toward him. I feel sorry for him, and I guess that's why I always feel obliged to humor him by pulling his hair and laughing and stuff.)

September 23, 1990. Yesterday Mom dragged Dad and you know who to another mall. (Once again, I think it was a different one than the others, but it's really quite difficult to know for sure.) There they bought me a humidifier for my nose, because it's been so stuffed up.

September 24, 1990. The beginning of my twelfth week. Once again, didn't get a chance to write last night. What a day! A lot of new faces, the names to which I will never remember. Went to Uncle Jack's house in town. Crammed with strangers and beautiful, breakable things. I've got to go back there when I'm old enough to crawl around and reach for things myself. What an opportunity to learn! I've never had the pleasure to hold porcelain in my hand, for example. Either we don't have much at home or Dad keeps it hidden. I'm going to have to pay more attention in that sphere now. Oh, and Uncle Jack's books! My gums itch just looking at those leather-bound corners! Well, at any rate, we went out afterwards to some sort of Oriental restaurant. (I had blanket again. Magnificent.) The only interesting aspect of this place is that they had fishies like from my crib, but they were immersed in a tank of water (won't they die?) for me to watch when I got bored with the dinner conversation, which I did the moment it veered from me.

September 24, 1990. Holy Mackerel! If I only had teeth, I'd swear they were itching me! I don't know what's going on, but suddenly I am overwhelmed by the desire to shove everything and anything in my mouth that will fit there. (Curiously enough, I find that just about everything does fit when you get it good and wet enough. God, the mouth is amazing: a hole in your head in which you can carry stuff!). The truly positive outcome of it all is that my mouth now seems to stay in one place while I grab for the next thing to bring to it. This, let me emphasize, is progress. The frustration in missing your target at such embarrassingly close range is inexpressible.

September 25, 1990. The day went by in a flash (now that I found my mouth), and I didn't even get a chance to practice my conducting. It's really not as much fun without an audience, anyway. The only problem with the audience bit is if that audience is Dad sometimes. He has the habit of changing the tune he's whistling right when I'm getting the orchestra to follow him.

September 28, 1990. Yesterday was weird! Uncle Jack's brother came with his wife to bring me something else to wear. (Everyone seems to be petrified that I'll go around

naked for ten seconds or something! It's hard to make them out. I can't help but admire my body every time I see it in the changing table mirror, and I simply don't see what all the fuss is about keeping it covered.) This Guy (that's really his name, can you believe it?) looks nothing like Uncle Jack except for his last name, and I tried to ask him if they were really brothers in the sibling sense or if they were just Freemasons or something. Unfortunately, I just couldn't find the words and they just sat there laughing at me until I got good and tired of the abuse (it's incredible how cruel grownup people can be when you give them a chance to show their true colors!) and cried enough for them to go home.

September 28, 1990. Mom seems to get off watching me kiss Lambchop and Iceberg. She laughs her head off every time even though it's unarguably rudimentary stuff. That's what I love about her: she's so easy to please. (I really am crazy about her. It's hard to explain. Him too, even though he runs away from home nearly every day.)

October 2, 1990. Someone else must have escaped from the zoo: a weird looking creature like a brown hog with a hedge of fur running down the middle of her (his?!) back has been hanging around with Lambchop and Iceberg lately. Won't tell me her/his name or where she/he escaped from. I'm afraid she/he will just have to go back because after we play I have little hairs sticking off my tongue.

October 4, 1990. Dad makes me laugh sometimes. Last night we were watching the flickering glare of the big box in Mom's study and Dad was standing in place, jumping slightly up and down to rock me the way he usually does when he wants me to go to sleep or something. Well, Mom asked for me, and when I looked up at him next he was doing the very same thing with that mackerel-colored pillow in his arms-the one from the downstairs sofa. For the second time that I can remember now, I swear that I saw that pillow move on its own. It had that terminally shocked look on its face normally associated with persons of my age. (Do I ever look like that?) It reminded me of Dad's face every time he changes my diaper. (It is possible that a grown man does not know what diapers are used for?)

October 6, 1990. A day to remember. Today I learned, quite by accident, the real reason for the diapers. This stuff about "pee pee" and "pooh pooh" is crap; it has more to do with keeping me from knowing myself. The revelation came while Mom was changing me this morning. She was taking an inordinate amount of time in laying her hands on the fresh diaper. Dad was hiding around the corner like usual (the coward), evidently terrified that I'd mistake him for a lamp post or something in the meantime. Well, with nothing better to do other than count sheep that had already been accounted for, I took inventory of my personal belongings again: "nipples, good; ribs, good; belly button, good;...Hello! What have we here? Ahh, where have you been hiding till now, and what's in the bag, pritheee tell?" Well, here I am enjoying a real education when all of a sudden class is over without prior warning as this hand comes flying out from Mom's general direction like a shot off a shovel and disengages my curiosity faster than you could say "hot dog!" I haven't the dimmest notion as to the impropriety I committed (after all, they're all mine, are they not?), but Mom and Dad embarked upon a heated polemical over it that suggests that there's more here than meets the eye.

"He'll crush them or pull it off or...!"

"He does have nerve endings there, you know. You can take it from me."

"But he might not understand or figure it out..."

Etc., etc., etc. I don't know yet what all is behind this, but I do know that the next time the diapers come off I'm going to be a shot quicker on the draw.

October 8, 1990. Either I am actually teething at the tender age of 3 months (tomorrow, according to my calculations), or else I have a leaky faucet and a row of insect bites on my lower gum. It is bearable when I have a fist or two free to shove in my mouth, but otherwise I can't think of what to do but complain.

October 17, 1990. We sat in the car for hours today. When Mom finally got me unhooked from the back seat the city looked quite foreign to me-sort of like New York. We visited some old friend of Uncle Jack's and there was this young person like me there who was much bigger than me and, quite frankly, not nearly as handsome. I don't remember his name-only that it was unusual. Mozart or something.

10/18/90: We went to a room that was not ours and stayed there all night. It looks like we're on the move again. I realize now that I can be happy just about anywhere provided I've just been fed, changed and woken up from a nap.

October 20, 1990. Yesterday we sat in the car again for hours and again we went to a house that wasn't ours. (Who feeds Lambchop and Iceberg and Hedgehog when we're away this long? And what about that striped gray pillow on the sofa? Does it not need to be moved from sofa to sofa occasionally?) Nice place. Everything old. Spent the night in the bottom drawer of a late 18th century New England cherry chest (or at least so says Dad-it could have been early 19th century Georgia Piedmont for all I could tell). Wouldn't have been surprised to wake up and find myself on the front page of *Maine Antiques Digest* or something.

October 21, 1990. We sat in the car again for another eternity, and when we got out there was nothing but trees and water all over the place. Nothing of significance happened until a couple of hours ago. I was sitting on Dad's lap gnawing a finger or two, watching Mom eat this round green thing with wet white center, when out of the blue she goes bonkers and raises the remainder of it right up in front of me in an obvious gesture of, here take some. Need I say, I was speechless. This woman has surely lost control at the wheel, I'm thinking. Dad's thinking the same thing, obviously, because he's saying it too. I simply stared in disbelief as she let me wrap my itchy gums around that cold wet baby. Wow! How do you describe the sensation? The word sinful comes to mind, whatever that is. I mean I've had every finger you can name, I've had fuzzy things, stuffed things, plastic things, all sorts of things in my mouth, but this was... well, sinful. Or is it ghhkheeeeh the word I'm looking for? Whatever. The world became an instant blur to me, I lost track of everybody in the room and all I could hear out of one corner of an ear was Dad saying to Mom, he's going to far his little backside off if you let him swallow that stuff, and Mom saying, Oh, come on, no he won't, and Dad saying, yes he will I just know it, and Mom saying, he will not, and Dad laughing and saying, I told you so, and everybody in the room laughing and holding their noses.

October 22, 1990. We're back home again. Iceberg, Lambchop, Hedgehog and the mackerel pillow are apparently all fine. One thing this trip has driven home to me, speaking of driving home, is how important it is to be on your stomach a lot if you really want to learn to grunt and groan like a weight lifter. Next to orchestra conducting and sucking on cold round green things with wet white insides there's nothing quite like it. If only I could remember to keep my feet on the ground instead of up in the air I might even manage to move, but I definitely think that the real fun is in the grunting.

October 23, 1990. Apple. That's the word. Apple. Not sinful, but Apple. I overheard Dad telling the story and that's the word he used. I guess that's where apple-Jews come from. Apple. Now, the rub is, how to get one.

October 24, 1990. For Dad's birthday I ate some of his hair and tried to bite off his nose. I don't know what it is exactly about that black mop he wears on his head, but when I get my wet little hands tangled up in it I suddenly feel as if we're real close, the two of us, and that he's not gonna just get up and go disappear on me. Why my mouth, though? Mom says it's reflex, whatever that is. All I know is that when you put something in my hand it ends up in my mouth as sure as gravity.

October 25, 1990. God I love the sound of my own voice! Do I sound that great to others, or am I a bit partial? Lately I can think of nothing more fun than taking in a deep breath, bearing my gums, and going for whatever comes out. Sometimes I get a high C, sometimes a belly laugh, but more often than not a groan that ends up a shriek. What's the difference, anyhow? It's all free and it's all Art.

October 26, 1990. Last night we went to the restaurant with the tank of wet fishies (the ones over my crib are much plumper and fuzzier, so it must be the water that makes these look so malnourished looking). Anyway, there were a lot of people eating with us (them, I should say; I wasn't invited to partake, as usual), and there was this one guy there called Uncle Paul. Now as far as I am concerned this guy could be my uncle, unlike Uncle Brian, Uncle Dick, and all the others who don't look a thing like a brother of Dad. Anyway, this guy is really crazy (another sure sign of a family connection). He and I danced on the table after dinner, and I must say, I've never had a dance partner who knew so many steps.

October 27, 1990. The things you find when you look up! In our library downstairs, for example, I noticed this weird white thing stuck in the ceiling. I can't take my eyes off it. It looks like the kinda thing Mom would have hung over my crib if only there was room. Dad took notice of my fascination and probably thought he was helping me out by telling me it was a sealing van. This made matters worse, not better. Come to think of it, I seem to remember this thing turning around just a month or so ago. It must be broken or at least sleeping.

October 28, 1990. The mackerel pillow makes a strange soft vibrating noise until you grab its fur. I'm glad it has a collar on it because I don't know how else to keep it from getting away from me.

October 29, 1990. Is it paranoia when you think your bassinet is constantly getting smaller? I estimate that I have about three-quarters of an inch before I'm touching both ends at once. (It is definitely NOT paranoia when you think your bassinet has gotten smaller and you're touching both ends at once.) What then? Bend my knees? Curl my toes? Sleep sitting up? Find an apartment? The logical answer would be to sleep with Mom. There'd be plenty of room in her bed if what's his name would trade places with me and sleep in the bassinet. But on second thought, if the bassinet is too small for me, I don't really see how he would fit in it.

November 4, 1990. The big toe definitely tastes better than the thumb. Unbelievable. I'm sure it's neither the novelty nor the added effort that makes it seem so. It's simply more delicious and satisfying. I suppose this is just another example of what Dad calls "Murphy's Lawn": that which is furthest away tastes best.

November 11, 1990. Thank God It's Sunday Night! Another one of those weekends: wall to wall mall and nothing purchased! At least when I'm with Mom alone I have a chance to inspect the stuff as we go along, but when I'm on Dad I'm lucky if I pick one or two things off a shelf or hanger in an afternoon! Hey, where's the fire, anyway? I don't know whether he puts his brain on automatic pilot when he's following Mom around the malls or what, but the speed he paces those isles waiting for Mom I could get windblown or something.

November 12, 1990. Today was my 4 month check-up. It turns out I've got a big head, a long body, and still plenty of spunk in me. What more can a man want? The Doc says I'm in great shape for a man my age. I told her she's not so bad herself, but she didn't get a word I said, so I blew a few raspberries at her and she liked that. Well, anyway, there I am undressed with this married woman and she's giving me a rather personal examination (and I mean NOTHING is sacred) and everything is going like a nipple dripping warm milk when all of a sudden she gets it into her head to stick something sharp in my thigh in the name of medical science. I don't remember exactly what happened next because the room got blurry and my face got wet and it was very loud for a few minutes. But I do remember she looked quite ashamed and very sorry about what happened. I told her not to worry about it and that I'd see her around sometime, but again, she didn't understand a word, so I blew raspberries, which she understood.

November 13, 1990. I'm beginning to think I made a mistake in taking that correspondence course in raspberry blowing: now that I know how to there are times when everything I want to say comes out wet and bubbly and there's no stopping it.

November 16, 1990. Wow, what a night! Mom and Dad and I spent four hours in a class on Infant CPAs, or something like that. They had these ugly plastic babies there for everyone to pretend were real (Mom and Dad were smart and brought me instead), and all these adults lined up all night to try to wake them up or something. Do I look like that when I sleep? And do they have to go to all that trouble to wake me up each time? Well, anyway, I was the only person of the younger persuasion there, and by far the best behaved.

November 18, 1990. A weekend to remember: foreign liquids on Saturday and solids on Sunday! What's tomorrow, strange gases? Incredible! Saturday morning I'm minding my own business along with Mom and Dad's and all of the sudden there's a glass of orange liquid in front of me ("orange Jews," I later found out). So of course I grab it and suck on it quick before someone has the chance to stop me. Well, no wonder nobody tried to stop me: it's terrible. I wish I had had a mirror there to see what I looked like tasting it, but if I had to describe to somebody from memory how to imitate the face I made, I'd say start by pushing your cheeks up over your eyebrows. Well, I figured, that was just the initial taste; the rest can't be quite that bad. But it was, as was the third, fourth, fifth, etc. So this morning I'm there again at the breakfast table bracing myself for more of the same torture when I find that Dad went and switched the Jews on me: this time it was "apple Jews." Again I forgot to bring a mirror with me, but take it from memory that if you want to make an "apple Jews face," just follow the steps for the "orange Jews" face and don't hold it quite so long (three or four seconds as opposed to eight or nine). And while your exercising those particular facial muscles you might as well just hold them there and wait for the rice porridge, because you're gonna need the same face for that stuff too.

Just a couple of hours ago, at a little over 4 months and 1 week old, I Daniel David Borodin ate my first solid meal. Like with "orange Jews" and "apple Jews," rice porridge tastes bad enough to make you pucker on the first taste and the second and third and fourth and fifth and sixth, but after enough repetition you don't feel your facial muscles straining any more. Mom said, My he's (me's) hungry, look at him eat. Mom didn't quite understand the reason for my appetite until she changed me a half hour later. If she would have remembered Murphy's infant law # 678, she would not have been surprised. The law says that to determine the amount of rice porridge that has actually made it to the recipient's stomach, simply estimate the amount on his or her clothing and divide by roughly 12.85.

November 23, 1990. Yesterday was "Thanksgibbing" and we went to the O'Sheas'. Mom dressed me up to look grownup with a bow tie and all. Dad said I looked like Winston Churchill and laughed (I take it by this that it is not quite the most fashionable thing to look like this guy at my age). Well, whatever the case may be, I certainly didn't get a chance to eat or drink like Winston Churchill. Technically speaking, there was no shortage of good looking fare to nibble on, but none of it ever got closer than twelve inches away from my outstretched arm. I would have settled for a taste of the tablecloth even, but Dad untangled me from it just before I had time to pull it all toward me. Well, all in all I had my fun anyway: I declared war after the party by refusing to go to sleep for more than 45 minutes at a time. This morning Dad was not making those embarrassingly silly faces at me. I remembered last night and figured I might reconcile things by opening up a conversation about literary theory. I don't think he heard a word of it.

November 25, 1990. I guess I really was made to party. Last night was ("Uncle") David Bloom's 40th birthday party and we went at 7:00 and didn't leave until 11:00. There was no mistaking that I was the life of the party. Mom and Dad had no trouble striking up conversations with people with me around. Dad was boasting to someone or other about my new-found ability to stay vertical while holding on to a dependable surface; it took me a while to realize what he meant. Funny, I thought I've always been able to do

that! In any case, he was able to summon up a consensus that I'm a step ahead of the textbooks - a real "vunderkint" (do I have that spelled right?) as Dad calls it. (I think that's German for Wonderbread.)

November 26, 1990. All I seem to want to do anymore is roll over and then back again. I have no idea why it should be such a source of entertainment to me just now except that I just learned that I can actually do it.

November 28, 1990. I just found something better. Stand me up against anything I can hold onto that's heavier (and less wobbly) than I am and viola!, I can stand... for a while. (I have to look up somewhere why it is that gravity increases in strength through duration.)

December 3, 1990. They must celebrate Christmas (whatever that is) early around here. I got the two best gifts a man my age could ask for, all in the same day: my own car and a chair to sit in while on daddy's back. The car makes it a lot easier to chase after that elusive pillow with the tail on it (which, by the way, appears to have woken up and found some energy ever since I learned how to drive this thing), and the chair is great for taking naps without the fear of waking up all alone. And when the ride gets bumpy there's always a thick mop of hair to grab onto.

December 9, 1990. I feel like pooh-pooh today. My ears hurt when I lie down on my back for changing. I pray that this does not mean the "A" word (Amoxicillin).

December 10, 1990. My worst fear was confirmed by Dr. Goode today. The "A" word! I just don't think it is worth it putting that stuff down my gullet just to feel better! Give me pee-pee and I'll drink it gladly. I'll suck on daddy's socks, no problem. But this stuff can only be meant to make you vomit.

December 13, 1990. I'm desperate enough about this Amoxicillin to attempt a little reverse psychology on mom: next time she looms in front of me wielding an eyedropper of the stuff I'll grab it out of her hands and suck it dry no matter how bad it is. That ought to make her think twice about making me take it.

December 14, 1990. Oh pooh-pooh, it didn't work! She thought it was so "cute," my taking the eyedropper, that she gave me a little more to make up for what I missed the days before when I threw it all up. I'm afraid this means war.

December 16, 1990. I'm hoping tonight is bath night again. I feel I need it with all the physical exertion I've been through driving around the house in pursuit of that elusive pillow. More than getting clean, however, I love the very wetness of it all. No, more than the wetness of it all I love the plastic faucet bumper. Now that's worth getting undressed for!

December 18, 1990. I know this sounds funny, but when I get out of my car my legs feel like rubber and it's hard to adjust them to carry my true body weight (unless some one turns up the gravity the minute I'm oughta that thing). I can walk just fine when

holding onto someone's hands, but as soon as I try it after getting out of the car I'm like a drunkard. Must be what the experts call a "fenominum."

December 20, 1990. I think dad is going to be proud of me...I feel like I'm turning into a bibliophile (I think that's what he said you call someone with a voracious appetite for books). I'm beginning to see books as a wonderful new world of stimulation for my itching gums. Hardbound books are always superior to your average trade paperback, yet there are times when I feel that nothing can compare with the pleasure of Time magazine.

December 25, 1990. Now I know why all this talk about Christmas: a year's worth of wrapping paper in a half an hour! Wow! I would have liked to borrow a really big mouth (like dad's, even) for fifteen minutes just to try to make use of half that paper on its way to the trash. (Can you believe they throw that stuff away?! There are impoverished babies on this earth who have never tasted wrapping paper and here they throw the stuff out.) Next time Christmas rolls around I'm gonna be ready and weighting.

December 26, 1990. I don't want to sound vain, but wherever I go I can count on being the life of the party. Take last night, for instance. Beautiful Christmas dinner at the Fertigs in Palmyra, NJ. Great group of people. All very interesting, probably, but they never even got a chance to display any of their skills at small talk once I walked (was carried) in the front door. From beginning to end all eyes were on me and it was great. All I had to say was booh! (literally) and they went crazy (including at least two of them that had "I hate kids" written all over their foreheads, so to speak).

January 5, 1991. Oh no, I feel like pooh-pooh again, but this time my nose is all stuffed up to boot. Dad walks me around the house in the dark a few times a night (is he what they call a sleep walker?) when mom has trouble feeding me back to sleep (does she think I can drink without breathing?).

January 8, 1991. Sometimes I think I must be the happiest little man in the world. I notice, for instance, that every time I try to pronounce what will be my first word (exacerbate), I end up with something that sounds like a squeal of delight. Then when I attempt what will be my second word (extrapolate or examine, I haven't yet decided which) the very same thing happens. Could it be that I have a case of chronic happiness? If so, I know one medicine (starting with the letter A) that would cure me once and for all, but why bother when I'm having such a good time? I notice these squeals erupting whenever I think of mom (God, I love that woman!!). I think even that loony bird of a father of mine has an effect on me. Every time he plays that stupid hide and seek game with me or makes those infantile faces I say to myself "don't laugh or you'll sound patronizing," but I can't help the inevitable squeals of delight. It's getting to the point anymore that merely riding in the back pack gets me giddy. It must be the breast milk. This couldn't possibly happen to formula-fed babies.

January 10, 1991. I never thought I'd be interested in women my own age, but my Mexican girlfriend, Camille, stopped by on her way back to Mexico City, and I really do find it hard to keep my hands off of her.

January 13, 1991. My first taste of commercial vegetable puree (Gerber's Sweet Potatoes). The first mouthful tasted like compost, so I quickly grabbed for a second spoonful just so I wouldn't be afraid of ever eating again (which is just what they tell you, I hear, when you fall off a horse). The second was every bit as bad but the thought of never wanting to eat again was overpowering and I shoved still another spoonful in which was progressively worse. I don't know how I looked but I'll bet I had my cheeks up over my eyebrows again.

January 14, 1991. Now that I'm over my cold you would think my life would be back to normal again, but my ears still hurt and, believe it or not, I heard mom, dad and doctor all say the "A" word. If they're serious about this they'll be sorry, because I will sabotage their every effort and before long they'll have to give up with that stuff.

January 15, 1991. Today is D-day. If she gives me that pink stuff that tastes like #2 I'll retaliate with everything I have.

January 16, 1991. My worst fears were confirmed: she attempted to give me Amoxicillin again (which I had resolved on Jan. 1 never to take again, as you will remember). I launched a preemptive strike on the eyedropper and there was pink everywhere (except in the eyedropper or my mouth). But how long can I possibly hold out?

January 17, 1991. A brilliant device for preventing such frequent diaper changes: as soon as that gorgeous behind of mine touches the changing table, over it goes as I roll over onto my stomach. It appears that there's nothing at all they can do about it. (Oh, of course Dad tried to change me like that but it looked like bloody hell and Mom said nope and he had to do it again.) Now if I can only learn to deploy this tactic against the Amoxicillin!

January 24, 1991. Yesterday we went for a rather long ride in an airplane. Mom and Dad were falling all over me, afraid I might scream my lungs out and embarrass them, so I kept up that pose (eyebrows raised in fear, lower lip squared and ready to curl, you know: right on the edge) the whole trip and it was great: scared the hell out of them. I must say, however, that they behaved themselves pretty well overall. When we finally got out of the plane it was much warmer outside, as if we had been traveling for months right into the summer, and we drove for two hours to our new house which was very small. (I later learned from Mom that the reason she raised her voice somewhat to him about 45 minutes into the trip was that he indeed took the right road but in the wrong direction, and that our new house was actually very near the airplane place.) Now (this morning) we're getting ready to go to dizzyworld, whatever that is. I think there will still be time to practice my three words again before we leave.

January 25, 1991. Wow, what a place! Its like the kind of stuff you see when you get real cranky and you drink a little milk and close your eyes for a while. The best part of it is that none of the cars that take you through these weird places have any baby seats and seat belts. I felt like I was on vacation or something. Cousin Camille came to visit us for the day. She brought with her someone to carry her bottle and change her diaper. (It always amazes me to see how the jet set live!) Camille loved all the loud and scary rides

which I found utterly intolerable. Overall I had a good time. By the way, I did have time to practice my three words for about half an hour before we left. I'll try to write them down so that I won't forget them: aytaytayt [English, awtawtawt], bhauwauwauw and, most importantly, bfthpboeuf'thfsf. The last one is damned difficult to pull off just right. It's too convenient to just cheat and do boeufth (which is meaningless as I understand it).

January 26, 1991. I feel like hell today. I think I have a hangover. I can't keep my milk down and I have no desire to write. That doesn't leave much in this world but complaining and sleeping and I don't much feel like sleeping right now.

January 28, 1991. Well, we're back. I'm feeling better now, but I didn't feel like writing for the rest of the trip. The ride back was all right until the last hour. Every time I cried for milk Mom and Dad stroked my head and said to each other: poor little guy's ears must hurt from the pressure (did you ever hear such a thing?) I tried like hell to speak articulately but that's all they could make of what I was saying. After a while I didn't know why I was crying anymore, I was so frustrated. It might as well have been on account of the "pressure" (whatever that is).

February 1, 1991. I've decided to make fewer entries in this journal from here on in. It just takes too much time. I find that experience is slipping through my fingers as I grope for the right words to express it in. Besides, they have most every move I make on video, for crying out loud! From now on I write down only the most important happenings.

February 28, 1991. I have to hand it to Mom, she found one of my weaknesses: Cheerios. I don't know whether it's really the flavor or maybe just that amazing hole right in the middle of each one but I never tire of them. Come to think of it, how long have I been eating these now before realizing how much I like them?

February 20, 1991. I'm beginning to suspect that Dad reads this, because only two days after my mention of Cheerios I notice that he's caught on too. Now, whenever he wants my cooperation, out come the Cheerios.

February 25, 1991. Mom's trying all sorts of foods on me. This morning I chewed about a half an hour on something called a bagel. Like Cheerios but twenty times bigger and they don't dissolve at all. You could go on chewing the same bagel till your old enough for school. Sometimes I open my mouth to put some newfound treasure in it and out comes a wet slug of bagel that I thought I lost hours ago.

February 28, 1991. It's amazing what strange things happen to foods when you squeeze them real tight. Pureed vegetables, for example. When you intercept a spoonful in your hand which was meant for your mouth and you make a fist and tighten it real hard the stuff changes shape and comes running out in all directions. I keep doing it for them so they'll get it on video, but they have yet to take the hint.

March 5, 1991. I have to laugh at Dad. Ha! I'd just love for someone to explain how that man's mind works. Whenever he reads to me the nonsense he reads (and I mean

nonsense too: riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, etc., etc., etc., he gives me a book to read too. Now go figure that! Does he want me to read with him or not? How am I supposed to pay attention to what he's reading if I'm to read a completely different book by a completely different author at the very same time? Yet as sure as I'm sitting here you can count on him not sharing whatever book he chooses to read to me. As soon as I grab for it to see exactly what it is he's reading and which pages he's on, etc., he assigns me my own literary project. You can imagine, however, that once you get me interested in a text-no matter how bad or incoherent-I'm not exactly happy about changing mid-stream.

March 16, 1991. "Tim and Paula" got married today (who in hell are they? I can't keep all these grownups straight). I thought that service at St. Paul's Episcopal Church would never end. It takes those Episcopal people three times as long to do just about anything as it does anybody else. I must remember never to let an Episcopal diaper me. At least the acoustics were great in there. We sat in the back and even the folks in the very front row could hear me loud and clear whenever the chorus stopped singing. I know because they would turn around to look at me each time, and they looked rather surprised that my voice carried so well.

April 12, 1991. Went to my first funeral today. (Charlie Whitaker's mother, whom I've never had the pleasure of knowing.) It was pretty much like "Tim and Paula's" wedding except without the singing. I was in particularly good form and my voice carried exceptionally well (as everyone later told me).

April 18, 1991. Now that I've been "cruising" quite proficiently for some time I find that Malone (finally figured out the name of the mackerel-colored pillow) has become increasingly more exhausted. I would even go as far as to say that he avoids me, although I cannot conceive of why. On the occasions when I catch him napping and find myself with the opportunity to get a handful of fur or a whisker or two he makes a mad dash from the room, like he just remembered he had somewhere else to be all of a sudden.

April 21, 1991. What a weekend! First Tony Huston came to town to see Dad and Uncle Jack, and we (Mom, them and I) took him out to The Four Seasons for dinner and had a great time. The waiter told me on our way out that I was welcome back any time I liked. I said, "thanks muchly, but the old man is rather tight with the buck, if you know what I mean, and if I were you I wouldn't be too surprised if you don't see a lot of me until the next time Tony here visits us," etc. Then, no sooner did I digest that meal Dad's cook'n up a storm the next day, anticipating a long-awaited visit from Aunt Sofa (?), Mom took me to a country auction where Mr. Huston was hanging around with his hands in his pockets and we took him to some Barn Foundation where Mom and I strolled the grounds while he looked around inside. Mom was pissed. They wouldn't let me in the place (I think you gotta be dressed up or something) and Mom said "I'm not going in if he's [me's] not..." or something like that. I love that woman! (Besides, what could there be to look at in a Barn Foundation.)

Anyway, by the time we got home Dad had the place smelling like a restaurant and Malone was rubbing himself on every stick of furniture he could find, like he hadn't

eaten for a week. Well, the best is yet to come. The doorbell rings and a mob of relatives is waiting there impatient to get their hands on me. As soon as Dad lets them in they all start yelling and laughing and talking loud in my face and I hid my face in Dad's shoulder till they settled down a bit. Well, it seems this Aunt Sofa is mostly to blame for all the noise. She had never seen me before and she could hardly contain herself when she finally had the opportunity to. Needless to say, I was the central attraction throughout the dinner. I felt bad for Dad. He's not nearly as good looking or talented as I am, and after all that slaving in the kitchen all those people could talk about is beautiful, intelligent, cute and remarkable me. But he really seemed to take it like a sport. He's O.K., my Dad.

May 1, 1991. What a week! Camille came to stay with us for about a week and she again brought along the tall blonde woman to tend to her needs (she must be very rich to globe trot with a full staff like that). By the time the two of them left I found myself eying Dad's sherry bottles rather seriously. Camille is a nice girl but she's a little young for me and, more importantly, she carries herself like a sumo wrestler. (She's got to lift weights, that girl!) Every time I try to cop a feel of one of her toys I inevitably end up in an uncomfortable position with her in control. Yet my toys are instantly hers the moment she smacks her eyes on them. The word please does not enter into the negotiation (actually, what negotiation?). Better yet, it is simply not in her vocabulary. I've checked and the closest she has to it is gimme! And half the time she doesn't even bother using that (I guess she figures it's understood and that it would be tedious and redundant to articulate the obvious).

But the worst problem with the week was concerning my health. Again I caught something which was going around. I find this curious, as I don't spend a lot of time "going around" so to speak. I mean, I have a small circle of intimate friends with whom I share certain intellectual interests, but I'm hardly what you might call socially active.

The positive aspects of the week were many when I'm honest with myself: a pool, a sandbox, and a swing (although I'm not quite sold on the value of the last yet). It's difficult not to see this quick succession of gifts for me as a sort of payoff for sharing my toys with Attila the Hun.

May 6, 1991. Is there anything more satisfying, really, than drinking from a glass? With a bottle or a breast you've got to work your entire torso to get anything out of it; with a glass you sit back and let it come to you. And on a hot day there's nothing quite like it for cooling down your neck, chest, belly, legs and feet.

May 8, 1991. For Mom's birthday I've been practicing saying Moma (Museum of Modern Art, which, when I say it, sounds like Momma). I got it down perfectly and then forgot to say it to her!

May 12, 1991. I remembered to say Moma (Momma) to Momma (Mom), and she loved it. She seemed visibly touched. Probably because I stopped calling her Dadda, which I've recently read is not used as a general honorific, the way I've been using it, but applies only to him and not to her. (What's really going to take some getting used to is not using it for the dryer.)

May 18, 1991. I've learned something interesting about dealing with parents: being subtle gets you absolutely nowhere, fast. If you want to communicate with that species you gotta be more than just obvious and unsubtle, you gotta be crude and direct. For example, you're sitting there at the table eating Cheerios and everything's fine until Mom goes on NUTRITION ALERT and starts plying me with weird tasting stuff you wouldn't contemplate eating even if it were in Malone's bowl. You try being nice about it by gently pushing it away with a polite "no thank you, Madame" or a "very kind of you but" and it simply doesn't register. So you purse your lips, make a painful face and turn your head, thinking "this is pretty direct and straight-forward; she ought to understand this" and she thinks you're just playing hard-to-get. The trick is you've got to take hold of the unwanted substance and pretend you can't wait to eat it, and when you've got it out of her reach you take that sucker and throw it right over her head and watch it land and slowly slide down a distant wall or appliance or something. This gets through to her!

May 28, 1991. I've discovered Jazz. I'm sure I'm not the first (or else it wouldn't have had a name already). Dad brought home a CD of the Microscopic Septet and when he put on "Lobster in the Limelight" my body started rocking and my hands clapping and I was suddenly overcome with the urge to raise my hands over my head and laugh, probably at something "buried deep within me" (as they often say in certain books Dad despises). Up until now the musical menu has been rather austere. Usually, Dad just loves music you can't whistle. And what does he do but go around the house whistling it! (And if you think it makes no sense on the stereo you should hear the stuff by the time Dad's lips are done with it!) Don't even bother trying to dance to the stuff: you might get hurt! I once tried to dance to the Berg Chamber Concerto and I ended up all twisted and contorted with a tortured look on my face like a painting by Egon Schiele or something. But this Jazz stuff you can dance to and not worry!

May 29, 1991. I'm losing my patience with Dad. He evidently has the refrigerator rigged so that the door swings shut behind him and, unfortunately, I'm just not quick enough to get in there and grab what I need before it closes. And then of course, on the rare occasions that I do get my body wedged in there for a few seconds, I'm so dizzy with triumph and excitement that I don't have time to collect my wits and remember what it was exactly I needed, and so I just grab the first thing I see that I can at least bring back a souvenir with me. It's not like the kitchen cabinets which stay open for as long as you need them. There have been dog day afternoons when I have kept them open for hours rearranging the canned goods. Actually, rearranging is not quite accurate. Moving is the word I'm looking for-moving the canned goods from the cabinet to the floor and spreading them out so that I can...well, so that I might...come to think of it, why do I do that? Funny, but it always seems to me to be a rather important and necessary project while I'm in the middle of it, yet to be quite candid now, I can't think of even one useful purpose for it except that it is satisfying!

June 1, 1991. What a day! In the morning I discovered Dad's dingdong and in the afternoon, the ocean. This is the kind of stuff you would expect to find in books written by men with beards, cigars, umbrellas and thick accents, but it actually did happen to me.

The day started like most other days: I woke up in the big bed beside Mom. I have yet to figure out how this happens, by the way. I know for a fact that while awake I can neither climb down out of my bed (crib) or up into theirs, yet I often wake up as if I were Dad with Mom beside me and Dad nowhere to be seen. (Does he get up in the night and switch with me?) I then performed the customary ritual of entertaining them: first Mom and then Dad. Well, to get to the point, while following Mom around it occurred to me that Dad was missing. I noticed that the bathroom door was closed and then realized that he was playing hide-and-seek and was probably getting pretty lonely by now (why doesn't he tell me when he's going to play that game?). I swung the door open like a saloon door in a black and white movie and sure enough Dad was sitting on the toilet pretending to read. He definitely looked relieved that I found him (he probably had been holding that book the whole time so I could find him like that). Anyway, as I was pulling myself up onto my feet, holding onto those little hairs between his legs like I always do when he's on the toilet, I noticed something out of the corner of my eye. I looked close and sure enough there was something new there, something hanging down below which he had never bothered to show me. My first reaction was one of mild hurt-hurt that he had hid something from me-but then I realized that I had seen him naked everyday and just never noticed it before for some reason. Well, I got a good grip on this thing, whatever it was, and looked up at his face immediately because he was making strange noises-sort of like laughing but a good deal more serious-and for some strange reason I was overcome with laughter and I lost my grip. When I got back on my feet and grabbed for it again I employed a far superior grip this time (it finally occurred to me just what fingernails are for!) and gave it a good inspection while Dad was frantically looking for things to divert my attention with. Frankly I was not very interested in those other toys he found for me; the novelty of this one had hardly worn off yet. It's funny but even though I never saw this thing before it did look familiar in a way. (Maybe on Mommy? I don't know, I never noticed. Tomorrow I'll check and see.) I'd like to know one thing: just how long did he actually think he could have hid it from me?

Well, the rest of the morning was a little more typical, and once again I allowed myself to be strapped in backwards in the back seat of Dad's car facing Mom as she talked utter nonsense to me and the scenery changed like a collide-a-scope in the back window. All of this was the typical fare-even more typical than usual, somehow, as we spent even more time sitting in the car than usual-until, that is, we got to where we were going, and then...WOW! I think they call the place Briganteen or Brig and Teen or something like that. All I know is that its at the very end of our street if you turn right and then right again and then make some other turns and go straight and pay the men in the tiny rooms (two or three of them I think) and keep on going until you can't go any further. Rarely can I remember being so glad to get out of a car seat!

Anyway, we got out of the car finally and headed up this little hill and I could feel that my cheeks were riding high and my eyebrows low and everything that I could make out in between looked real bright and shiny and hot, and then when we got to the top of the hill I just couldn't believe what I saw. I rubbed my eyes and peered out again and realized I was right the first time: PLAY SAND! The entire place was covered in play sand! Bags and bags of the stuff spread out for as far as you could see, just waiting to be eaten! I seriously hope that they are not naive enough to expect me to eat from that pathetic little sandbox in our backyard after this. Once you get a taste of the real stuff there's no going back to store-bought. I mean this stuff was so good even the birds

would come down and eat it. I definitely never saw that happen before! I know this was not just my imagination, because there were lots of other people there playing in the play sand too and I've never seen anyone else ever come to use my sandbox.

Well, Mom and Dad put the things down in a big pile and undressed me except for a big T-shirt and walked me down to where the play sand got cold and wet like the time after Dad forgot to cover the sandbox. Well, there I was watching my feet sink into the stuff (Mom's feet doing the same on either side of me) and all of a sudden they got ice cold and disappeared. I just stood there looking down in shock, but before I could cry for the loss of my feet they miraculously reappeared and everything was all right except that all of a sudden we seemed to be moving backwards real fast while standing absolutely still (I could actually feel someone pulling the wet play sand out from under my feet). I must have let out a laugh of relief when I saw my feet again because Mom and Dad laughed that kind of laugh they usually laugh when they think I'm having a good time because I'm laughing even though I often laugh without knowing exactly why. We all laughed. But Mom and Dad laughed longer than I laughed. (Dad's laugh is so weird that it's infectious. I can never quite tell from his laugh whether he's happy or in pain, so I laugh along with him just in case it's the latter and it helps the poor guy along through it. I hate to watch people suffer. Mom's is more complicated-as is Mom generally when compared with Dad-but at least you never wonder, is she all right?)

Well, this happened a couple of times and I got tired of standing in one place and decided to sit down for a while and all of a sudden Mom and Dad started laughing again and I looked down and saw what they were laughing about: this time both legs disappeared...all the way up to my belly button. But remembering how I got my feet back the last time I wasn't all that worried about my legs now. And sure enough, in a few seconds they reappeared just as before while someone was attempting to take the sand right out from under me. Dad told Mom he was amazed I was laughing because the water was so cold. Water? Where? What water? I looked down at what he was calling water and...sure enough it did actually resemble somewhat the stuff I drink while in the bathtub at home-except that it was dirty as hell and, worse yet, had soap suds in it too. After Mom helped me stand up I dragged her like usual (one of her fingers in each of my raised hands) and we just kept going until I don't know quite what happened except that I was in her arms and crying all over my body all of a sudden. Mom tried to think of comforting things to say such as "weee, that was fun!," but we both knew she bending the truth not a little. Next I knew I was in Dad's arms and Mom was drying me off with a towel which I never saw before in my life (lending still another element of strangeness to the whole affair). Mom put me down on the sand and off I went like a wind-up toy, but stark naked, and Dad was calling out to me "You look'n for your pants, or what?" and I looked back at him just to make sure he wasn't in pain or anything and just then I heard click and saw dad take a small black plastic box away from his face and tell Mom, "I got it!" (Who knows what he got but it certainly wasn't my pants, that I knew.) "And that cute little sack of family Jules (?) swinging there between his..." I looked all around me to see what he was jabbering about but evidently I just missed it.

Then, all of a sudden, I realized that I had overlooked the obvious reason why I was there in the first place: LUNCH! The first fistful didn't really taste much different than the stuff we had back home-rather bland and of a conspicuous graininess-but the special ambiance of the place imbued it with rare flavor and the second and third helpings went down like mother's milk. Suddenly I was overcome with an unsettling thought: where

does it all end? I've hardly made a dent in it and if I can't finish it all just where do I begin? But no sooner did I ponder this than Mom and Dad made the whole question quite irrelevant by determining that I had had enough anyway. Dad scooped me up with my sixth fistful still in my mouth saying, "we'd better take him home before he actually finishes the stuff!" (I have to imagine that he was joking. He couldn't possibly think I could eat that much! God, he makes me laugh sometimes!)

The drive home was tedious and grainy. Dad had to pay the men in the little rooms again and, spurred on by the discomfort of sand between my toes and teeth, it occurred to suddenly that there was something basically unfair about this arrangement. I mean that you should have to pay to go to your own home. I can understand paying for eating the play sand maybe but.... Well, as soon as we got in the house Mom took me upstairs and filled the tub with real water (the clear stuff), peeled my clothes off and dunked me in it with the word RELIEF written across her forehead in bold letters (just like I have it written here). I lowered my head to the surface, breathed the familiar stuff in with a hearty snort and said to myself, "ahh, I'm home again!"

June 2, 1991. I remembered to check this morning and, no, Mom doesn't have one of them. I didn't think so. When I looked and shook my head no to myself Mom saw and laughed. Now what was so funny, that I needed to check to be sure, that I shook my head while talking to myself, or that she coincidentally remembered something funny?

June 3, 1991. Last night we went to stay in somebody's tent. It was so noisy I could hardly hear myself drink. Dad said it was a sirkous (which is like calling some place you don't like a "zoo," I think) but I could tell that was because it was noisy (he had his fingers in his ears half the time) and because it didn't look like a library, an art museum or a concert hall to him. (Loosen up Dad!) I liked the horses and clowns a lot and loved all the handbags (all set out for me at just the right level on the benches before and behind me) but I realized I missed something when Mom asked me how I liked the L-afants. (L-afants? Where and what are L-afants?," I asked.

As far as I was concerned there were two highlights to the show. First of all something called cotton candy. Incredible! It's like a tampon all pulled apart real thin but its pink and sweet -and when you're finished your hands and mouth are stiff and sticky. Secondly and more importantly, this gorgeous little brunette dish about 8 years old (God, I love older women!) sat next to Dad (I couldn't believe he didn't even notice her!) with a huge plastic snake that kept looking over to me every time she turned, saying, "psss. bud, ya wanna play? Yer Dad seems to be preoccupied, so why dontcha grab onto my tongue here and we'll just have ourselves a little tug a' war with my owner, this gorgeous brunette nymphet here." Meanwhile Dad and Mom were busy watching the horses or dogs or who knows what and suddenly it was just me, it and her locked in an eternal love triangle beneath the flickering shadows of the flood lights. But then came intermission and Dad said to everyone that it was too bad but that we had to go, pointing to me with sagging eyelids and saying, "he's very tired." He's? More like me's! Speak for yourself, mister! Why don't you go home and get a good night's sleep and we'll see ya later. (And don't forget to leave the car keys with Mom.) Really! Dad can be inadvertently uncaring sometimes. It probably never even occurred to him that I might never see that snake again. Or the woman for that matter. When I shook my head no so that everyone could see that it was Dad that was the party pooper and not me, everybody laughed.

There must be something inherently funny about negation, because they all laughed just like Mom did yesterday when I said no. I'm glad that they're all so easily amused but I am a bit worried as well. I'm the kind of person who aspires to please those around me and I'm afraid this sure-fire gag will prove too tempting for me whenever I'm in need of grabbing center stage. And of course, what begins as a harmless form of entertainment inevitably risks becoming a philosophical-political stance. Before long I'll be a nabob of negativism, negating everything in sight just to win acceptance, laughs and friends. This would be morally reprehensible. As I see it now, my only solution appears to be to learn to nod yes as well.

June 4, 1991. Time flies (what does that really mean?) when you keep a journal. Today I actually walked by myself for a couple feet. It seems like only a couple of months ago that I learned to cruise! Of course, today's feat was quite accidental and unplanned, as seem to be most great achievements. I was cruising as usual and forgot that I was running out of furniture to hold onto and all of a sudden, WUSH!, it hit me: the existential angst of realizing that one is standing alone in this world with nothing at all to hold onto, no one to lean on, nothing between me and the inevitable downward pull of gravity. Of course, there wasn't a whole lot of time to stand around and philosophize about it, primarily because there was not a lot of time to stand around. Next I knew I was back on my backside with my legs in front of me and the room looking taller. Before I even realized what had happened I heard all sorts of commotion coming from the parental department and I realized that I had been spied on. Mom and Dad were either very happy that I gave the furniture a rest or very impressed with my free fall. I tried it again a little later on while holding onto Dad's knees. A noticeable improvement. It won't be long now!

June 5, 1991. Oh my God, I've got one too! This is definitely weird. Dad put me in the bathtub last night and I was minding my own business splashing him like usual and having a good time when I inadvertently looked down to see if by chance there might be something else I could throw at him besides water and there it was. Just like his but proportionate to my body. Incredible! I pulled on it and let go and it stayed on just like his did. I realized at once that Dad and I have something more in common than merely our last names. Is it this common bond between us which explains our close relationship? If so, how do I account for my equally close relationship with Mom who definitely does not have one?

On the other hand, whenever I hear the term SEPARATION ANXIETY I immediately think of Dad rather than Mom and I don't know why. For as long as I can remember now I have reacted powerfully to Dad's leaving for work and coming home each day. For quite some time now it seems to me that of my many rituals-and I have many: chasing Malone around the house, banging my palms on the open dryer lid while singing Wotan's farewell to Brunhilde, banging my palms on the bathtub while singing the same thing (or I Love You Baby), and several others I won't even mention-my very favorite is undoubtedly greeting Dad when he comes home from work. When I hear the front door open and close downstairs without a knock or ring preceding it I figure it has to be him and I position myself accordingly by sitting down with a toy of some sort and wearing a look of busyness on my face as if I can't be interrupted except for someone rather important. When he comes bounding up the stairs Mom usually asks me, "Kuka siella on?" [who's there?] (which I believe means "Do you speak Finnish?," a rather

strange thing to ask someone daily unless you think they have the capacity to learn foreign languages overnight) and next I know Dad is standing there with arms stretched out and a look of total surprise on his face (is this a gesture effected to entertain me or is he somehow actually surprised to find me here everyday?) and I imitate him to save him the embarrassment of doing something that silly looking all alone. Then he swoops down and picks me up off the floor and puts his forehead to mine or plasters my cheeks and neck in kisses. This is where my part of the ritual inevitably kicks in: I turn to look at Mom with a toothy smile, patting Dad's shoulder with one palm (as if it were half a dryer lid or something) and with the other hand I make him instantly homebound (i.e., unsuitable for going back to work) by: 1., taking off his glasses, smudging them and throwing them on the floor 2., taking his handkerchief out, unfolding it, wiping my nose and mouth in it and throwing it down on the floor 3., grabbing his tie and trying to do the same with it (although I have yet to be able to get it to the floor [does he pin it on?]). I never tire of this procedure. Sometimes I get so excited when I hear the door that I loose my cool, skip the first step of the ritual and wait for him at the gate at the top of the stairs.

It is certainly not that I don't look forward to spending the day with Mom (I'm crazy about that woman!), but its just not the same somehow. Maybe it is just that there is so much less of him than there is of her, timewise. Or might it be this common bond of, well, dingdongs (for want of a better, more precise terminology)? I would ask Dad about this except that I can't trust that he would be honest with me about this. He would probably explain it as our similar good taste in music. And this is bullshit. I have good taste in music. You can't dance to 95% of the stuff he listens to unless you happen to have a couple extra legs, and most of it is in some foreign language anyway if there happens to be any words to it at all.

June 6, 1991. I've been going through my papers (everybody's papers are my papers, you know) and found some old notes that I forgot to incorporate into this journal. First of all, in or around May 30 it appears that I had a visit from a certain Jonathan Gay, Jr. and his Aunt Katie Gay. Oh yes, its coming back to me now. Nice guy, basically. I let him in the bathtub with me and we played like children and had a good time. We went to the zoo as well (of course, I had been there well over a month before, but I didn't let him know that for fear he'd start asking me where's this, where's that, like a wise guy) and we petted a goat over the fence at the "Children's Zoo." Frankly, we were both a little surprised to find goats in the children's zoo. They should really call it the Children's and Goat's Zoo if they're going to have goats there too. Then we went home and had a bath...? (I must have written the bath part down twice because I liked it so much, but it is now coming back to me: we had only one bath.) And then I shared my new phone (Mom bought me my own about the day before or so because I was tying up theirs with my many business calls) with Jonathan (and I was about to ask Mom to go out and get him one of his own too so that my line wouldn't be continually tied up).

Then we went to meet Dad and Uncle Jack at a "tie restaurant" for dinner (probably a place requiring shirt, shoes and tie). The owner of the place must have known I had business calls to place because she brought me over a phone to our table without my having to ask for it even. It had a car attached to it (which, frankly, I had never seen before, although I have heard people speak of these "car phones") but it worked just fine nonetheless. I must confess that I was quite taken by surprise when she awarded me this car phone when we left and told Mom I could take it home with me to finish my

business calls. Well, I'm sold on the place and I certainly hope we go back there for dinner sometime.

Another note here, probably from about the same time period, says: "sitting on his shoulders." I'm surprised that I would have forgotten to enter this one. A few weeks back Dad was trying to convince me that I was in a good mood while I was trying to convince him that I wasn't, and for the first time that I can remember, he succeeded. Having exhausted every wrestling hold in the book, and on the point of giving up and handing me back to Mom so that she could "fix" me as he calls it (sometimes he just cracks me up with his metaphors), he experimented with a new position which surprised us both: putting me up on his shoulders. I was determined not to give in, for I have read that the minute you make concessions to parents you immediately forfeit whatever control you might have ever had over them, but I simply could not help laughing. First of all, the only thing to hold onto up there is that ridiculous black mop of hair he wears on his head. That in itself is usually enough to get me laughing, it looks so funny. Secondly, being suddenly taller than your parents isn't all that bad either, you know. Thirdly, it is closer to the ceiling fan (and what may I ask is closer to God than a ceiling fan?). Then of course there is the...the...well, what the French refer to as the I don't know what.

And finally, here is one I simply cannot believe I haven't written about before: the computer. Months ago I happened to walk in on Dad when he was typing something and he immediately tried to pretend he wasn't. I think he was writing about me (what else was I to think?) but I really can't prove it. At any rate, he covered his tracks, so to speak, by making the screen look like a black sky full of shooting stars (whatever they are). In other words, so that I couldn't read whatever he was writing. I was pissed, quite frankly, but the action on the screen captured my attention, and when Dad invited me to type anything at all I wanted I was so taken back with surprise that I agreed. I quickly thought of all the people I had been meaning to write to but decided that by the time I chose which one was my first priority he might change his mind about this all. So I just typed whatever, I don't remember, perhaps an invective against the bad taste of most baby foods or something.

In any case (is it too late already to make a long story short?), I looked up at the screen while searching in my mind for just the right word (crap, I think) and what did I see? It was amazing. The stars on the screen had changed their pattern configuration each time I depressed a key! This is the kind of thing you would not flinch at seeing on an episode of *Star Trek (The Next Generation)*, but which you would never dream of finding in real life! I quickly checked the floor to make sure Dad wasn't doing this with a pedal of some sort just to get a laugh out of me, but no, this was for real. Well, Mom walked in and saw me doing this and suddenly their both say how amazing this was too. I have to assume from this reaction that neither of them had been aware of this connection between stars and letters before I found it. All I know is that they were very happy that I discovered this "at his (my) age!" (maybe this was back when I was say six months or so), a reaction which I found rather puzzling the more I pondered it. After all, how far can you go in life with such a skill? I mean you can't exactly go to a job interview expecting to land some executive job because you can make the stars change direction, can you?

June 7, 1991. Mom is getting rather frustrated with my eating habits. I can't really blame her, so am I. I don't know why, but I am simply not interested in baby food any more.

All I crave for anymore is pizza with everything on it: sausage, peppers, mushrooms, anchovies, onions, and anything else which will fit on it and which doesn't come in some cute little glass jar with a picture of some happy little tyke on it. (Yuucchhh!) I would really sooner eat dust balls and magazine covers (which I actually enjoy on occasion [i.e., when they're trying to read the magazine]) than the tasteless, wholesome, antiseptic mush they bottle in the name of nutrition and profit. Poor Mom tries every type imaginable. Not that I don't give it a try, but after a couple of spoonfuls I actually find myself afraid that I might die of boredom from the stuff. In the end I get my way though, because she inevitably gives me bagel, rye bread, cracker or pasta, all of which being tried and true success with me. Of course, I can understand Mom's position: she obviously wants me to grow real big so I can be in the top percentile (whatever the hell that means).

June 9, 1991. We went to the "sure" again yesterday. (Believe it or not, that's what they call the place with all the play-sand. I overheard Mom and Dad refer to it on the way down there.) This time we went to Ventnor, a place overrunning in Brooks and Jonathans. Mom and Dad timed it perfectly: I hadn't eaten much all day, so by the time we reached the beech (that's what they call the part where the play-sand gets wet in places) I was good and hungry for lunch. And it was just as tasty as the stuff I had eaten last week further down the coast. When we got all dried and covered in play-sand (like smearing your lunch all over your body) we got back in the car and went back to the Gay's house where I topped off lunch with all sorts of foods which I never eat back home. Mom was pissed! What can I say except that the salt air brings out my appetite? (Naively, Mom asked Aunt Bambi [that's her name, I kid you not!] the recipe, thinking that I would eat this if she made it for me at home. (Ha!) I don't think either of them have yet discovered my strategy concerning food: I show just enough interest in each new dish they test on me so that they go out and buy a week's supply of the stuff, and then I refuse to touch it ever again.

In any event, the indisputable highlight of the day was the Cool-Aid popsicle the Bambi woman gave me to suck on when I was more than good and hot. Wow! For the next five or so minutes the only thing I was aware of was a blind sensation of intense satisfaction. I don't remember who was holding me, what I was wearing or who was on first. All I knew was popsicle. In retrospect now I remember being mildly aware of some blurry objects moving beyond my close-range focus on that wondrous shaft of sweet red ice, but they were all devoid of meaning; I could hear people talking to me, but they were talking only words, words, words, and without substance. The only thing that mattered anymore was wrapping my gums around that cool wet baby.

June 14, 1991. Just came back last night from a two-day trip to "The Burgers" (Bergers?) in upper New York state. Dad and Uncle Jack were there to write about their artworks; Mom and I were there to help them. The Burgers had a horse which was allowed to roam freely through the house because they said it was a dog. Dog, my footsie! Since when do you need a ladder to pet a dog? Well, anyway, the highlight of the trip was their pool. If not for the unseasonably cool weather which made me shiver too much to really enjoy myself, I would have liked to do a few laps while I was there. The trip back was unbearable. I have told Mom and Dad a hundred times if I have told them once:
I HATE BEING BELTED INTO THAT DAMN CAR SEAT!! (Am I making myself understood? I hope someday they read this journal, because I can't

seem to express clear enough to them my position on this matter.) Well, after a couple hours of that torture I raised bloody hell. It must have registered on them because we pulled into some hotel and all got out of the car and watched as Dad walked me by the fingers around and around some tree about a hundred times like he was nuts or something. Everybody was laughing at him, and I have to admit that I had a good chuckle myself.

June 15, 1991. We went to the Doctor today and got the good news and the bad news about me. First the good news: I'm not a nabob of negativism like me infernal head shaking previously suggested to Mom and Dad. Now the bad news: shaking my head no is a sign that I have an ear infection again, and this time in BOTH ears! Well, the moment I heard this I began involuntarily mouthing the dreaded A-word which I felt was somehow inevitable. Sure enough, as if we were in some nightmare or horror film, the Doctor read my mind (lips, I guess) and also said the A-word: A M O X I C I L L I N. Yuucchhh!! I am desperate enough at the very thought of this to write to my congressman or something.

June 16, 1991. Bloomsday, today (whatever that is!). We went for another long ride yesterday, this time not quite so far as before: Hightstown, New Jersey, to visit more relatives which I seriously doubt are blood relations: Uncle Paul and Aunt Janice. The music was great. He played Jazz of various sorts, and everyone laughed when I turned it off by accident and when I automatically clapped every time I heard the audience on the record clap.

June 17, 1991. They just don't get it, do they? Each time I hold out to them something in my hand to show off my newly improved coordination, they mistakenly think I am suggesting some sort of transfer of ownership or something and they go and attempt to grab it from me. Am I going to have to start wearing signs around my neck or something? You cannot be too explicit to big people.

As an aside I should mention that there is something strangely satisfying about speaking into a fan and listening to your voice get garbled. It's another example of what Dad calls a fenominim. It's almost as much fun as speaking directly into the bath water, but without getting your eyes wet.

June 18, 1991. Walking reminds me of surfing: you're half way across the room on your own two feet without anything or anyone to hold onto and you're balancing just fine with outstretched arms waving, but then out of nowhere comes this wave of gravity that hits you like a wall or something and you start bending this way and that and waving here and there until before you know it you're sitting down looking up at where you might have been and all there is around you is the sound of applause that sounds like the surf echoing in your ears. The one aspect of this all which still confuses me is this: do they clap because you walked or because you fell?

June 19, 1991. It's astonishing the things you can learn from the lips of adults! Here I was thinking that they were still waiting to hear my first legitimate word like parents always do (I'm told) and it turns out they think I've already said it some three weeks ago! Now I wouldn't have known this juicy tidbit unless I was listening to one of their conversations whispered when they thought I was asleep. Mom reminded Dad that

when Uncle Jack, Uncle David and Aunt Carolyn came over for a cookout and I opened a gift-wrapped book the latter two had brought for me, I squealed "BOOK" in delight and that everybody heard it loud and clear except Dad who was cooking (which is a real irony and pity, by the way, because I think "BOOK" must be his very favorite word). Well, it may be that I said this, but the truth of the matter is that I was referring to the wonderful wrapping paper!

June 20, 1991. I know it sounds a bit odd, but during the last couple of days I have had this irresistible urge to bury in deep dark places everything and anything I put my hands on. So correct did it feel that I didn't know there was anything unusual about it until Mom started laughing out loud this morning while I was doing it again. I can't figure out what is so funny about it, really; it's damn hard work! I was busy trying to stuff the cover of this week's Time Magazine down between the mattress and the pillow (which Mom keeps between the mattress and the wall on Dad's side of the bed). Don't ask me why this became such a priority on my agenda. All I know is it appeared to be of vital interest to all involved and I knew that I was the right man to get the job done. That's it: it's a feeling of tremendous responsibility which makes it all so worthwhile. Well, anyway, I realized that I hadn't quite buried the thing and that a corner of it still might be seen if one were to use a high-powered flashlight. So I asked Mom to hold my ankles (I don't think she understood what I was asking, because she didn't hold my ankles until I nearly fell in) and I reached my arm all the way down there and made damn sure we would have no more trouble from that magazine cover (good riddance!). And that was the point at which Mom started laughing real hard (and where Dad started laughing real hard when she told him about it later in the day): the part where I really got the job done instead of merely pussyfooting around! (The ethics of parents is something not to be understood by the serious-minded, evidently.)

Later, when Dad came home, I got the urge again and I stuffed his socks down between the mattress and the blanket chest at the foot of the bed. When I reached down to make sure they were really buried and not just waiting to come back as soon as I turned around Dad started laughing just like Mom had earlier and he handed me other things to be buried: toys, teddy animals...anything he could put his hands on! I actually began to think that he was deriving as much pleasure from this as I was and I found myself a bit annoyed and perplexed by this thought. I mean, it is my hard work and ingenuity, not his. Then I began thinking to myself: Loosen up! What's it going to cost? If they think it's funny laugh along and humor them!

June 21, 1991. We went to a restaurant where I finally learned how to make that special face of critical dissatisfaction: the one where you get the nose real crinkled and the cheeks real high (just like you are listening to Wozzeck or looking at abstract art). The secret is sucking on a lime or a lemon. It really works! Dad gave me the lime wedge from his seltzer and immediately I realized what has been lacking from my expressiveness until now. The really funny part is that once I learned to make this face it became difficult not to make it. Everything became a suitable object of disdain: bread, water, pasta, cake-all the crowd pleasers.

June 23, 1991. I've been staying up late these days because of the Amoxicillin I think. Come 9:30 or 10:00 I get a second wind and suddenly the night seems young. Mom and Dad do not look particularly pleased when this happens.

June 26, 1991. Uncle Jack hired a limousine to take us all to the airport to go to Finland. At the airport I introduced Mom and Dad to some folks with very interesting luggage. Mom and Dad would have never thought to start up a conversation without me.

June 27, 1991.(I think!): We arrived in Helsinki this morning (last evening? who knows?) and I was amazed how easy the trip was. I slept right on the floor of the plane at their feet for at least 4 hours and woke up feeling like a daisy. No ear pain at all! The only thing is, I feel like sleeping a lot and as a matter of fact I'm beginning to get sleepy

June 28, 1991. Yesterday was too confusing to keep straight. It was definitely the longest day I ever remember, if not in history. I waited and waited for dark but had to give up and turn in at about 10:15 and it was like afternoon out there. Dad tells me it didn't get dark except for two hours between midnight and 2:00 a.m.

June 29, 1991. My new extended family is all right but they keep the floors too slippery for someone just getting the hang of walking straight. Yesterday I had a very unusual experience called "bussing." We got in this long car to go into downtown Helsinki and gradually other people-complete strangers mind you-got on with us without asking or anything. I tried to start a conversation with a few of these brazen intruders but all attempts were futile: the ones who noticed merely laughed at me; the others never even turned to see who was tugging on their sleeves.

June 30, 1991. Last night I tried to stay up until the sun went down and I almost made it! Mom and Dad were thrilled (but they weren't showing it). Oh, I almost forgot to mention yesterday's main event: I got a chance to meet my Finnish cousins, Satu and Tommi, and my Aunt Heljä and Uncle Jussi. All I can say about Tommi is that I hope he doesn't grow up to be as emotionally expressive as his father or he'll put people to sleep. Uncle Jussi seemed so excited to see me I had to look close to see that he was actually alive. Here the guy hasn't seen me in...never and he merely sticks out his hand for me to pump and says..."hei."

The highlight of the day (possibly of the year) was undoubtedly the walk we took behind Finlandia House because we stopped for Finnish "Eskimo" jäätelö (which is really just plain vanilla ice cream with a hint of nostalgia added for Mom, as Dad tells me [in confidence].) Anyway, Dad gave me a taste of his popsicle (at Mom's request) and the second I got my lips around it I felt my eyes closing and my consciousness flickering. It was like sucking at Mom's breast but colder and sweeter. When Dad pulled it away for a second I grabbed after it. I'm hooked. Sorry folks.

July 1, 1991. We went to visit Aunt Heljä and Uncle Jussi at their summer "cottage" as Mom calls it. Mosquito incubator is what I'd call it. (Anyhow, isn't cottage some sort of cheese?) Cousin Satu attempted to satisfy my needs (no one human being can tend to them all) and we had a pretty good time. It was pretty rustic, however, with no running water, so I had to just go right in my diaper like usual (Yuuucchh!) We all went to Sauna and jumped in the cold river except for me. Satu keeps these little rats which they call "gerbils" so they don't have to get rid of them.

July 8, 1991. We left Aunt Heljä's and visited with "Aunt" Melus's mother and her sister at their beautiful mansion designed by the celebrated Carl Johann Engel (whoever the

heck he is) in 1830. I don't know whether it was the architecture, the strawberries (which really are better than the ones you get here), the smoked sea trout or what, but I woke up this morning with hives all over my body. Mom and Dad took me to see a doctor in the big circular building in downtown Helsinki (Hakaniemi) and he said what I had was rather common and was probably just an allergic reaction to the sun or heat. I said, yeh, sure... I can see you never been to Philly if you think this is hot. He said something to the effect that I was in tiptop shape.

July 9, 1991. I'M ONE YEAR OLD! Only fifteen more years until I can drive! (And only a few more years until I can drive [in Park] without having to stand up to reach the wheel.) Dad began calling me Mr. Ambassador today, I assume out of respect for my age. My face was particularly suggestive of my meal when he turned to me at the table and inquired of me: "Excuse me, Mr. Ambassador, would you kindly tell us your opinion of the situation in Yugoslavia...and while you're at it, pass the pepper mill you currently have in your mouth." I felt very distinguished and important when everyone looked at me following his request.

Uncle Erkki came over for dinner this time to help celebrate (very quietly) my birthday. He is very quiet and says only "no, hei" like Uncle Jussi (except that the latter usually limits his to "hei" without the "no"). If this witticism means the same in Finnish as it does in English (no hay [i.e., I'm still suffering a complete shortage of hay; perhaps next year will prove more abundant in such commodity, etc.]), then why bother worrying a one year old about such matters. I now nothing about farming! Why can't they adapt their conversation to topics of interest to me? They could just as easily say "no bedtimes," "no car seats," or if they insist on being pessimists, "no ice cream" even. I suppose Mom and Dad would never stoop to the pessimism or cruelty of saying "no ice cream" now that they have witnessed what sweets mean to me. Oh, they had dreams for me, dreams of my never acquiring a taste for sugar, but those dreams were shattered, I'm afraid, the very first time I allowed myself to be placated with a piece of cookie. And by the time I first tasted ice cream there was simply no going back. From then on every other food would only be some tiresome prelude to dessert. When I find myself in a particularly bad mood due to my teeth or my bad mood I refuse to eat regular food just to see how long it takes them to break down and give me sweets. I always win. Actually, it's funny to watch them buy ice cream for themselves when we go out for a stroll together because they still believe they can be sly enough about it to buy it AND eat it without my knowing. Well, they've yet to get away with it, I can tell you that. I threaten to scream my lungs out, and then, magically, it's mine for at least a few licks. Next I am working on getting one for myself.

July 10, 1991. I have been in a generally pissy mood in the last few days and I can't quite put my finger on just what it is-my teeth, my financial worries, the troubles in Yugoslavia, I don't know. You would think that now that I'm one year old and walking beautifully I would be happy for the immense progress, but no. The one thing which always puts me in a bad mood is anything even faintly resembling a car seat, be it a stroller, a high chair, or whatever.

July 17,1991. We are in a very big building which moves and rocks and sways even though there is no earthquake. We got inside it last night, along with a lot of other people which we don't know. Dad said it was a zoo but Mom said it was a ship.

July 14, 1991. Yesterday after breakfast we got out of the moving building and Dad said we were in stock-home, the capital of sweet-den. I was delighted, of course, as I imagined what this could mean from a culinary perspective. But, low and behold, the menu was just the same as before, and was I pissed! When they tried to take me through the King's Palace (a mansion of 1600 rooms of stuff you're not allowed to touch) I screamed bloody hell and made our tour much more concise and focused than they had expected.

July 15, 1991. We're back in Helsinki and I have learned a trick which never fails to win attention: getting on my hands and knees with my head touching the floor so that I can look through my legs at all the upside down people. They simply love it.

July 17, 1991. Yesterday we went with Mom's girlhood friend, Krissa, and her Neanderthal husband, Hannu, out in their boat for a cruise to Porvo. It was great: the bouncing on the waves, the noise from the engine, the things to play with on board, all of it. In fact, I can't remember when I had such a good time. The only thing which made me question the good planning of the evening was the place chosen for dinner. After driving cooped up in a boat for two hours, where do you think we ate but in a restaurant on a boat? Go figure! On the way back things started to get fuzzy and distant and suddenly I found myself wrapped up in blankets, horizontal, as the boat pulled into dock just moments later. The trip back is always faster.

July 18, 1991. The strangest thing! I think I'm losing my short-term memory. Mom and Dad and I took a ride to the airport today for something or other and I fell asleep before we got there. When I awoke we were already on our way to "Tammela," Aunt Heljä's country place, and I started to ask myself, was he or was he not with us when we left this morning? Hmm, I guess not. I just can't remember. And so forth and so on.

July 19, 1991. This time the mosquitoes are not so hungry as last (either that or we killed most of them last time). But something or other is just not the same as last time. I keep taking a head count: me, Mom, Satu, Tommi, Uncle Erkki, Aunt Heljä, Uncle Jussi...that's seven like it's supposed to be but I don't know. It feels like someone's not here. Who could it be. Let's see, I'm here....

July 21, 1991. Well, we got back to Helsinki yesterday and I still feel like there should be one more of us although I can't quite figure out who it should be. It's not a particularly troublesome or depressing feeling, only an occasional desire to count everyone in the room for the twenty-fifth time. I'll bet it's something in the air here in Finland-some feeling left over from the Winter War or something.

July 24, 1991. Dad! Of course! How is it I couldn't figure the missing person out all this time? Oh that was funny! Mom and I got on the plane in Helsinki, I took a couple of good long naps and asked Mom to take me to flirt with the stewardesses, and before I could say...just about any word except for Bif, Kagca, or Daaaa, we landed in New York (well, not really in New York, but near it [can you imagine landing in New York?]). Well, anyway, everything seems status quo: it was just me and Mom and this Finnish

guy Mom was talking to on the way over who was kind enough to help me with the luggage and all, and after clearing customs I finally said to myself (after a week of that strange feeling), "everybody's accounted for," and what do you think happens but we walk through these frosted glass double doors and this guy with dark hair and glasses and shorts just like Dad is waving to us and I say to myself: "Hahaa! I was right all along. I was missing one parent all week and everyone was trying to pretend that nothing happened!" Do you know, I was so surprised to see him I could hardly bring myself to react? It was strange, but it took me at least five minutes to come to my senses as Dad was laughing and kissing me from head to toe and bouncing me up and down and kissing Mom and laughing, etc., etc., etc. And then all of a sudden something else occurred to me: this guy with Dad is Uncle Jack! Unbelievable! He had been missing for weeks! What a coincidence that they found him at the same time as they found Dad! And in a big place like Kennedy Airport too!

So anyway, we came home and I took a nap and woke up in my own bedroom and said aloud, "I'm up, folks!" and Mom brought me to bed with her and Dad but we were not in synchronized moods. They wanted to sleep and I wanted to talk. (It was morning in Helsinki, after all!) Dad was amazed to see that I can now stand up without steadying myself against something else (I take these easy things for granted but Dad-he's impressed by them.) He was also impressed by the change in my general attitude since he last saw me (i.e., since my sixth tooth came in and I was no longer in discomfort).

The house looks particularly nice to me after the austere and slippery interior of Isoisa's (Grandpop Kyösti's) apartment. The only slightly disconcerting detail is that someone has gone and collected my working tools (what they call "toys") from the floor where they belong (so that I can easily find them) and piled them together where you can hardly see them let alone get to them easily. (Not a pretty sight when you've just gotten off a plane and are feeling the first signs of jet lag and culture shock!) One thing that struck me right off was how much better the place smelled than I remembered. The place always had the distinct odor of cat litter or something...which reminds me...where is what's his name?

July 26, 1991. I'm afraid Mom and Dad do indeed suffer mild comprehension disabilities. I had an inkling of it way back, but way back then there wasn't a whole lot I myself understood, and being the youngest and most unexperienced of us by far I humbly assumed the responsibility for any misunderstandings and miscommunications which arose between us. Now it is quite obvious that the problem lies not with me but elsewhere. For example, since we've come back from Finland I've been testing out my new vocabulary in both Finnish and English by pointing to the objects for which I happen to remember the names. It's kind of frightening to say but it appears that neither Mom nor Dad seem at all able to tell exactly which objects I am referring to. It sounds unbelievable I know, especially at their age, but the truth must be told.

To cite specifics: Dad came home from work today and, like usual, quickly ran upstairs to see me. (I can't help but laugh at his lack of proportion: he stays away ten, even hours at a stretch but when he gets home all of a sudden five seconds is crucial.) When he rushed into the room with that big smile plastered all over his face and picked me up for a hug and kiss I reasoned that this was obviously going to be the closest I would probably get to his complete and undivided attention (it doesn't happen often around here, so you have to make hay while the sun shines) and that this was therefore

the time to show off my most recently acquired word, *guga*. I said it and pointed right at it with the outstretched index finger of my right hand so that there would be no mistake about it. So expectant was I of applause that I was really devastated by the response. Dad turned to Mom, they looked at each other for a second or so, and then both burst into laughter almost simultaneously. I was astonished. I couldn't have made it any plainer, clearer, or more articulate, nor could I have been more precise in pointing to *guga* (all the objects in the far corner of the room by the window, sort of from the wingback chair forward but not including things as far over as the fan, the computer, etc., though obviously including the coffee table and my Fisher-Price wagon with the blue wheels and yellow handle which, while it does not really belong there in any kind of permanent sense, was there at the moment and therefore had to be included unless one was going to go to the trouble of stipulating qualifications). I'm sure my facial features registered my complete surprise when I repeated the word in Finnish for him (*guggaa*) and he still only looked at Mom and laughed. This was obviously the laughter of embarrassment and confusion, so I looked over at Mom, realizing as I did that this wasn't Dad's mother tongue as they call it for some strange reason and that if anyone in the room would recognize a simple word of the Finnish language it would definitely be Mom. Well, I was even more astonished to see that she had no more idea of what I was referring to than did he!

Now in the old days I would have given up at this point, assuming by virtue of the relative differences in our ages that it was I who was mistaken and not they. But this time I was far too sure of myself to concede. I repeated the word for the second time in English (*guga*) and got the same laugh as before except that this time at least they both made an attempt to see what I was pointing to. (Progress!, I thought.) Their eyes were darting all over that room in search of a simple *guga* (*guggaa*), and don't you know on the fourth attempt to drive this most basic and concrete of all points home to them it appeared that I actually made contact! Dad laughed again but repeated *guga* and looked right at it this time. So relieved was I at this simple achievement of his that I avoided any speculation as to the fine points such as the relative inclusiveness of our respective *gugas* (i.e., whether or not his included the Fisher-Price wagon and excluded the computer stand and contents like mine did, etc.). I merely shook my head and shuddered at the thought of watching that poor man trying to get through an entire day at the office when it takes him a full three minutes to catch onto a simple thing like *guga*.

Well, since I was making progress of sorts I figured that I would strike while the iron was hot (whatever that means [while you still have a good chance of getting burned?]) and test out the rest of the new words I learned, *gugu* (*gugguu*), *gagu* (*gaagguu* or maybe *gagguu*, I'm actually not quite sure of the Finnish pronunciation on this one), *gaugu* (*gaugguu*) and, last but not least, *boo* (*buu*). All I can say is that my enthusiasm did not last quite as long as their combined incomprehension. I realized then and there that we were going to have a long road ahead of us and that I was just going to have to be grateful for each step along the way.

August 1, 1991. I overheard Mom and Dad talking about our recent trip to Finland and was surprised to learn that I've already begun speaking Finnish. I vaguely remember the scene. Late one morning about half way into our visit it occurred to me as somewhat peculiar that nobody in the apartment was wearing any shoes. Now, I knew they all owned shoes and that this was not an matter of poverty, but at least they obviously weren't wearing any at that very moment. As a matter of fact I was hard pressed to remember anyone ever wearing shoes in that apartment at all. So I took it upon myself

to investigate and, if need be, right this injustice. I politely excused myself from our conversation in the living room-I didn't understand what they were talking about anyway-and went on a little expedition down the hall. But unlike expeditions you see on television, which usually take between thirty and forty minutes, leaving enough time for commercials, mine lasted approximately four seconds. For, what did I come across half way down the hall, neatly ordered in rows right beneath the coat rack, out where everybody could see them if not trip over them, but a huge collection of SHOES! I simply couldn't believe it. I knew how happy everyone would be that I had found them all, especially knowing how frightfully expensive shoes are in Finland. So I grabbed the biggest one I could find and ran with it down the hall toward the living room yelling what I thought was the word for look! look! and everyone responded just as I imagined they would...but, alas, not for the same reason! It turns out, just as much to my surprise as theirs, that the word I chose, *kenka*, did not mean look! in Finnish, but (better yet) shoe! Now I wonder to myself, is this coincidence or do I speak Finnish?

August 4, 1991. We took a long drive in the car with Uncle Jack and when we got out about two and a half hours later who was standing there to welcome us but Aunt Chris and Uncle Charlie! Normally we get in the car and drive about two and a half minutes to get to their house, so I can't quite figure out what took so long this time. Anyway, we stayed the night and we all had a pretty good time. They had a huge lawn of little stones for me to eat, the only complication being that there were always four people running all over that lawn in pursuit of a feathered ball while I was trying to help myself to these delicious morsels. Best of all was that I found a stone-loving companion up there. They have this dog, Omar, who is as big as a horse and more comfortable than a sofa and who has excellent taste in pebbles, if I do say so myself. We would often sit together tasting and pondering a good plot of gravel and I think it is safe to say that he enjoys stones just as much as do I. Whenever he hears some footsteps on the gravel out front he calls out ROCKS!, ROCKS! (a rhetorical exaggeration of pebbles!, pebbles!, of course). I tried to imitate him but it only came out rather sheepishly, baaah!, baaah!, and everybody laughed.

August 10, 1991. How come everything seems to be funniest when I do it? I've been watching the way they've been carrying on like children, and whenever I try to do likewise by imitating them they behave as if it's the funniest thing they've ever seen. For example, slapping my face with both hands in surprise, a very simple thing I've watched them...I've...oh oh...come to think of it, I can't remember if I've actually seen one of them do precisely that, or whether I picked that one up elsewhere, but whatever!

August 12, 1991. Is it normal for a guy my age to have an ear infection his entire life? I can just about claim that honor myself. I just pray one thing: That I never ever acquire a taste for that horrid antibiotic stuff they try to get into me with that evil eyedropper, for that would be nothing short of throwing in the towel, abandoning ship, defecting to the enemy's side, sacrificing my human dignity and freedom, or call it what you will.

August 13, 1991. That Raffi guy who does the kids songs on cassettes is irresistible! Whenever I hear his songs I can't help but laugh and I'm not quite sure just why. I guess I have a picture of him in my mind drawn from the qualities of his voice and inane lyrics: I see him in a cheap business suit of brown offset by a loud tie of purple, orange

and yellow polkadots against a striped shirt matching designer sneakers with black socks. If I'm off a bit on my description I don't want to know. That's just the way I see him. Anyway, I've even stooped to singing along with one of his silly songs lately, the one about the old woman who was just skin and bones-oooohhh, ooohh, ooh, oooooohhhh, etc.-and you know, I can't resist joining in with the kiddie chorus on those rhythmic choruses of ooohhs. It's not that I find musical substance to the stuff. I've long ago developed my sense of composition far beyond that point, thank heavens! (witness my two favorite pieces of music: the Alban Berg Chamber Concerto and the theme to *The Simpsons*). Who knows, really, just what it is. Maybe just the way he dresses in my mind's eye.

August 16, 1991. I've been preoccupied with hygiene lately for some inexplicable reason. I'm too young for guilt and the like, so I think it's something far more simple and overt like just feeling unclean...probably because of hot weather or something. At any rate, even taking two baths a day (one in the morning with Mom and the other in the evening with Dad) and sometimes swimming at the pool in between, I still feel the urge to wash up. Mom and Dad drag the bathroom waste basket (the large stiff one with the lid) over before the sink so I can stand on it and reach the faucet. I wish I were tall enough to look into the mirror over the sink, because as soon as I start washing my hair they break into hysterical laughter and inevitably one of them dashes off to fetch the camera. What could be so funny about someone washing their hair? (I can hardly wait to see what they do when I eventually attempt to sit on the toilet in privacy.)

August 19, 1991. Uh oh! Bad news from Moscow! There's been some sort of coo there (or is that cew or maybe kuu...this is the down side of getting your info on the world verbally, by the way) and the Gorbichop guy has been formally requested to stay on vacation sort of permanently on grounds of bad health. I don't know really what all this means in a political sense, but I just love the important sound it carries when Mom and Dad discuss it. As far as I'm concerned anything they want to do that far away is A O.K. with me provided nobody lays a hand on Raffi or the folks who bottle seltzer (boy, do I love that stuff!).

August 21, 1991. Good news from Moscow: the cooo has been aborted! (What does that mean?) The Gorbachev man is feeling better and back from vacation and everything is rosey in the U.S.S.R. just as it was before Monday so that now the rest of us can breathe easy and get on with our Raffi tapes, our telephones, our hair washings and our seltzer drinking.

September 2, 1991. Last night we went to a dinner party in Wynnewood at the Stapleton's home to celebrate Labor Day. This holiday is particularly hard for me to understand because I would think there would be exactly as many different Labor Days as birthdays if the two are causally connected, as I would think they must necessarily be. Whatever. The party was a huge success in my book. Largely because there was no shortage of seltzer and lemons, but also because I had an endless array of pant legs and skirts to wipe my hands off on all night. Also, there was a baby there. I just can't imagine being that small! It's funny that I never gave the topic a moment's thought before but all of a sudden babies fascinate me. Here I was thinking to myself, "This kid looks like about half my age...why she's young enough to be my daughter, sort of!"

September 3, 1991. We worked in the garden yesterday and I discovered the beauty of holes. Dad dug a deep one for me but seemed rather surprised to find me in it when he came back with this big bush he evidently had in mind for it. Now, if he thought he was going to bury that thing in the back yard why didn't he dig a deeper hole?

September 8, 1991. My eighth tooth is coming in and all I can say is dldldldldldll (that is, when I don't have one or both hands in my mouth).

September 10, 1991. Dad broadened the horizons of my dancing repertoire a couple of days ago when he got me a CD of something called "Bate-hovens seventh sympathy." When he first put it on I thought to myself, "Truly this man has burnt himself out with too much work and not enough animal cookies!" but after three or four minutes when it finally got crank'n that baby took off like a bird and soared. I just couldn't keep up with my legs. I looked down and there they were going this way and that until there was no stopping me...until all of a sudden everybody stopped playing and it got boring again like the beginning. (To tell you the honest truth, I suspect that the orchestra players got lost and simply had to start over at the beginning again). So all and all I would say that "Bate-hovens seventh sympathy" is pretty good, but it needs serious editing so that you can start dancing right away and not have to stand there whistling to yourself while the orchestra gets good and ready. Dad said that Wagner (whoever he is!) danced to the whole thing (which I took to mean, "It can be done; you just don't know how"). But I said (implied, actually), "Were you there, Charlie?" Besides, with a little imagination anyone could envision what a fool the man must have made of himself.

July 16, 1991. Dad cooked some beef stew last night and I was helping him by putting my plastic rings in the trash can one by one. (I wouldn't have had to do that, by the way, except that he went and took them all out the day before!) We were having a good time and listening to music. Dad was chopping and I was tossing...everything was great except I was getting impatient with things and I couldn't quite figure out why. I still had countless toys to throw away in the trash can: the living room was my oyster, so to speak; yet slowly but surely life was losing its fizz. (That's the kinda imagery you use when you consume the quantities of seltzer I do.)

All of a sudden it hit me: He was getting me hungry with the aroma of the stew! Well, I tried to think back to my last meal and it was so far back there that it looked to me like some ancient home movie. I was beside myself suddenly with paranoid thoughts that I would never eat again and would grow so thin as to never grow out of medium diapers. I grabbed Dad by the pant legs and looked up at him as he was stirring the stuff. His features were swimming around through the water which was running down my cheeks. The music got slow and undanceable again ("Bate-hovens seventh sympathy," of course...Oh how I hated it suddenly!). At that particular moment I just could not find anything in my life resembling (even remotely) a silver lining. Dad tried to entertain me, but alas, in vain. The aroma of cooking meat was all that mattered anymore, and by the time he checked it again to see if it was ready I was walking the fine line between mild civil disobedience and outright malicious violence and vandalism.

The next few minutes were a blank. All I can salvage from memory is the fuzzy picture of his picking me up and putting me in the high chair and bringing over a plate

of the stuff from the pot and trying to cool it down as fast as possible. But after Mom came in (she had been at the doctor's, something to do with her headaches I think) and I was beginning to feel my old civilized self again I got a chance to hear his version of what happened during those few minutes that he been erased from my memory. Dad was enthused about the story, and Mom's eyes were glued to him while he told it: the gist of it all being that I had eaten as if I had been on my way to put out a fire or something. Mom's face beamed when she heard Dad describe the gusto with which I ate. He said I was grabbing the meat off the plate and stuffing it in quicker than he could cut it up for me. Mom explained that I hadn't eaten well during the day and that was why. I didn't want to wreck her theory but I knew that the real reason was that the smell of stew cooking drove me temporarily insane.

September 24, 1991. When Dad came in and saw me sitting in my little blue, red and yellow upholstered foam armchair in front of the T.V. he laughed. I can't quite figure out what in particular he found to be so funny. Was I sitting in it the wrong way? Or is the chair meant only for climbing onto the coffee table?

September 25, 1991. What used to be rather beouifthf is now almost always digadigadiga-especially when I'm dancing (which is rather often lately) atop the coffee table or in front of the stereo.

September 26, 1991. Now that Mom and Dad finally turned the car seat around to face the right direction (so I can see what's coming up, not what's already too far gone to do anything about!), I really don't mind going for rides. Now it is easy to keep an eye on whoever's driving and I'm finding the whole experience to be rather pleasurable. I still would prefer to do the driving myself, however.

Maybe I'm just becoming more reasonable in my old age, but not only don't I mind car seats anymore, I am beginning to take a liking to Ceclor, the antibiotic I have started to take again for those relentless ear infections. Dad couldn't believe it but not only didn't he have to wrestle me to the ground to give it to me but I grabbed for more too. I'm half tempted to ask for some of that Amoxicillon also while I'm at it.

September 27, 1991. I seem to be kept pretty busy these days just trying to clean up after Keith when he comes to clean and straighten. I know he means well but the man makes my life a lot more complicated when he goes and puts everything in its place, merely undoing hours upon hours of my hard work. There have been days when I have had to forgo a nap just to get the place looking lived in by the time Dad came home. But taking from one cabinet here and putting in an obscure drawer there is not really as demanding or as interesting as the work I have waiting for me upstairs. Sometimes I have to walk around a good while before I can find a suitable home for certain things. For example, Mom's calculator. When I finally found a good safe home for it in the sweater rack in the bedroom closet I figured that I would be free to go on to other responsibilities, but Dad found it one day and told Mom to find a better place to "hide" it. It got me thinking, hide it from whom? Nobody these days goes around stealing cheap pocket calculators!

September 29, 1991. Uncle Jack came over yesterday afternoon and stayed for lunch (which included a magnificent meat sauce on pasta that Dad had been cooking all morning [the sauce, that is, not the pasta!]). I was glad when they finally decided to sit

down and eat because once again the smell was driving me crazy. The more Mom commended me on my appetite the more disgruntled Dad looked about Mom's utter surprise that I might like the stuff so much. Well, after a while I gradually became aware of my surroundings and realized that I had three people sitting with me at the table and that I hadn't said a word all the while, so engrossed was I in the meal. I looked down in my plate and realized with horror that what I had been shoveling in all that while was food destined to be leftovers-destined to be heated up tomorrow, reheated the day after that and rereheated the next.

Well, all of this imagery of heating and reheating, eating and reeating, suddenly obsessed me and I could think of only one way out of the torture which undoubtedly lay ahead. I looked up from my plate at uncle Jack sitting next to me with the lean and hungry look on his face (well, hungry at least) and said to myself, "kiddo, here, sitting right beside you is the solution to your dilemma in the shape of the one man in this world not afraid of food." Uncle Jack seemed to know what I was thinking and smiled broadly, and when the lips broke apart into laughter I seized the moment and sent a fistful of lunch in his general direction. Before he could close his mouth he had my fist in it, and instantly I opened up the fingers to release a portion of soon-to-be-leftovers in the one place from which I knew there would be no return. Uncle Jack laughed, Mom laughed, Dad laughed. What else was there for me to do but laugh? The laughter proved helpful to my plan, as it distracted everyone long enough for me to send another care package in Uncle Jack's direction. With each helping the laughter escalated in volume and intensity until I realized, to my horror, that they were obviously laughing not at Uncle Jack but at me! Suddenly I found myself the butt of some dark, mysterious joke bigger than all of us put together. I felt alone in the universe (which seemed particularly large suddenly) and confused.

Luckily it was time to go in. Uncle Jack and I played catch with the big ball in the living room. I don't know what it was about the dumb game which made me laugh so much. Maybe it was just that here's a man who's at least fifty times older than I am (old enough to know better, at any rate), and he's chasing after this big red ball as if it was filled with animal cookies or something. Well, at any rate, it took my mind off the existential nightmare of lunch.

October 4, 1991. Ever notice that when Dad's real busy I never make entries in this diary? I think professionals refer to this as Empathetic Busyness or something. When he's doing one of those 12-hour days at the office or traveling on an assignment I find myself, curiously, with little time for writing.

October 5, 1991. Dad came home last night from wherever he was ("Al Tuna, Pencilvainya" I think he called it) and we got up this morning and went with Uncle Jack to a big house on the Eastern Shore of Maryland (wherever that is). This place is great except that there is water everywhere you look out front (plumbing problems I presume).

October 7, 1991. We're still down here at the Maryland house and I hope we never leave. It's difficult to imagine, but with all that water out front these people actually felt the need to put a pool out back! It's crazy, but it's great! I can't resist it-especially when everyone has just gotten dried and dressed. Mom and Dad couldn't understand how I could walk right into the cold water while they themselves had to enter it toe at a time.

October 13, 1991. Today is Mom and Dad's 15th Wedding Anniversary. I detect gushiness in the air, not to mention an unusually intense anticipation of my nap. Dad keeps telling me I'm looking especially tired and in need of some shut-eye. But I decided to try an experiment to see what happens if I skip my nap. I'm just going to sit it out and shake my head NO every time either one of them breathes the slightest hint of napping.

October 14, 1991. Yesterday's experiment never got off the ground. Right in the middle of my strategy session on staying awake through nap time I felt that strange sensation of the room growing dim, and before I knew what hit me I was looking up at Mom and Dad staring down at me with a strangely calm and satisfied look blazoned across both faces. Maybe I'm missing something but I can't quite see why my naps should make them so happy.

Well, anyway, later that day we got in the car and drove to Elkins Park to have dinner with Aunt Bea and Uncle Morris and Aunt Debbie and Uncle Albert and their children Peter and Gary and the former's wife Diedre and, most importantly, their horse, Sid. Sid left a big impression on me. She's not your average indoor horse. She's every inch a gentleman. She not only let me ride her (without a saddle) but let me chase her through the house and pull her fur and ears. Ah, those were heady hours we spent in Elkins Park: Sid and I eating from the same bowl, sharing table scraps, dancing to the music on the radio and crawling between adults' legs under the dining table. I'm only sorry I didn't inquire about renting her out on the weekends.

October 15, 1991. Mom has been going away on Monday nights to teach breast-feeding to new mothers. I've been doing some serious thinking about what exactly is wrong with this picture. It's obvious. She goes off with some textbook under her arm to bore perfect strangers with theoretical blaah blaah blaah about human milk production and the average child's nutritional needs, etc., while the one particular real and unidealized little man in this world who is most passionately concerned about the topic is left at home to pretend that his father can just as well satisfy his needs with apple juice. Well, I may be short but I'm not stupid! It doesn't take Albert Einstein to figure out that by taking me along to class rather than that dumb textbook she can accomplish two tasks as easily as dirtying a diaper: first, she can show (rather than merely tell) these women how it's done with the help of a real live volunteer; and second, I can hunker down and have my din din too. But noooooo, that's too simple and sensible! Instead I get to stay at home with a man who means well but has no milk in 'em.

October 17, 1991. My recent favorite book is Mircea Eliade's *Myth and Reality*. Dad has all his books but none interest me so much as this one. It's bright orange. The others are steel blue, white, red, gray...whatever, but this one you can spot from across the room. Of the thousand of books at my disposal (and I mean disposal) in this house, *Myth and Reality* is the only one which holds my interest. Dad and I have hit upon a fun game called hiding *Myth and Reality* from Daniel. It doesn't work. Lately I have the feeling that the game is no longer a game in Dad's mind. He used to laugh when he would walk in the door after a long day at the office and I'd be standing there clutching my elusive, hard-won prey by one dog-eared cover, bathed in the glory of another victorious search with an irrepressible smile across my face. He doesn't any more.

October 19, 1991. Mom and Dad and I went to the playground in Wyndmoor and I decided to give them a little treat. I agreed to go on the swing like all the other men and women my age do. I knew that this would give them a real thrill, the idea of watching me going back and forth like a pendulum. (Go figure!) I sacrificed my philosophic stance on swings for a few minutes just to watch two adults engage in true parental happiness and the result was, curiously enough, that I became happy too. It's hard to believe, but watching them laugh and make those weeee sounds can become infectious. Before I knew it I was having fun.

I'm still waking up several times a night for unknown reasons. Lately I've been getting up every hour and a half. Mom and Dad have too, especially Mom, who tries to coax me back to Tutu (Tootoo?) Land by nursing me. Sometimes it works, but only in a rather devious way. What seems to happen is that I get so involved with sucking, swallowing, sucking, swallowing, pissing, sucking and swallowing that I forget momentarily about that idiot in the White House and all those other things that keep me up.

October 20, 1991. Brownies are the greatest food known to man, second only to play-sand. If only someone invented a way of removing the nuts from them they would definitely be the greatest, period. Until then, sand is still preferable, even if only because I don't have to spit the nuts out of sand. Vanilla yoghurt comes in a distant third...except when I hate it and refuse to eat it entirely (which happens every fourth day unless I lose track). Yesterday I only lost my interest in the yoghurt Dad was offering me; the same yoghurt from Mom's bowl was still acceptable for some reason. (I must confess that even I have trouble figuring myself out sometimes.)

October 22, 1991. Last evening when Dad came home I conducted "Bate-hoven's seventh sympathy" for him from beginning to end without stopping for anything except dinner. He and Mom were both amazed at my stamina, especially since I was dancing the entire time I conducted the orchestra. Today I'm going to try doing the same to Götterdämmerung.

October 24, 1991. Today was my first day on the job. Who would have guessed? Fifteen months old and I'm already working in a major down-town appraisal firm! Granted, it's only temporary (until they find someone to replace Florence who went back to Texas) and part time (10:00 a.m. until unbearable crankiness sets in). And granted, they don't give me any of the really important jobs yet. But I already have my tent pitched in the back office and I already figured out the water cooler. The latter appears to be very important around Dad's office-like an initiation rite, I suppose. There was considerable gasping and applause when I walked up to the machine, grabbed myself a paper cup from the dispenser, pulled down on the tab to pour myself a drink and drank it down. I heard chuckles from behind me saying, "I can't believe it...where has he learned to do that?" Well, if such a simple thing as taking a drink of water impresses these folks so much, I doubt that I'll have any trouble keeping up with the competition around this office! I think my favorite business responsibility is answering the phone on the Fax machine. Since it never rings (at least not while I'm there) I have trained myself to second-guess it and I pick it up before it rings...long before.

October 25, 1991. Sesame Street is wonderful. I can't get enough of it. First thing each morning I run into the T.V. room (Mom's study) and pull on the corner of the set until it mysteriously turns on (usually only when Mom or Dad is standing behind me) and then pull up my foam chair and sit there entranced. What I like best about the writing is that none of the sex and violence in it is explicit. You have to read between the lines a lot to get the real story. I've learned this art from reading James Joyce. It's the trick of reading one thing and thinking quite another. It's much more challenging and rewarding than the other way around: watching sex and violence and trying to pretend it's all just implicit (which is what adults would like you to do). I'm particularly intrigued by this Cookie Monster fellow. Not only is he a dead ringer for Dad but at times I even see a little of myself in him.

October 26, 1991. We went back to that Vietnamese restaurant (the one with the fish tank) last night with Uncle Jack. Nothing memorable beyond the usual good food and interesting strangers. (I never have any trouble striking up conversation with the people at other tables. On our way out I waved bye-bye to everyone in the restaurant and everyone laughed. I'm confused. Is that wrong? After all, I introduced myself to all of them. Wouldn't it be considered impolite to just get up and leave without saying goodbye?

November 2, 1991. I've been waking up nice and early since daylight savings last Sunday. Mom has not shared this new enthusiasm of mine for the morning hours. I simply don't get it. If they're so crazy about me why do they wear that look of utter desperation on their faces whenever I say Gooood Morning these days? Am I any less lovable at 6:30 than I was at 8:30? Maybe it has to do with the fact that the both of them are rather poor sleepers. They get up just about every two hours throughout the entire night -just about as many times as I do, as matter of fact (an almost unbelievable coincidence!). I wonder if they too lay awake worrying about the state the country's in with that idiot in the White House?

November 3, 1991. I'm back to baths and bathtubs. Now my two favorite nightly sports are the breaststroke and bath water drinking.

November 5, 1991. Mom abandoned me again last night. She put on her coat, said "byebyesweetheart" and just walked right out the front door, leaving me all alone in the house, except for Dad. I was outraged. If I'm really her sweetheart, what is she doing leaving me to rot here by myself and Dad every Monday night. As I stood gripping the bars of the gate at the top of the stairs, looking down at the front door which Mom had just secured with a key between us, I could feel Dad crouching beside me whispering things in my ear. It was just so much white noise to me, so focused was I on my mother who ran away. After a couple minutes of waiting I noticed that my booties were getting wet with tears and that all this protestation was pointless. I started listening to what Dad was saying to me as he kneeled there beside me, stroking my hair and massaging my back. He was saying bushymushybowwowdingdongJamesJoycegummybearmommybacksoonappelsiii-nimehua. I couldn't believe my ears. Yes, he had made the fatal mistake of letting slip the G word. Dad couldn't know that Mom had already let me try a small piece of a gummy bear that afternoon and that I decided then and there to devote my life to

seeking the rascals out and eating them, one by one. At the sound of that word, so cunningly couched amid meaningless alliteration, I remembered the bag of them on Mom's desk and ran toward it like I was on fire. Dad was feeling rather proud of his forensic skills at convincing me to give up my bout of so-called Separation Anxiety (humbug!) and come with him.

But he was mistaken, as he learned when he followed me in and saw me climbing up Mom's desk in search of bears. Just as I got my hand around the whole bag of the critters I could feel my body levitating off the chair and I knew I was on my way to Nirvana. But this time I was mistaken. I was on my way to the floor to wrestle with Dad for the bag of gummy bears. I don't remember whether I followed the rules of professional wrestling (do they have rules?) but I am almost certain that I won because Dad was sitting there breaking off pieces of gummy bears for me to eat. This rather magnanimous gesture of Dad's has taught me something which I will carry with me throughout life, and that is that you can get anything you want in life if you wrestle for it. Dad blurted out something like peepeepoohpoohblaahblaahthisoughttosatisfythelittleblaahblaah, but once again, he was mistaken. Do you "satisfy" a fire by throwing gasoline on it? Suddenly I felt energized. (Is there sugar or something in gummy bears?) Wow!, I was ready for action. I grabbed the so-called softball (I'd hate to have to bite into a hardball if that's a softball!) and showed Dad the game I had just invented a couple of days ago called "Throw the Ball Down Hard Against the Floor So You Can Imitate the Sound of a Canon Going Off." It is difficult to do well but quite worth the effort. You take the ball in both hands and shake it over your head while saying ooooooo with puckered lips, and then you let the ball go and wait for the canon sound. Sometimes it doesn't work, especially if you forget to get off the rug. Sometimes it works extra well, especially if there is something breakable between the ball and the hardwood floor. Dad seemed impressed with the game, but he has a lot to learn about it. He is much to gentle with it and ends up sounding less like a canon than like a drip from a leaky faucet. I could tell from his wincing when I played that he prefers quieter games. He tried to interest me in the foam ball, but I said "No, you use that. I'm fine with this here."

November 12, 1991. I think it's time to seek professional help: last night I drank COW'S milk and evidently liked it. Or at least that's what Dad told Mom this morning. I don't quite remember because I was not in a good state last night. It was Monday night again, or, as it really should be called around here anymore, "Abandon Daniel Night." Mom went out and left me to babysit Dad, and the task seemed particularly difficult and trying this time. Somehow Dad got it into his skull that he would be going to bed early, "to catch up on a couple thousand hours of lost sleep," as he put it. Well, I certainly never promised him that he could go to bed early and, as I'm the one around here who decides such matters, I think I should have been the first to be consulted about this rather tall order. Anyway, 9:00 came and Dad was telling me I looked pretty sleepy, to which I replied "blaah, blaah, blaah," etc. By 9:30 he was looking at me through bloodshot eyes, boring me with the usual nonsense about having to wake up at 5:00 a.m. in preparation for a "big day" (whatever that is). Every time his eyelids would droop a little I would say BOO! At 10:00 Mom was still not home, I got my "second wind" (whatever that is) and Dad sunk to his lowest level of ethical and moral behavior I have can remember in weeks. He actually offered me money to go to sleep. I was deeply offended (though I took it, of course, as I could obviously use the raha), and I

strengthened my resolve to fight off "the sandman" (whoever he is) just on principle. I have read somewhere that when a man is deprived of sleep he will sacrifice everything and anything to obtain it out of physiological need. (What about women?) So I knew that my declaration of war meant I would have to be on "red alert" (whatever that means), and that Dad could try just about anything at this point. But I didn't know that "anything" could include the unthinkable. He put cow's milk in my bottle! Did he think I was so stupid as to confuse a plastic bottle filled with cow excretion for a warm, human breast full of namnam? I don't know. It's difficult to explain the arbitrary and irrational actions of adults, particularly when they're tired. The problem was that it wasn't until I had downed a good bit of the stuff that I realized what had transpired, and at that point I knew that my system was already tainted with the stuff and that a little more wouldn't make much difference.

Well, I had fallen into Dad's insidious trap. The next thing I knew I was getting sleepy. I looked up at him with one eye and I could already make out the hint of a smile breaking the rigid line of his tightly pursed lips. I don't remember anything else, except that when I woke up this morning Mom was again by my side and Dad had escaped from the house to go to work (probably to get some sleep, if I know him).

November 13, 1991. My experience on Monday night really drove home to me like never before the many small pleasures I take for granted. Like having Mom around to suck on whenever I like. Last night when the three of us were sitting watching television, I felt so consciously happy about my First Amendment right to nurse that I decided to flaunt it. I told Mom to lift her blouse, and when I knew Dad was looking I took a premeditated nose dive into the nipple, like a hawk coming down on small fry. I was surprised to see that they both found this even more entertaining as did I, so I went one step further with a few acrobatic stunts. First I got onto my hands and knees on Mom's lap. Then I lifted my right leg high in the air like a doggie does when he has sniffed something he likes. Then, with my free right hand I rubbed my head in contrary motion to the turning of my raised right foot. Keep in mind that I still have my lips around that nipple, sucking like Mom's hooked up to a hydrant or something.

Well, by this time the two of them were in convulsive laughter, so I opened one eye to check the screen and make sure it wasn't some dumb sitcom they were reacting to. But no, it was some boring, monotonous documentary about why Eskimos will never eat penguins, or some such thing, and I knew at once that Mom and Dad had to be laughing at me. Well, don't you know, I started laughing too. I don't know quite why but I had to sit up, interrupt my drink, and give out a good old belly laugh myself. It's catchy. Laughter is a funny thing, really. It comes and goes mysteriously and without warning, like ear infections (but more often and in shorter durations, thank goodness). Mom and Dad too. We can be sitting there, the three of us, quietly watching *Sesame Street* together, and all of a sudden the two of them will start laughing out loud, simultaneously and without the slightest provocation (without so much as beep out of me). And of course, once they start laughing it's really hard to avoid joining in myself. I think they're both a very bad influence on me. But it's hard not to love them, really.

November 14, 1991. Mom and I went out and bought me a little chair of my own the day before yesterday. I sense that this was inspired not so much by the idea of my having furniture I could call mine as much as by their fear aroused in my climbing the waste paper basket to get to the bathroom sink (which I do whenever the devil tells me

to put all the toothbrushes down the drain and replace the plastic drain guard so that nobody guesses where they are). Actually, sometimes I climb up there on my own incentive (just to wash my face and brush my teeth), and then the devil whispers these orders in my ear. And sometimes I embellish his orders by shoving other things down there to keep company with the toothbrushes. But usually I stick to orders.

November 16, 1991. Yesterday I babysat Martina. It's hard work but somebody's got to do it. Martina demands a lot of attention, as do all people who are as short as we are. But at least she shows an interest in learning, unlike some of those other creatures in our playgroup whose sole interest is whether this hair on my head is really mine or whether it comes off with enough tugging. Anyway, I took her up to the third floor to show her my drypoint collection (while Mom was up there looking for something Dad had stored [i.e., lost] there). Martina was impressed most of all by the bathroom. (It is my experience from real estate hunting that if you want to sell some hovel of a place to a woman, just make sure you install a good looking bathroom and, dagnabbed, you've got yourself a sale.) I think it was the jacuzzi in particular that won her over. I'll never forget her look of entranced wonderment as she stood there, gripping the rim, looking down at my slippered feet submerged in the water. Unfortunately, before I got a chance to demonstrate the whirlpool effect by pulling down the handle, the door opened suddenly and Martina's attention was stolen outright from under me by the abrupt sound of a woman's laughter pouring in from the hallway. It was Mom, of course, and tears were coming down her cheeks (even though she was actually laughing, not crying-I think) as she quickly picked me up and out of the jacuzzi and immediately threw my slippers into hot, soapy water-as if the jacuzzi would dirty them or something. When she told Dad what had happened, he laughed in just the same way. Am I missing something?

November 17, 1991. I've been practicing my fast ball, and I'm a bit frustrated with my progress. My speed is improving tenfold; my only real difficulty seems to be that of actually letting go of the ball. After all, what's the good of a power-packed pitch if you can't open your fingers to let the ball go and do its work? I have found that unless you open your fingers immediately upon throwing the ball, it's just going to fall to the ground like an apple from a tree. Catching is another problem. If Dad would only tell me exactly where on my face the ball is going to hit me I would be glad to have my hands there ready to intercept it.

All of this is getting to me, and I am losing my appetite again. Unless it means that I'm... Oh oh! Could it...? No, surely not!...

November 18, 1991. Yes it could. My worst fears were warranted. Mom took me to the doctor's today, and when he looked into my ear for two seconds, he uttered the dreaded C word that Mom had been bracing for: CECLOR! Why does Mom pay good money to consult a doctor who tells her the same thing every time we go to him? All he ever mutters is "yes, and ear infection," and I'm about sick of it all. On television the doctors sometimes say "contusion of the ventricle somethingorother" or "gout" or whatever, but you would never hear them say repeat the same disorder over and over again to everybody they examine! Besides, you don't need a professional to tell me that I've got an ear infection. It's been at least three weeks since the last one, so what's so surprising about having another one? Boy do I get in a pissy mood when my ears get infected!

Even my favorite sports seem to me suddenly flat, dull and unprofitable. Standing on chairs, unlocking doors with keys, writing on my face in ballpoint, throwing Dad's books in the trash, unloading the refrigerator: these were things which lent meaning to life. Now I think of them and say "who cares?" Even my trusty copper pot and lid holds little fascination for me when I'm suffering from an ear infection. I realized last night that it wasn't working at all. Come to think of it, I'd be hard pressed to describe what it is that it's actually supposed to do when it is working. All I knew was that now when I took the lid off nothing happened, and when I put the lid back on nothing happened either. I got so upset by this realization that I took it to Mom in desperation, but she was unable to suggest a remedy.

November 19, 1991. I'm still pissed today, but not as much as yesterday-mostly because we're on a plane headed for Disney World. I've been there before, they tell me, but I don't remember a bit of it. It must have been years and years ago!

November 21, 1991. We went to Universal Studios, which, just like Disney World, is different from other places in that everybody smiles, there's music playing everywhere, and, most importantly, you're allowed in the street! Due to the considerable distances we covered, I have come to respect the carriage. However, I think my sudden enthusiasm for it has something to do with my recently acquired skill in using seat belts.

November 29, 1991. We came back from Florida a few days ago and I've had my hands full with (of) laundry. As Mom would bring it up from the dryer I would spread it all out as evenly as possible across the floor. I can't remember why exactly I do this, nor why I enjoy such demanding work so very much. But it's better not to think too much upon these subjects. Anyway, last night we had Dad's cousins Anita, David and Danny over for Thanksgiving dinner. I even surprised myself as to how good a conversationalist I can be at the dinner table when I'm not cranky as hell and fed up with everything.

December 2, 1991. Uncle Jack had a party at his house today which seemed to me to be the equivalent of the old trick of attempting to see how many college students one can fit in a Volkswagen. It was great: food everywhere you turned or fell, a veritable forest of trouser legs on which to wipe greasy hands and, best of all, A CAT! God, I love cats! Unlike animals stuffed with synthetic materials, real cats have fur which comes off in your hands when you pull hard enough. Mom and Dad seemed a bit surprised at my gentleness with Cat "this time around." What can they mean by this? Have I not always been a gentleman with the poor, defenseless creatures which are pressed into service as my play toys?

December 13, 1991. There is definitely a correlation between Dad's work schedule and this journal! It is quite obvious that at times like this when Dad has "end of the year deadlines" to meet at the office I tend to get lazy about recording my activities in this book. Today is an exception, probably only because last night was so memorable. I made him laugh until his cheeks were wet. Don't ask me why. All I remember is that he offered me an opened jar of Gerber Meat Sticks, I took one out, bit the end off and put it back in the jar, took another one out and did the same, then another and another until I

could no longer hold so much in my mouth and had to spit all the ends out. So what's so funny about that? I wasn't hungry! (Heck, I do far funnier stuff when he's at work!)

December 26, 1991. A momentous day. The Soviet Union ceased to exist by the time I woke up this morning for my second feeding. Just like that and all without a peep! Unless, that is, all the brouhaha happened the day before when I was too busy unwrapping Christmas gifts to hear any of it.

December 28, 1991. Yesterday I was paid a visit by my old Mexican girlfriend Camille. Suddenly it was like old times when we used to see each other regularly. She makes herself at home rather quickly: everything and anything that's mine is hers the minute she gets her coat off. I made the mistake of showing her my Christmas gift of the tape recorder with microphone. No sooner did I utter the fateful word, "here's..." and the very next thing I know, she was showing it to me! I tried to grab for the microphone so as to demonstrate its proper use but I was too late. She already had the entire thing in her mouth and was hollering through it like a billy goat. Next time she's in town I'm going to insist that we meet at a restaurant or in the park or something.

December 29, 1991. I'm afraid that my own father is a bad influence on me. He does and says things so marvelously ridiculous and absurd as to become infectious to me. But as soon as I give in to temptation and imitate him everybody laughs hysterically at me as if I invented these things myself. Example: Dad saw me running around on one of the better carpets (I can't remember which since they all look alike to me anyway) with my onesy unbuttoned. When he came up behind me, lifted up the unsnapped flap trailing at my ankles and saw that I was bare-bottomed and diaperless, he let out a blood-chilling scream of existential angst which he says only a carpet dealer would understand. Well, don't ask me why, but this is funny. So I laughed. And when I stopped laughing, I noticed that Mom and Dad were laughing too, which made me a touch confused because at this point I wasn't sure whether they were laughing at Dad or at me. So I experimented by repeating the incident to see just which moment was the operative one. Well, no sooner than I lifted the front of my onesy, exposed my belly-button and let out an imitation of Dad's cry, did they both go into hysterics. The belly-button is definitely funnier than the behind. This much is clear. But might it also be that people quickly forget that I'm only following models of behavior set down for me by adults and that I don't make this stuff up out of thin air? I can see already that if I want to avoid embarrassing situations for myself when I grow up, I'm going to have to be much more selective concerning which of Dad's stunts I go around imitating for people.

January 1, 1992. I haven't even gotten used to writing 1991 and it's already obsolete! If today is any indication of what the new year's going to be like, I'm going to be mighty busy. The house was packed with playgroup kiddies and their parents. I had to share my toys, and I was not pleased. (If I'm to be expected to host such crowds in the future, I'm afraid they'll just have to supply me with the appropriate number of toys; what I was forced into today was nothing short of communism, and from it I can imagine that this Karl Marx character must have done more visiting than hosting when he was my age.

January 4, 1992. I had my first real taste of capitalism today and I don't care for that too much either. Today Dad and I went to the supermarket for a few things and, like usual, I was confined to the back-carrier for the duration. No problem. But as Dad was paying the woman at the cash register for these things she was selling him, I started looking around at all this stuff stacked high in endless aisles and thinking to myself, hey, this woman is never going to live long enough to eat all this food by herself anyway, so why nickle-and-dime us to death for it all? At this point Dad was submissively handing over a wad of green paper for the goods he had selected (which I'm sure she had even forgotten that she owned) and I'm looking around over my shoulder at a stand stacked with candy that she would never miss even if she were to spend all day counting it. So I grabbed a couple of rolls of mints which had been screaming to me to be liberated from the clutches of capitalist greed and, out of a sense of decorum, I mumbled to Dad that he might as well pay her for these as well (i.e., when in Rome, etc.).

Well, still strapped to Dad's back, I followed him back to the car, and when he took me down and installed me in my car seat and noticed the roll of mints in each of my hands he became flushed with color and immediately pretended to be surprised by the mere sight of them. I realized then that he hadn't paid a cent for them and that I was the one left holding the goods! Being a minor (with little in the way of reputation, career, house, or car to loose), I knew I would probably be the one to take the rap for this. When Dad exclaimed "you little thief you!" I quickly closed my fists around the mints, completely hiding them from view, and laughed along with him to show any FBI agents watching that it was all one big joke. Well, quite to my relieved surprise, the getaway was a stunning success, the mints delicious, and the adrenalin surge quite stimulating. But I am left with the rather empty feeling that something had transpired which could have only happened in a society rooted in excess and greed. Had we been standing in line to buy food from a Russian woman there would have been no mints to tempt me and, therefore, would have definitely noticed them missing.

January 5, 1992. I am finally over my fear of descending staircases. I am surprised that the solution didn't occur to me sooner: SLIDE DOWN! Sliding down precludes any and all risks of falling down for the simple reason that you're down already and there's nowhere further down to go. I think I've gotten it down to a science at this point: go to the top of the stairs, turn around, get on your belly, straighten out your body with only your right knee bent for braking, give a good strong push off the top step, and before you know it your downstairs. It doesn't work going back up. I don't know why that is.

January 6, 1992. I said Daaddyyyy (meaning, "listen to the sound of my voice as I imitate Dad") and it made a big impression on Mom and Dad who evidently think the word means something different than I think it does. (They laughed that laugh of utter surprise that I can make the same sounds with my mouth as they can.)

January 7, 1992. I've been sleeping with Mom and Dad for the past week or so and I must say, I do enjoy their company. It all started with one of my famous ear infections wherein I was waking up in pain all night and Mom realized that I slept better at her side. Well, to nobody's astonishment I slept equally better in their bed without an ear infection. As far as I'm concerned, they're free to sell the crib now, for all I ever plan on using it again. Maybe they can put the money toward buying a bed for Dad. (He does

take up a good bit of room, you know. Room that could be shared by Mom and me to our considerably greater comfort.)

January 8, 1992. I'm losing my patience with Dad's unnerving habit of searching through the trash all the time as if he were some poor street person. Lately it seems as if it is happening every day that he removes the lid to the kitchen trash can, roots through with his arm clear down to the bottom, and removes most* of the stuff I spent all day hiding in there. (*Luckily, I must admit, he often does miss some choice items.) I can't quite figure out his intense interest in this. He seems particularly relieved to retrieve books he finds in there, though all he does when he finds them is shove them back up on the shelf without even reading them!

January 9, 1992. The wonderful house Mom built for me out of a washing machine carton a few weeks ago doubles perfectly as a washing machine. Today I was able to do an entire load of plastic trash bags in one wash (and there was even room for a couple towels, a coffee cup or two, the calendar from off the refrigerator and five or six books on James Joyce I retrieved from the trash can before Dad found them).

January 17, 1992. Coffee is an acquired taste. I am therefore making the effort to drink whatever I can acquire of the stuff whenever I can do so. Thus far I think I prefer the idea of coffee to the actual taste of it. (Sort of like democracy?) Last night they let their guard down exactly long enough for me to help myself. I walked into the room only to find Mom reading and not paying one bit of attention to the cup which was beckoning to me from beside her. I walked over, picked it up and quaffed down a good gulp of the stuff before either of them could say peep. When I let out the appropriate aspirated exhalation of satisfaction they laughed out loud as if I had just told a joke or something. If the sight of me enjoying a good cup of coffee is so entertaining, why am I only allowed to do so when I catch them off guard?

January 20, 1992. Why was I given this heavenly body if I'm required to keep it covered all the time! They spend half their time chasing me around the house trying to get me into these constraining garments that hide my best and most famous parts. I never have told them that the real reason I love baths so much is that its the one place and activity where you're expected, nay, urged, to be buck naked the way Mom made ya. It does a man good to look down and see his equipment there out in the open where he can see how it works. (In a diaper there's almost no difference between "going to the bathroom" and not; out of a diaper there's no mistaking it, whether you've made it to the bathroom or not.) The trick is to stay that way after the bath. Normally I wait until Dad takes me out of the tub and grabs for the towel. At that point I make a mad dash for the bathroom door. The first rush of cold air hitting my wet body feels like raw freedom itself. And the liberating feeling gets better the further down the hall I get toward the front room where I know Mom is waiting to save me from the bogey man with the towel at my heels. Ultimately Mom is on same side as he is concerning the clothing issue, but of the two she is definitely the more relaxed about it. (That's funny, actually, because back when I was too tiny to run away from the towel I also used to cry when Dad dried me, and Mom was certain this was because he was letting the cold air nip at me in the process; in fact it was because he wasn't!) I think that's because she comes from a country where running around naked after a bath is considered quite the thing to do. (I

have heard it told that some actually go outside like that and roll in the snow or jump in ice-cold water or such, but not even I am interested in such extreme expressions of machismo.)

January 23, 1992. When is he going to learn that I'm simply not interested in eating unless I'm the one doing the shoveling in of the food? He says I get more on my shirt front than in my mouth when I'm in charge, but so what? That's what washing machines are for-washing clothes.

January 26, 1992. Last night we went to David and Carolyn's with Uncle Jack. The place was crammed with strange knees. Like usual at these parties, most of the action was happening up on high and out of my reach. But someone was thoughtful enough to leave two bowls of salted nuts for me on a low table. (Who else could they have been intended for at that height?) I love salted nuts! No, I love salted nuts! Yes that's the correct emphasis. I would have preferred they just leave me two bowls of salt and leave out the nuts entirely. Nuts only get in the way and slow a man down when he's trying to knock back some salt. And besides, after a while its hard to keep straight the ones you've already sucked saltless from the dry ones still ahead of you (unless, that is, you're rude enough to drop the used ones on the floor where the next guy will have to bend down for them). Toward the end of the evening I returned to the nut table and grabbed a handful that I had obviously worked on before, forgetting where in the bowl I left the dry ones.

This morning when I woke up the room was filled with an unusually intense light, and when I looked out I saw that everything was white. Mom and Dad and I later went out in the stuff, but I really don't see how they expected me to enjoy it all when I was so bundled up that I couldn't bend down. Every time I tried to do so I fell over like a statue of Lenin. And that's a little too close to the stuff to get any real enjoyment out of it. Each time they would pick me up and balance me again against the intense attraction of gravity they would clean the snow out of my nose and mouth and urge me to "go have fun." Right! If I had only been naked and unencumbered, then I would have had some fun!

January 27, 1992. Last night Mom went out and Dad and I stayed home and watched a movie. I didn't understand a thing about the film (it sounded as if it was in Georgian or something), but we had a pretty good time because of the refreshments. Dad made a big bowl of popcorn and I sat in his lap the whole time, one hand in the bowl, the other wrapped around my bottle of apple juice. When Mom walked in I looked around and realized that there was popcorn scattered all around us. Dad is considerably messier than I had realized.

January 30, 1992. Last night Uncle David and Aunt Carolyn came over to bring me the bottle I left at their party the other night. They are a indeed a couple of upright citizens, for I noticed that the juice was at the very same level as the night I left it. They are also quite easy to entertain. I showed them my lately perfected Hollywood kiss that I give Dad when he comes home (ripping the glasses from his face and zooming in with cocked head and open mouth for a big wet smacker) and they immediately asked for the same (even Aunt Carolyn who doesn't wear glasses!). Kissing Uncle David takes some

getting used to, I'm afraid. He has a curious carpeting covering his cheeks, lips, chin and neck. It doesn't come off no matter how hard you pull.

They seemed to really get a kick out of my term go. Everybody does, actually, and I can't quite figure out why. Dad tells everyone it means "ball" (ball??!!) and Mom tells them rather it means "come play with me" (?). It means neither of these. It means "go!" What is so very hard to understand about that? "You're standing too close to play ball with in any meaningful way, so go back a bit," etc. I learned it from Uncle Dick a few weeks ago while we were playing ball together in the kitchen. He told me to go (back a little so I can throw this thing). I did (i.e., I goed) and it worked.

February 9, 1992. I'm 19 months old today and I'm beginning to watch my tastes mature. My passion for pens has partially subsided to make way for an even stronger attraction: rubber balls. Don't get me wrong. Pens are great-provided they really work and you can write all over your face-it's just that balls go further. Or maybe it has something to do with my having just learned how to pronounce the name of the darn things. Easier said than done! (I know that's cliché, but it is so very true.) In order to get that low guttural double-L sound to come out, you've got to really push from the diaphragm (is that the right word?). And the a before the ls isn't pronounced at all like it's written. It's more like awe than a. As I see it I had two choices: practice saying it correctly or throw the towel in (whatever that means) and call the thing pallo like Mom does.

February 10, 1992. Diapers are the scourge of the earth. The fact that they're confining and uncomfortable is the least of their negative qualities. The worst is that when you're wearing one you simply can't see what you're doing, if you know what I mean. Mom at least lets me run around without them for a little while at a time. But just watch Dad's face when he sees me like that across the Oriental rugs. It's like he just saw a ghost or something. Well, yesterday before Dad got home I was taking advantage of my freedom when all of a sudden I realized that the cold hardwood floor I was standing on no longer felt cold. As a matter of fact it began feeling kind of warm, and wet too. I looked down and sure enough I realized what's really wrong with diapers: they waste perfectly good warm water! Here I was, drawing myself a bath just where I wanted it (as opposed to the same old bathtub where they always wanted me to have it), when I wanted it, sort of. I looked down at what I had made and said to myself, "it feels good." In fact, there was only one thing I could think of which was noticeably missing from this pond: fish! So I ran to the bathroom and got the only one we have which isn't in a can. (It's a wind-up plastic one with a spring-loaded tail that I chase in the tub.) As I was coming out of the bathroom with my catch in hand I noticed Mom walking toward my new pond with a couple of cloth diapers in hers. I wasn't born yesterday. I knew what this meant. So I put my legs in high gear, passed her in the hall, made it to the front room, jumped back into my pond (which had cooled considerably in my absence) and dropped in Mr. Fishie before Mom got there to call off the party. What's so funny about that? Well I don't know but Mom was in hysterics, as was Dad when he heard her account of it later on.

February 14, 1992. I've got my first sentence just about perfected: pftshfbbwoerdhid'go? (which means, of course, "where did it go?" or "here has it gone?" or "have you seen it around here lately?" or "can you tell me if the likes of it has been seen around these parts in recent memory?," etc.). But since it has taken me weeks

to develop this phrase, I've had to use it for a few other meanings as well. And worse comes to worse, there's always baaallll? to fall back on.

February 15, 1992. The Olympics winter sports competitions have been on TV the last couple of nights. Watching them I realize that if I'm ever to ski like that, I'm not going to do it keeping my behind warm. Skiing is not a spectator's sport. The secret appears to be in getting a good jumping start. Taking my lead from the folks on TV, I perched myself on the nearest platform high above the course. (Being that Mom and Dad don't keep platforms lying around I used a book. Worked just fine.) After getting the attention of the crowd (Mom and Dad) I jumped free of the book and swooped down along the treacherous curves of the course, weaving sharp zigzags throughout the room until I arrived safely at the base of the floor lamp between Mom and Dad. I had to jump-start the applause but once it got going it was just fine.

February 17, 1992. Yesterday we went to Uncle Jack's and I stayed with Uncle Jack while Mom and Dad went "buy-buy." (I often wonder what it is that people buy when they go buy-buy.) Uncle Jack is the world's preeminent babysitter! (Or is diminutive person's custodian the politically correct term used these days?) I feel that he truly understands me. I wonder if we're what they call kindred soles? When I ask him pftthsfbwwoerdhitd'go? he knows precisely in which sense I am asking it. (Only once did I need to resort to baaallll?) And best of all, he's a hedonist like me. He buys the best potato chips I've ever had the pleasure to suck the salt off of. (When I grow up I'm going to eat only potato chips [stopping only for salted peanuts].) Even Uncle Jack's cat is the world's finest. She not only feels nice to hold but she really likes being massaged and strangled. (You'd be surprised at the number of them that don't.) In fact, she only tries to escape when you lie down on her.

February 21, 1992. Baaallll? is too short a word to convey the sense of what these marvelous objects do when you throw them. Baubaaallll? Ah, yes, that's more like it.

March 2, 1992. Been working on my pitching arms (I can't quite tell yet which one it will be: either left or right, maybe left, yes-but no, maybe right) by throwing balls and things at Dad and Mom. (They prefer balls; I only throw the other things to see if maybe they're just balls posing as books, pens, coffee cups and portable calculators.) And furthermore, Dad keeps shouting (with his head buried under his arm), "throw it to me, not at me!" Semantics. The problem seems to be in my windup; it's hard not to walk right up to the catcher when preparing your throw. I just need a little practice. (Till now I've been able to practice only day [with Mom] and night [with Dad].)

March 4, 1992. What has helped my pitching arms more than anything has been exercising with Dad each day after he gets home from work. We do chin-ups, push-ups, sit-ups and heavy breathing. (I just fake the last so that he doesn't think I'm falling behind.) Chin-ups are my personal favorite. Dad says he gets so much exercise helping me do mine that he probably doesn't need to do his own. Just what does he mean by that?

March 6, 1992. Yesterday was a major turning point for me in my development into a responsible adult. It might be seen as still another hurdle cleared in that vast obstacle course which constitutes the rite of passage to manhood: I pissed all over Daddy.

Micturated is probably a better choice of word for what I did-or "made peepee," maybe. Whatever you call it I did it with panache and it surprised the \$%*! out of him. The funny thing is that I wasn't even aiming in his direction when it happened! We were both standing there like usual, staring down into the toilet bowl in a trance waiting for gravity to do its work, when all of the sudden-even before I got a chance to aim-there was warm water everywhere, but mostly running down both of Daddy's thighs and knees and shins and ankles. Surprisingly, Dad laughed, but not as loud as did Mom when she got wind of it-especially after hearing Dad tell about my having flushed the toilet when all was done (quite needlessly, Dad said).

March 8, 1992. We went to the opera today and I found it quite stimulating. Luckily for them it was only a half an hour long and my stimulation didn't have time to gain any real momentum; a minute more and they would have had a tough time peeling me off the ceiling. A half-hour is about my limit at the opera, I confess. But it's hardly due to lack of interest. On the contrary, the real challenge for me (and for Dad who has to hold me back) is to keep from going up there on stage to try out for the part myself. Seen from my perspective it's pure punishment to force an opera enthusiast like myself to sit there quietly until it's all over (i.e., when there's nothing left with which to sing along). And particularly with an opera as interesting as this one! If I hadn't known better I would have sworn that the composer wrote this thing for me! (But being that I don't know any Mr. Menotties I suppose it is what is called co-instadince.)

The opera was all about being on the telephone. Need I say more? (I was going out of my gourd.) Every time the keyboard player made that poor imitation of the phone ringing I wanted to go and get it myself. If not for superhuman willpower on my part (and a tenacious hold of my pants on Dad's part) I would have certainly gone up there to answer it. When it was all over we clapped. Especially me. I love to clap. Ah yes, clap clap. And then it was time for baabaas. I love to say baabaa at the appropriate time (baabaa time). I said baabaa to...well, basically, to all who were interested. And on the walk home with Mom and Dad I said baabaa to a few other folks who were either very late for the performance or were not even going there (unthinkable). Knowing that some people are deaf I usually buttress my baabaas with the universal sign language for baabaa: a few open-close movements of the hand. And when that doesn't work I resort to the one thing nobody has yet to resist: blown kisses. Even complete strangers become instant family when you blow them a few kisses.

March 9, 1992. Last night I sensed again what I believe to be mild exasperation in Mom over my vocabulary. It has to do I think with the stuff I pick up off of Dad. It's called "English." I don't know quite what it is, but English is just easier to pronounce than Finnish. I guess I can see why Mom is perhaps a touch disappointed. She spends all day long with me jabbering away in Finnish (while I pretend to understand everything she says for fear of having her start from the top and repeat it all for me) and all I ever answer her in is English. I can't help it but English words just make more sense! I'm sorry but kerosilmaisyyss just doesn't sound like squint, no matter how good your intonation is. Nor does yksikertainen come close to sounding simple. English is direct and to the point; I like that in a language. Therefore, I took it upon myself to teach Mom some English. Remembering that repetition is the key to learning, I decided to be persistent with her. Last night was Mom's first lesson. We were sitting together with one of my Finnish picture books-the ones with the unrecognizable drawings of everyday

objects beneath hundred-letter words peppered with dots and double letters-open on her lap. The idea, or course, was for me to repeat after her, but knowing she was never going to learn English that way, I took the matter into my own hands. Here's a transcript of Mom's lesson:

Mom (Äiti): "p a l l o."

Me (Minä): "baaaalllll!"

Mom: "k i s s a."

Me: "baaaalllll!"

Mom: "s i k a."

Me: "baaaalllll!"

Mom: "n o r s u."

Me: "baaaalllll!"

Mom: "baaaalllll?!"

Mina: "baaaalllll! [i.e., Good! You did it! I'm proud of you! Baaaalllll!]

As you can see, my method works, but you have to be very patient.

March 10, 1992. Last night I stumbled upon the secret for simulating peepee: apple juice. Of course! I just can't believe I've been drinking the stuff all those months and I never realized it. It came to me in a flash of intuition. After several requests, Mom took the top off my bottle for me so I wouldn't have to mess with the nipple when I had serious drinking to do. But having forgot why I made the request in the first place, I proceeded to look around for something new and creative to do with the stuff now that it was in my charge. I looked over at the wagon and thought, naaa, I've done that already. Then I looked over at the new potty they just bought me and thought, bingo! Well, to cut a short story shorter, I poured it in and it worked perfectly, a dead ringer for the real stuff. But then again, it really was apple juice. Strange but true! It looked like peepee yet intellectually I understood its true nature to be apple juice. This was my first true philosophical dilemma (as I never have had a problem with consubstantiation or other seeming absurdities)-one which I knew could be solved empirically. I thought to myself, what would Dr. Johnson have done? and suddenly it came to me. Of course, prove it's apple juice by drinking it! Amazing! Indeed it was apple juice (and for some reason particularly tasty apple juice at that), even though pretending to be peepee. Weird but true.

March 11, 1992. Hot is a great word. Very expressive. I find myself saying it whenever I am overcome with the desire to be expressive. Dad taught it to me in the tub a couple of weeks ago and I never forgot it. He was lowering himself into the water before lifting me in. There was steam coming out of his eyeballs and ears, and when he said " h o t " you just knew he wasn't talking about winter in Finland (which is exactly what comes to mind when Mom says it: kuuma!)

March 12, 1992. Äiti and I went to visit Omar the "German Shepherd" yesterday. (He's actually just a dog, and a regular American one at that, but the adults appear not to have recognized this yet.) Omar lives at the Whitakers' house. After a couple hours of roughhousing I finally managed to wear Omar down, and when he curled up for forty winks I felt obliged to join him-until, that is, I remembered what happens every time I take a nap with a friend: my napmate always gets away! Well, I thought to myself, this is one doggie that isn't going to skip out on me-not if I stay real close. So I plopped myself down right on him and took my nap right then and there, and a very good nap it

was indeed! My plan worked exquisitely, but for one tiny glitch. By the time we woke up it was time to go back home!

March 20, 1992. Yesterday, while Dad and I went food shopping and errand-running, Äiti went and bought me a whole bunch of balls, bats and rackets of the various sizes and colors lacking from my vast collection. Äiti is great! She's always thinking up things to get me. I think it is safe to say that due to her diligence the only balls not represented in my arsenal at this point are musket balls, canon balls, and wrecking balls. (Boy, would I love to have them.) Come to think of it, she could add a bowling ball to her shopping list too. Anyway, the only problem with owning so vast a collection as mine is the immense responsibility of protecting them all from use by the unauthorized (i.e., anyone else but me). I find myself walking around the place loaded down with ten, twelve balls at a time when we have suspicious visitors-especially those my size, as they are typically the most likely to attempt liberating my ball collection from me. For example, Jonathan Gay, Jr. came over today, ostensibly to play with me but really to try and augment his own budding collection. Uncle Jack was here as well, and while I was showing Jon boy my cardboard house (hoping to interest him in something harmless so I could go out and play ball with Dad), Uncle Jack pushed my entire collection in on top of us through the windows. Of course this put me in a rather awkward position because there was no way I could nonchalantly clutch all my balls and still fit through the door once I got him duped into staying inside. My options were limited: a.) stay there and share my collection with him; b.) leave him in there with my coveted stash of balls and pretend I'm not interested in them so that he would come out and I would run back in and lock the door; c.) stay in there with him and hold on to every ball I could manage. I was in a quandary. I reviewed in my mind the options, each worse than the preceding. Well, "a" was out of the question. (I'd just as soon give him my gall bladder as my precious balls.) And "b" was simply too complicated to actually work. (You can't use "reverse psychology" on someone on whom you've never even tried regular psychology!) Clearly "c" was my only possible choice. And believe it or not, it worked. He just sat there dumbfounded at my dexterity. And it struck my how lucky I was that my wish had not yet come true about the musket, canon, bowling, and wrecking balls.

March 21, 1992. Today Dad and I went to the playground with a rather disappointingly small sampling of my ball collection (i.e., that portion we could actually fit in the car with us). We took along the tennis rackets but I was almost sorry we had because I had a great deal of difficulty making him understand precisely how they were to be used. After I first realized that he was not following me I decided to limit my vocabulary to the most important words: baubaallll! and gooo! But even then he seemed confused. So I had to resort to showing him step by step. First I gave him the blue racket, then the ball, then another ball, and then the yellow racket. He seemed even more confused than before. Patiently I took back the yellow racket and one ball, exchanging the latter with the former until, of course, I remembered that it was indeed the former and, hence, not to be given back yet, and so I gave him instead another ball and, in its place, took back another racket which left him with two balls and absolutely no rackets, which wouldn't do at all, so I returned to him the blue racket, let him hold on to the two balls, dropped the yellow racket on the ground so that he wouldn't get any silly ideas about using that one too, and implored him to get on with it before my hands froze, goshdarnit! He seemed the very picture of confusion, in spite of the absolute clarity and concreteness

with which I had demonstrated the rules of the game to him. So, I picked up the yellow racket and gave it to him, asking for the blue one in return, along with one of the balls and the blue racket, all of which he dutifully conceded with a blank look on his face-that same look he wears whenever I attempt to teach him rules.

Well, the only thing to do at this point was begin again from scratch. So, I dropped everything on the ground and proceeded to hand him each thing separately. And this time I threw in the bat, a golf club and two more balls (just to heighten my chances of his getting one of them right.) But after I got him all loaded up, he seemed more confused than ever! So I took back the bat in exchange for a different club, removed the sixth ball from between his right elbow and his left knee, shoved in there in its place another racket (...I have three rackets??!!) and shouted *baubbaalllll!* All he could do was stand there like a pretzel and laugh. That's when I realized that my efforts were futile and that it was about time for a nap. Later in the afternoon I told Mom about my difficulties in teaching Dad, and she just shook her head, rolled her eyes, and chuckled, "tell me about it!"

March 30, 1992. Yesterday we went with Uncle Jack to the Art Museum, where they have paintings and sculptures of other people's mothers without clothes on. I kept thinking, Uh Oh, *namnam* time! (even though it wasn't really). After lunch (which, fortunately for them, included rice or I wouldn't have eaten a thing, thank you very much), we went to the big playground at 25th and Lombard Streets (near Uncle Jack's house, sort of). Wow! What a place! They have these sliding board chutes on which you slide on your belly and find Uncle Jack waiting with open arms at the bottom even though there's nobody to catch because they designed it so ingeniously smartly, that you naturally come to a stop at the bottom. But most important, they have *attas*. They must have ten different types of *atta* running around there: big ones like Omar, medium size ones with long hair, little ones with no hair, medium size ones with short curly hair, little tiny medium ones with long frizzy hair...(have I forgotten anyone?)...and all of them calling out the same thing: *arfpharphph*, *arfpharphph!* (which may be roughly translated, "Daniel, come play *babaaallll* with me!, Daniel, come play *babaaallll* with me.") And not only the *attas* were playing *babaaallll* but the people too. And *basketbabaaallll* no less! Boy do I love *basketbabaaalllls!* I could watch them bounce for hours. Come to think of it, yesterday must have been Sensory Overload Day or something at the playground: they even brought a *chuchu* through with about a hundred cars carrying little black stones. It was so long, the train, that they needed four or five locomotives to pull it. (At that point wouldn't it have been a lot easier to just leave the stones where they were and-probably with a fraction of the number of cars-just take the people there to where the stones were?!) All in all it was an exciting day. In fact, it was one of the few days I was actually glad to be wearing a diaper.

April 2, 1992. *Atta* (dog) sounds a little too close to *Äiti* (mother) for comfort. One of them has got to go and it's certainly not gonna be *atta!* (Great words like that don't come around too often!) So I've come up with a substitute for *Äiti*: *Mammy*. It's good because it rhymes with my new word for father, *Da'yi*. *Mammy* and *Da'yi*. Good. I'm going to have to try it tomorrow and see.

April 3, 1992. It worked! I said *Mammy* and guess who turned around and answered? Yep. And then I said *Da'yi* and guess who turned? Yep. And then suddenly it hit me

what awesome power there is contained in a word. Why, naming things invests in you an incredible power over them. It's like "which-craft" (is that how it's spelled?) or something. You say Mammy and suddenly, as if drugged or programmed or something, Äiti drops what's she's doing, turns in her tracks, and answers you. And suddenly you are the center of attention in the whole universe (no small achievement in our universe, let alone our home). I like that. Tomorrow I'm going to try it a whole lot.

April 4, 1992. Wow! I have kept both parents under a spell all day just by reciting their names (like some sort of magical formula or something). I've said Mammy about two or three hundred times today and have gotten her attention all but three times (when she was out of earshot). And the same with Da'yi. I guess I know what's next. Yep, Jack'i. Perfect!

April 6, 1992. We were watching television last night when, right in the middle of a Ray Charles Pepsi commercial Mom got a phone call and had to turn the sound down. (Had too?) Anyway, Da'yi was impressed somehow by my saying "Uh Huhhhh!" at just the right moment, cued only by the visual. (I guess that is impressive, from the adult perspective.)

April 8, 1992. Knowing how much I love salted peanuts, Dad offered me a fistful from the can he just opened, but without telling me they were unsalted! Yuucchhh! Unsalted peanuts? What a horrible idea! How unnatural! Pythntyucchhh! I spit them right out and handed them back to him, thank you very much.

April 13, 1992. We picked up [Uncle] Jack'i, so to speak, and drove for 2 hours to a place called "Omni Hotel in Baltimore." We must have been very late because the owner or someone was waiting there for us outside the front door and was very very glad to see us. He helped us out of the car and took us in and even came back out for the luggage. Mr. Omni had a very big house. We stayed for a couple of days and played ball and came back home. Oh yes, we did also go to see the fishies in the big dark place, and we did hit a couple museums too. Whatever. But the highlight of the trip, obviously, was on the way back home when we stopped at that big rest stop where we ate lunch at the outdoor picnic table and played ball until even I was tired. Jack'i went in and got me an ice cream cone (he's definitely O.K., this Jack'i) but it was the soft kind that gets all over your face when you dive into it like I do. So Dad stood there right in front of me with a stack of napkins, giving me a wipe every time I came up for air. I know he was just trying to be helpful in his own way, but lost patience and decided it was high time he taste his own brand of helpfulness. So I stuck the cone right up there in his face (aiming for the general proximity of the mouth of course) and with my other hand grabbed one of the napkins from him and gave his extraordinarily messy mouth a good wipe. For some reason everyone found this amusing, evidently not realizing that this was a serious lesson I was teaching, not entertainment.

The rest of the trip home was easier to handle because I was tired from running around and had a tummy full of ice cream. So I just sat there quietly waiting to point out and announce airplanes, ticktocks and anything even remotely looking like baubaaallls. I realized, however, that I was loosing my control over the adults (they were slipping into some parentbabble) and that I had to do something quick if I was to remain in power. So I said kakka! in the tone of voice normally reserved for when you mean it. It was unbelievable. Dad pulled off the highway at the first exit and found a

lot to pull into and Mom got out the diapers and Jack'yi disappeared-there was no mistaking diaper time. Well, now I know what to do whenever the scenery or the parentbabble gets tedious.

April 14, 1992. I have finally come around to want to have my diaper changed. I find the whole ordeal a lot easier to handle if I am behind the wheel, so to speak. I mean if I go and fetch the diaper and bring it to Mom or Dad and then get down on the floor on my back to facilitate the change. Then I don't mind it because it's my idea in the first place.

April 15, 1992. Boy do I love bobbpkas! Mom and Dad have trouble with this word because of some kind of speech impediment they have, but I still recognize it when they ask me "youwanna popsicle?" [youwanna bobbpka?]. But what I like best is to get a bobbpka started and then put it down somewhere and forget about it until the next day and go back looking for it. Sometimes I find it, sometimes not. Just like with that piece of sausage which I put it the...Hey, where did I put that?

April 16, 1992. The only thing approaching the discomfort of getting cinders or grass on your tennis ball is getting melted bobbpka on your hands. Jeeze, if they can put a man on the moon you'd think they could make a bobbpka that melts upwards!

April 17, 1992. We went to Ariye's home for Pesach Sedar and tug-of-war. It was a rather frustrating evening because the religious ceremony was continuously interrupting our war. But at least I did learn a funny new word from Ariye-Happy!

April 22, 1992. Dad thinks it's amazing that I can point to the correct pictures of animals and things in my Finnish picture book prompted only by the Finnish name of it. But now I understand why he is so impressed. He thinks that I recognize the particular object represented in those weird, thoroughly unrealistic drawings (in which case he should indeed be impressed), whereas I just figured that's what these drawings were called, not the unidentifiable things they attempt to depict! For example, I thought all along that kissa meant "weird and unrealistic drawing of a cat."

April 23, 1992. Uncle Tim (who is not even a distant relation even though he's an uncle, but never mind-I'll never understand that one) came by last night with a copy of his new book for Dad. Like Dad needs still another book on James Juice! Everyone laughed when I said his name. I wonder if I have it wrong? Is it rather Jeemes Juice?

April 24, 1992. The only thing more fun than hiding bobbpkas is running in circles and then standing still to watch the room run keep going. Dad told me that's an old trick but I don't know, it seems pretty new to me.

April 25, 1992. Mom and Dad got me some really fun little pets. They're called ants or something similar and their everywhere in the kitchen now (Dad says it's the time of year but I have the feeling that if I like them they'll let me keep 'em. There are basically two things that are really great about ants: a.) they're fast; b.) their crunchy.

April 26, 1992. They still get a charge out of my nursing acrobatics. Maybe it's just that I'm getting better and better the older I get. Now, after diving head first into the nipple

with mouth open and ready I am able to balance on one knee and keep the other leg extended high in the air before changing to the other leg, all without a pause in the sucking. What I'm aiming to do eventually is nurse while playing baubbaaallll. Wow!

April 28, 1992. I realized today that I've been calling Daddy by the wrong name all along. It's Dadiya (or Da'ya or even Dar'ya) actually. I heard Mommy say it that way several times now, and maybe she was saying it that way all along and I just wasn't paying enough attention. But today she clearly said to me "kato Daddyya!" and not "kato Daddy!" I've gotten used to calling him Da'ya now, but the crazy thing is Da'ya seems to prefer the old way! He says "I've been reduced to a mere partitive declension in my own home!" (I think that means a "laughing stock.")

May 1, 1992. Boy do I love kubpkha! Anymore I think I would give up bobbpkas altogether just to have a little kubpkha. My favorite type so far is Reese's Peanut Butter Cups, but I'll settle for Godiva or whatever. Mom tried to hide some kubpkha from me (or was it from Da'ya?) by keeping it in the ice pail atop the refrigerator. Wasn't she surprised when I next asked for kubpkha pointing to the ice pail as if it were a traditional kubpkha pail! Dad says this whole affair is getting "very kubpkhaesque." I have no idea what that means. (Maybe he is "reducing" my kubpkha "to a partitive declension" so he can have some company.)

May 3, 1992. Yesterday we were all watching Sesame Street when all of a sudden I saw Mommy on the screen. I couldn't believe it, but there she was: a green felt face with a bright orange mop of hair teased like frayed rope beneath a weird hat and wearing strange big glasses perched on a huge potato-nose over lips with which you could whistle in your own ears, and not a hint of chin. Now that I think of it, she didn't look like Mommy one bit, but since she was playing the role of a mommy I quite naturally and understandably cried out "Mommy!"

Boy did Daddy laugh. I thought he was going to fall out of his chair and get a booboo or something. Mommy thought it was funny too, but only slightly and not nearly as funny as did Dad.

But when I turned back to the T.V. who did I see walk in onto the screen but Daddy! I just couldn't believe it. And the funny thing was, it really did look like Daddy: a bright blue felt face with big white horns sticking out of his forehead at odd angles over a nose that was even bigger than mommy's (the T.V. mommy's), not to mention ears like cabbage leaves, eyebrows like small rodents, purple hair and no lips. I thought, If Daddy thought the last one was funny, he'll love this! And so I shouted, Daaaaadddyyyyyyy!!

Boy did Mommy laugh! Daddy laughed too, but it was more like the way Mommy laughed the first time around than it was the way she was laughing now (which was exactly the way Daddy was laughing the first time around).

May 10, 1992. We're with Jacq'i down the shore for what Dad calls a "long weekend" (which I take it to mean he's gearing up for something he predicts he's not going to like). I love the beach. I hate the sand. (I have a problem. I have observed that everywhere that there is beach there is sand. Everywhere, I've checked.) I would really love sand (as I do at home in the sandbox) if it only stayed on the beach and not on me. When I throw my ball or myself down on the beach it/I come(s) up covered in sand, which is not good.

The man who will come along and invent non-stick sand will become a very rich man, I predict.

May 11, 1992. I have impressed everyone in Cape May (at least everyone who has crossed the pedestrian mall this weekend) with my facility in catching and throwing a ball. Someone told Dad I look like "major league material," no doubt a very expensive fabric and, hence, a metaphor for "good." (Why can't they just say good?) As we were walking through town a truck with the Pepsi logo on it went by and I shouted, Pepsi! Dad was very impressed for some reason ("because there was no picture or a bottle of Pepsi or anything, just the bottle cap logo") but Mom was not at all surprised (as she has "a more realistic picture of his [my] development"). I could tell that this conversation was going nowhere I wanted to be.

I've gotten extra close to Jacq'i on this trip. I realized fully this weekend that he cares for me very much without being intrusive like Mom and Dad. You'd never see him chasing me around to get a diaper on me or to give me medicine. He simply takes me as I am, and I respect that in an adult.

May 12, 1992. When we got back from Cape May last night Dad pitched to me in the back yard for an hour or two until he found some lame excuse or other to stop ("Oh, let's go in and say Hi to Mommy," or "Are you hungry?," or "Daddy has to make peepee," etc.). Well, the funniest thing happened mid-way: my bat began to ring! Of course I answered it at once. I couldn't tell exactly who was calling, but I told them that "we don't accept telephone solicitations" (just like Mom tells them except that I pronounced it blaahblaahblaahblaahblaah...byebye!). Dad was amazed and entertained by this, but it truly worked! (They did not call back).

Dad helps me to empty the trash every Tuesday night. We take the kitchen trash bag from room to room emptying everything that looks (even remotely) like trash. Dad thinks it funny when I get to a waste paper basket that's empty and I exclaim, Tyja! (Tyhja). Finnish works for some concepts better than does English.

May 13, 1992. Why is it that parents get more and more intrusive and strong willed as you approach your second birthday? Mine used to be so docile and angelic. All of a sudden it seems they have both become stubborn and willful. Do they all get this way, or is it just mine? Is this what's meant by the "terrible twos"?

May 15, 1992. I've learned the subtle art of growling like a large feline and scaring the heck out of Dad. (This surprises me not a small amount because it was from him that I learned this trick.) Whenever he is misbehaving (not showering me with 100% undivided attention) I hold up my hands like claws and growl ferociously. He shrinks, whimpers and cowers appropriately except when he's distracted with something else and forgets to do this (usually after a couple dozen times). That unnerves me. Mom has better concentration when it comes to this, but it is just this that makes me want to do this with Dad (since he needs the practice more). Mies van der Rohe was wrong; God is not in the details but in the repetition.

May 16, 1992. All bodily eruptions (even coughs and burps) are pupi (poohee) and are to be commended with a pat on the back.

May 17, 1992. I have discovered an exciting new daredevil sport (which Dad tells me is actually quite old): the ancient art of butt-scaring. An ancient, noble sport-one definitely not for wimps. First you fill the tub with H O T water. Next you turn on the C O L D water (only). Then you get in, crouch down, say A H H !, get on your hands and knees, raise your butt to the cold water and yell like hell. I promise, you'll never laugh so hard in all your life. And it's an excellent way to learn Finnish. Dad claims that this is the way the Finns learn the language over there, but that they do this with their whole body. (Good grief! Even I wince at the thought!)

May 21, 1992. I love English! It doesn't look anything the way it sounds. For example, my new vocabulary:

- a.) chuck! is actually spelled T R U C K.
- b.) caaur! is actually spelled C A R.
- c.) twee! is actually spelled T R E E.
- d.) ba't! is actually spelled B A T.
- e.) bookki! is actually spelled B O O K.
- f.) pipi! is actually spelled B O O B O O.
- g.) topps! is actually spelled H I T T H E B A L L W I T H Y O U R H A N D.

May 23, 1992. Boy have I been playing a lot of bakki recently! The other night Dad wiped his wet brow and looked up and asked one of the airplanes overhead if bakki meant "consciousness" in some ancient language. I got impatient with his stalling (especially knowing full well that they couldn't hear him up there) and said kikki! (kick it, darn it!).

May 25, 1992. I had a nightmare last night. I don't remember the details but it obviously had something to do with basketball. (Doesn't everything eventually come down to a matter of basketball or not basketball?) I think this because Mom said I was faintly but desperately moaning bakki...! bakki...! in my restless tossing and turning. God it must have been awful! I can just imagine what kind of horrible nightmare it must have been: some horrible authoritarian ogre dismantling the basketball net and deflating the ball and...no I won't go on and torture myself with such unthinkable thoughts.

May 26, 1992. I'm learning a lot about baseball from watching it on television. Especially issues of style, like how to raise your knee when you're pitching. (I still have to work on not falling on my butt when I raise my knee while pitching.) Also how to raise your knee when hitting. (That's my own invention. You'll never see them do that on TV.) At any rate, I'm getting quite good with hitting the ball. (I would venture to estimate I get 3 out of 5 pitches.)

May 30, 1992. Last night Mom and Dad took me down to Jakki's house so he could play with me while they went to the movies. This was good. I love going to Jakki's. As a matter of fact, I hate leaving Jakki's. It's open hunting season at Jakki's. It's there where I can do all those things I wouldn't think of doing at home (I can't really think of any examples now of the kinds of things I wouldn't think of doing at home, but it's the sense of Jakki's place I'm trying to capture here, not the material facts). Jakki took me to see Bobby. Bobby gave me ice cream. Wow, any friend of Jakki is a friend of mine. Bobby

has a shop where he displays empty video tape boxes for people to read. There seems to be good money to be made in this business, because he can afford to keep gallons upon gallons of ice cream on hand there in every flavor imaginable. I could live in a place like that. Anyway, Mom and Dad came back, thinking they were just going to scoop me up and plug me into the back seat of the car and ship me home, but uh uh, no, I said, I didn't want to let go of Jakki and I didn't want to go home. The only thing that would satisfy me at this point was a visit to Bobby. "Ah Bobby!," I mourned. "What is 'Bobbbyi'?", they all pondered (even Jakki had at first forgotten that he had actually introduced me to Bobby or that I would actually remember his name what with all the boxes and ice cream around), looking at each other as if I had just spoken to them of the weather on Jupiter or something. But I clung tight to Jakki's neck and moaned for my Bobby who had forsaken me. "Bobby, ahh Bobby," I sighed, over and over until Jakki remembered what was Bobby. "Ahh Bobby!"

Ahh is a rhetorical device I use to add emphasis to any object of a sentence for which one is a desirous, forsaken, longing subject. It is simply the most honest expression of pure undiluted id unhampered by the slightest notion of ego. One loses the use of this concept naturally with the onset of maturity and the necessary acquisition of such whimpish adult phrases as Id like some... or may I please have some... or if it wouldn't be an imposition to pass me some I'd certainly appreciate it... or with your indulgence...etc. Of course, Ahh has all this implicit in it as well, but much much more. It's many layers of meaning include: I shall perish if I don't get that this instant; How can you be such a beast and a brute as to watch me perish without that this instant?; You shall live out your life weighed down by the heavy guilt of having refused me in my hour of need; etc.

June 12, 1992. I fell backwards from the top step of the 6' sliding board (at the playground on Germantown Pike at Joshua Rd. in Whitemarsh) and hit my head on a metal step and got a pipi. I don't want to talk about it.

June 13, 1992. I still don't want to talk about it.

June 14, 1992. Whatever it was, I forgot about it already. Dad and I went to the playground on Allen's Lane and I had no problem facing the sliding board. (It wasn't the same one from which I fell, so what's to be scared of?)

June 19, 1992. Yesterday was the playgroup birthday party. It was at what'shername's house. Everybody was there. They all stood out like sore thumbs in their clothes. Didn't they feel conspicuous?

July 6, 1992. I love Finland. For, it is here that I discovered the ecstasy of busses. I'm sure they have them back home, but I've never been on one there (and as far as I'm concerned, you might as well not have 'em if you're not going to go on 'em). From Ukki's window you can see one waiting almost any time you look. All you have to do is push a chair to the window, get up, and...poof!, it's there waiting to take you wherever. I must confess, however, that it isn't exactly easy to communicate with the drivers of these things. We got in one the other day to go to Linnanmäki and I shouted "'K.!" (short for O.K.!) and we just sat there. Figuring that the driver couldn't hear me I repeated it louder, but still without response. I began to wonder whether the busses I saw waiting there from the window weren't all the same bus that just sat there day and night

pretending to be different busses, or maybe just the one Ideal Bus of which all Helsinki busses are a pale reflection....

July 7, 1992. Yesterday, after the amusement park, we came back to the apartment and played baseball. This drove Aunt Heljä's Lappish Spitz, Pyry, nuts because it was in his nature to chase after things, and a ball is a thing. So each time I would hit what was pitched to me Pyry would take off after it until Aunt Heljä or Cousin Satu would restrain him and yell "Istu!" [sit!] Well, there is nothing in this world lost on me, Dad says, and when Dad and I played ball again today I remembered to include the naughty Pyry in our game, even though he wasn't actually there, physically. I hit the ball and then quickly turned to instruct the invisible Pyry to stop stealing bases and balls: "Dog, sit!"

Dad and I work out on the sliding board out back of Ukki's. We count to 3 or 6 or 9 or 10 or whatever before sliding down. I always start with 2 so as not to waste precious time over the ridiculously small numbers. I have found the most useful count to be "kakasi, kolma [kolme], Pyry, Kymmenen!" [two, three, Pyry, ten!] But my favorite part is watching Dad climb up into the cage-like construct (like a treehouse actually) that forms the platform for the slide. It's meant for men my size, and Dad has to wiggle this way and that to squeeze in from the ladder. So I figured a way to help him through the opening: I wait till he's at the top rung with his head bent down to come in, and then I grab a fistful of his hair and I pull like heck. I learn new words for my vocabulary this way, like "cheese us crust, stoppit!," "ship!," and a few others I don't quite remember.

July 9, 1992. I am two today, terribly. In fact, I feel too too two. Even Dad noticed the change that came over me immediately upon my second birthday. He just walked into our room this morning to wish me a happy birthday and I let him know under no uncertain terms that, well, No! I shouted this rather difficult but necessary concept emphatically, although I can't quite remember what it was exactly that I objected to.

Last night after Daddy went to sleep I went into his room to keep him company, and I sang him the bussii [bus] song. You have to present it right to make it effective. First you stand on a chair pushed up to the window. Then you look down at the bus longingly and softly sing:

Byebye bussii, bye bye;
Bussii byebye, byebye, byebye.
Bye bye bussii, bussii byebye, byebye, bye bye.
Bye.

July 10, 1992. Yesterday was an important day around here, it turned out (after it was too late to make another entry in this journal). First of all, it turned out to be my second syntymäpäivä (which is very much like a birthday but much longer because that's the way Finnish is: much longer). But it was also the first day of the Helsinki Summit '92 (or CSCE [ETYK in Finnish-can you believe how different those people can make four simple letters!]) which was happening right under our noses next door at the Messukeskus [convention center]. There were 5,000 police there, a few of which were staring at us through binoculars from the roof of the Messukeskus. Helicopters and policemen were everywhere. Our dear, distinguished Precedent Bush was there (with 70 of his closest buddies, sidekicks, acolytes, accomplices and abettors) as well as the "heads of state" (whatever they are) from some 60 other nations-all right next door (only

a couple hundred feet from Ukki's condo). Dad and Mom saved the newspapers from today for me to show my kids some day. (I just know they're gonna say, "so what?" That's the way kids are.)

July 11, 1992. Today we went for a ride to the place with the mosquitoes. Pyry was there as well. And this was really the only reason I allowed them to take me there. It's called a vacation house, but it feels more like a prison camp. To escape the mosquitoes you have to run inside into the sweltering heat of the main cabin which is kept hot by the sauna built onto it. And if you don't exactly cherish the heat of the cabin, you should try the sauna! Now that I'm two I don't mind giving my unadulterated opinion of it all (or of any subject, for that matter). What I like best about Pyry is that you can give him orders and he doesn't laugh, like Dad does. Pyry doesn't follow these orders, but at least he doesn't laugh.

July 14, 1992. Today we (Mom, Dad, Tommi and I) went to Korkeasaari, the zoo in Helsinki. The first thing we did was stop for ice cream at the stand right inside the gate, but I realized a moment too late that what I really wanted was not ice cream but a pear juice popsicle. Not that I ever tasted one before, but everyone else seemed to be sucking on one and I thought to myself, hey, five million Finns can't be wrong! Well, you would think I had been speaking some distant branch of the Finno-Ugrian language tree or something, because no one paid the slightest attention to my request for "phbopb!" Not that I didn't get my revenge, by the way. I insisted on riding every automatic rocking animal I could find (at \$.75 per ever-so-short ride), twice.

In the evening we went for another excursion, this time back to the amusement park. Mom and Dad spent half an hour discussing the financial benefit of buying me an expensive all-day pass rather than the potentially more expensive final sum of individual rides. I listened quietly as complicated arithmetic formulas whizzed past my understanding (and I think Dad's too). When they finally agreed that the expensive, not-refundable pass would be the most prudent choice, they bought one for me that I wouldn't wear. Nope. No way. You can stand on your heads and promise the moon; I'm not wear'n that thing. Well, they did get a refund, and they spent a good part of the money on a wad of non-refundable tickets that would save a lot of time lining up for individuals. But as Dad and I made our way to our second ride what did I see only a couple hundred of yards away from us but a group of those expensive automatic riding animals that broke the bank earlier in the day. Dad tried in his hopelessly but irresistibly pathetic way to convince me that rides purchased with non-refundable tickets were far more enjoyable than those tawdry coin-fed affairs. Yeh, right. If you feel so strongly about it, Mister, you use 'em; I'm goin' on those expensive coin-fed babies.

July 16, 1992. We came back to mosquitoville yesterday, and I can't say I'm sorry, actually-in spite of the mosquitoes. You see, I have developed a passion for Pyry. I love feeding him chocolate, cookies, ham, peas, shoes, library cards, whatever. He eats them all, gratefully, enthusiastically, indifferently. He has yet to say, "no thanks, I've had my fill," or "oh, I'd really rather have something more nutritious." Sometimes, however, he thinks I've got food when I really don't or when I really do but it's really for me and not for him. When this happens I am frustrated at my inability to communicate with him. But overall I would have to admit that Pyry, by virtue of his essential Pyryness, is

worthy of inclusion in my Bussi song (the one that also includes from time to time Mommy, Daddy and Satu [but not yet Heljä, Jussi, Ukki or Irja-though who knows when?]).

July 17, 1992. I've grown awfully fond of the word kiitos (pronounced cat-o's or kit-o's according to whether it is preceded by a nap or by swimming), a very useful word invented, I believe, by the Finns, and used to express acknowledgement of having just received something from someone (whether you asked for it or not), so that they know they can finally let go of it 'cause you got it. (Hey, it must mean the same as thank you, because that's the word we use in our language for that!) It is very expressive and is used, I've noticed, to heightened effect whenever someone offers you something you really don't want. As with the English word, it seems in this context to instruct the donor to eat your shorts, but very politely. Today I used it, purely in the spirit of the first meaning, when Dad came up behind me and kissed the back of my neck.

The problem with this place is the heat. I am always yearning for the aitta (literally "storehouse," but meaning the guest cabin) because the tupa ("living house") feels like a sauna (no translation necessary).

July 27, 1992. At Aunt Heljä's place by the lake (a much nicer setting than their place at Tammela) I insisted on jumping into the deep water from the pier (while Daddy waited in the water of course). Once he didn't catch me (at my insistence), and after he pulled me up and put me on the deck, and once I coughed up the mouthful of lake I had swallowed, I smiled broadly and acted like a jock. (Piece 'a cake!)

July 27, 1992. We got on a couple airplanes again and were forced to wear seat belts. As soon as the seatbelt sign went dark I was back down in the aisle, running up and down, doing the "rabbit" thing. (You know, the rabbit thing-where you run up to each passenger and pinch his or her wrist while saying "rabbit, rabbit.")

August 1, 1992. I can now count all the way to kuusi [six] (though still starting from kaksi [two]).

August 3, 1992. We went with Uncle Jack to Pat and Ursula Hobsons for dinner last night. I had a ball. They have a 7 year old daughter by the name of Emma. She's just the perfect age for me. We hit it off beautifully. Emma introduced me to goggles. Wow, what a great invention! Goggles! You just couldn't get them off me. Neither could Emma, and so she gave them to me. I'm wearing them as I write this.

August 6, 1992. Last night we had dinner at Mr. Martino's to celebrate Jacqui's birthday. Emma was there too and I quickly whipped out my new pair of goggles (the ones Mom bought me when I lost Emma's) to impress her. Goggles work great as girl-bate. (I had her wrapped around my finger.)

August 7, 1992. Today, for the first time ever, I succeeded in putting my shoes on all by myself.

August 8, 1992. I find myself wearing my goggles more and more these days-and not just when swimming. Even just walking around the house they lend a sense of...well, wearing goggles (a sense you just don't get when you're...not wearing goggles). Mom thought it ridiculous that I would insist on wearing them to breast-feed too, but how inarnation does she think I'm going to find out what the experience is like if I don't try it?

August 10, 1992. Yesterday I was minding my own business watching a video of a Raffi concert when all of a sudden Mr. yougottawearadiaper comes walking in with a youknowwhat. He says to me, "show Daddy how you put this on by yourself, sweetheart." I shot him the youmustbejoking look, to which he smiled his ImnotjokingandIvegotplenty oftime look, pushing the tawdry thing a bit closer to my nose, so I grabbed it from him and put it on all by myself-on my head. And do you know, a pull-up diaper makes a knockout chef's hat! It was great! I looked like the frugal galloping gourmet, buck-naked.

Later in the day Jacqu'i came over with Jonathan Gay and his son Brook, and we all went swimming at Beachcombers club. And for the first time I actually got the nerve up to play on the steps of the adult pool. Dad was real pleased. (I think he's getting a bit bored with the kiddy pool.

August 26, 1992. It seems that whenever I have a few minutes to spend with Jacqu'i and Cat, Mom or Dad or both end up elbowing in on the fun and whisking me away to the torturous clutches of the car seat. Now whenever I'm at Jacqui's and one of them so much as comes within 3.1 meters of us, I issue the serious warning, "BACK! BACK! BACK!" And if there happens to be a door between us and the enemy, I order it closed, "DOOR! DOOR!"

September 7, 1992. Yesterday we went with Jacqu'i and sat in the car for a long long time until, finally, there were cars honking all around us and we knew we must be in New York. Daddy was behind the wheel, technically, but everybody else was doing the driving, including yours truly. When we finally drove so far that there was nowhere else to go except into the woods, Dad decided we were wherever we (they) wanted to be and he pulled over [The St. Morritz, 50 Central Park South]. We must have been really late, because the man who owns the place was standing outside waiting for us and seemed real glad we arrived. Judging from Jacqu'i's response, I think they were old friends. In fact, good friends, because he took the bags for us and took us upstairs and gave us two of his bedrooms for only a couple of dollars that he didn't even bother to count in front of Jacqu'i, so much did he like and trust him! The bed in our room was obviously not made for sleeping but was perfect for jumping. I spent some time showing Jacqu'i around his room next to ours, but when Mom came to bring me back to go to bed I immediately assumed my aggressive-protective stance and shouted, "BACK! BACK!"

Today we went into the woods across the street from our rooms. What a zoo! They had polar bears swimming there in a glass pool and all sorts of other animals, birds and things. There was even a woman standing there ready to make me a hot dog on short order. When we came out of the park we stopped to watch a parade coming up the street. Lots of the people marching had shirts on that said AFL-CIO. A group of them stopped to laugh at my dancing.

Afterwards we went on a big boat all the way around the city. There was a man with a microphone on board who just wouldn't stop talking the entire time (at least not for the ten minutes or so that I remained awake; the other one hour and fifty minutes I don't know about except that he was still talking when I woke up). Jacqu'i was afraid I was going to be scared by the horn they blast when the boat is about to dock, so he instructed me to hold onto my ears. But imagining to myself how incredibly silly I would look pulling down on my earlobes in front of all these people I really didn't know, I decided to try it rather with Jacqu'i's ears and see if anyone laughed. (Not to mention that his were a lot easier to find than mine, especially as I had just woken up.) Well, laughter I got and how, from Dad, Mom and Jacqu'i. So, when Dad jokingly repeated the order in a shortened version ("Daniel, hold on tight!") a few minutes later, I figured, how can a guy go wrong with this one, and I again pulled on Jacqu'i's ears and got the same laughter.

September 9, 1992. I've been going through an Ernie & Bert craze recently. I want to do little else these days than sit and watch Sesame Street on TV or video, particularly (though not exclusively) the sections featuring Ernie & Bert. Of course, I still maintain my strong interest in swimming goggles and basketball, but Ernie & Bert have become an inspiration.

September 11, 1992. Yesterday was my first day of what they call "pre-school." Why they call it this I don't know, because we came straight home after it and not on to school. So either the "pre" in it is meaningless and it is really just a school I'm going to, or else it is neither and just a hoax. But I have promised myself I'm not going to worry about this until I get a little older. (This is just the kind of stuff Dad worries about. It cracks me up.) At any rate, it's at the Germantown Jewish Center on Ellet Ave., and it's really not bad, whatever it is. When Mom dropped me off I melted right into the throng of kiddies there and waved her off with my customary "byebye Mommy!" I had a great time with the others, singing, dancing, drawing, playing, you name it. Then suddenly, about half an hour before the appointed time of pick up I became acutely aware of the fact that Mommy was not there. All of a sudden I was alone in the big dark universe, and it was not good. I was ready for my nap with no Mommy to take me there. Now, I'm not one to lose tears over nothing, but this was hardly nothing. When Mommy finally appeared I took to her like filings to a magnet and insisted that we go straight home together and watch Ernie & Bert.

September 12, 1992. Mommy took me back to school yesterday for my second day and I really wasn't in the mood for it. I told her I was tired (taaaerd) and was running near empty on Ernie & Bert, but Mommy said she'd come back for me soon and that I'd have fun with the other kids. She was right (as always), but our goodbye was nonetheless painful (for both of us) since I couldn't have known she was gonna be right until later. (That's the thing about time I can't stand.) Anyway, that night Dad and I were looking through my I Spy book and I spotted something rather strange and compelling at the bottom of one page and asked him "dis one?" The answer rang on the anvil of my ear like a perfect 440 A: "a [diver's] flipper" I repeated the word as if hypnotized. "Fwipper, fwilpwer, fippir, fwippler," etc. I overheard Dad tell Mom that it was just a passing interest; little did he know it was to be the rock upon which a religion would be founded. (Obviously, he had forgotten about my passing interest in swimming goggles,

which had by now become an integral part of daily ritual. Indeed, if I remember correctly, I was wearing a pair as we sat there reading *I spy*.)

September 13, 1992. Yesterday was fwlipper day all day. I sang the fwlipper song in the morning, spoke broken fwlipper in the afternoon and discussed the possibility of actually owning a pair of fwlipppers with Dad when he came home. (He opened the door, opened his arms for a hug, got down on his knees, puckered his lips, and I said FWLIPPER!)

School was O.K., but I would rather be home with Ernie, Bert & Mom.

September 14, 1992. Mom and I went shopping for fwlipppers. Nobody had any my size. It smelled of conspiracy, and I like it not. Mom bought be other things to humor me, but they were a far cry from fwlipppers. I guess I'll just grow up fwlipperless. Oh, why me?, why me?

September 15, 1992. Yesterday was one of the worst of times and one of the best of times. It started with school, which began as the worst of times when Mom left me there. But after twenty minutes or so I forgot all about her and started mingling. By the time she came and spied on me at play in the schoolyard (which, by the way, I didn't see and only learned about by overhearing her tell Dad) I was myself again, but still fwlipperless.

Until, that is, the best of times happened. Dad came home from work carrying a weird looking plastic bag. When he opened the door and opened out his arms for a hug, the bag swung wildly from his raised right hand, beckoning for me to grab it and explore. Before he could find the words, "look what I have for..." I grabbed it and opened it and found... and found (I get emotional even just remembering my excitement)...fwlipppers! I knew instinctively how to put them on and what to do with them. I instructed Dad to fill the tub, I got into the tub, and I kicked the dickens out of that water with my fwlipppers. Mom said that they looked a little small and that Dad should take them back and get larger ones, but I said Uh-uh! (I knew what that meant: you go back to the store and return them but they don't have your size and you are left high, dry and fwlipperless.) I said, "no no no, Daniel's fwlippirs!" But Dad insisted that I come to the "fwlipper store" with him. I agreed and we went. (There actually are fwlipper stores! Can you believe that?) And they had my size and I was one happy bambino.

September 19, 1992. I'm getting used to school a little more day by day and appreciably less clingy to Mom each time she picks me up. (It shouldn't be long now when she'll come for me and I'll ask her to come back later.)

September 20, 1992. We went with Jacqu'i to Bethany Beach, Delaware for something called a wed-ing [of Sean Duran and Kathy Bordinali], which is where you stand on the beach and wait until everybody stops talking into the wind so that the two best dressed people there can kiss. For a really good wed-ing you need short speeches and good sand.

Anyway, afterwards we went to take a nice quiet walk on the nearest boardwalk. Unfortunately, the nearest boardwalk was in Ocean City, Maryland, which is anything but quiet. (Picture the entire city of New York less only its cultural attractions and then

squeezed onto a mile or two of boardwalk and you have Ocean City.) Nonetheless we had fun. Dad and I played the "lobber the ground hog" machine against Mom and, thanks to my help, we won. Further down the boardwalk Uncle Jacqu'i introduced me to another version of this game consisting of these five weird looking plastic faces moving out on five different tracks (instead of ground hogs jumping up out of different holes). The mallet was the same, so I knew just what to do. Actually, you don't need to figure out what to do, because these faces are so weird you just want to llobber them out of sheer outrage at their weirdness (forgetting you're supposed to hit them anyway simply to win the game). Well, I llobbered them all pretty good until it got to the point where none of those ugly creatures dared to show their weird faces anymore. Hey, what's this?, I thought to myself. You weirdos can't take the heat? Come on out here and fight like men! Well, I reached with my left hand through the plastic guard at left and got my fingers around the nose of one of these guys, dragged him out in broad daylight where I could see him, picked up the mallet in my other hand and gave him one good hard whack before returning him to his hiding place and the mallet to its holder. (Game's not over till I say it's over, dagnabbed!) When I turned to leave I noticed that Jacqu'i and Dad were standing there next to me crying. I thought to myself, who'd I come here with, a couple of sensitive male types? This is a man's world, dagnabbed!

This morning, on the way back from Delaware, we stopped at Rehobeth Beach and built a hole in the sand by the water. Naturally, I didn't want to get back in the car and I let my feelings touching this be known. So Jacqu'i asked Dad to stop the car and he just jumped out. I couldn't believe it. I thought to myself, Hey, what's amatter, ya can't take the heat? But a minute later the door opened again and in he came holding out for me the most beautiful I have ever seen second only to a basketball: a soccer ball. This was a real soccer ball, not the kind the pipsqueaks play with. This was Daniel's Big Soccer Ball (you have to say this in a deep voice, the one you use when you tell people that you'll have beer, not juice). Anyway, the best thing about real soccer balls is the distinct hard noise they make when you bounce them off things. On the drive back, for example, I was able to bounce it off Dad's head nine out of ten times, which impressed Mom and Jacqu'i but not Dad, who complained that he was driving.

But I almost forgot to mention that we took the Cape May / Lewes Ferry both ways along this trip and that Jacqu'i bought me a small pair of fwlippers and goggles, all of which I wore as I toured the ferry terminal. Lots of people were looking at me and smiling. I look particularly good in goggles and fwlippers.

September 22, 1992. We have a few Finns staying with us for a few days. Teemu is twice my age and size, but it's my house, dagnabbed. We get along together just beautifully, except when we don't. We have been seen sitting together playing peacefully for hour on end-until one of Teemu's personality changes comes over him. (It's clear that in his last life he was an Oriental despot.) When this happens he suddenly acquires the need to use all my toys at one time. This inevitably leads to controversy, which always leads to crying (and everyone knows how hard it is to be diplomatic when you're already crying).

Teemu's father Risto is a runner who participated in the Philadelphia Half-Marathon. (Out of thousands and thousands of runners he came in fourth place.) He is appropriately built like a praying mantis. Teemu's mother Päivi is, well, Teemu's mother, and very nice and helpful.

October 26, 1992. Again the problem of finding the time for this journal when Dad's real busy. (October's been the busiest month he's ever had: 10 or 12 hours a day, 6 or 7 days a week.)

October 28, 1992. Today Jacq' (as I now call him) came over this morning to go to work with Daddy. Or so Mom explained to me after they left. I told her, however, that she was mistaken: "No, Daddy menee tyohin, ei Jacq!" [Daddy went to work, not Jack!] (I pictured the futility in two grown men squeezing into the same "work.") Well, things got even stranger as the day went on. Mommy had made arrangements over my head to bring me to have lunch with Daddy and Jacq' in the afternoon since their "work" was somewhere in the neighborhood. (This is weird because I've seen Daddy's "work" and it is a very big place that is not very easy to just pick up and take to another neighborhood.) Anyway, when we got there Daddy introduced me to another man in their "work" (all of them go there the same time, it seems!), a man named (by me) Billding. I spent most of lunch looking in the mirrored wall behind our booth, naming the various personages I saw there: "Dayan [me], Daddy, Mommy, Jack, Billding, whowherethat? [a stranger had walked in]."

November 11, 1992. Hey, all of a sudden I can talk! Up until today language seemed to me a rather blunt and ineffectual instrument with which to procure and protect my interests and keep the adults at bay; then came the Y word and everything changed. Used to be that when the adults said something, that was it, whether you understood it or not, plain and simple, even if it sounded liek: dontdothatuhohnonottodaydaddyhasaheadacheitscold outsidebenicetomommygoplaywithyourblocksItoldyounottothrowthebowlingballatthep embroketablepleaseeatsomethingpleaseanythingplease! But today I discovered a technique for deflecting this stuff back to where it comes (and making it stick, brother): you pucker up your face, knit your eyebrows together like they're made of velcro, assume an air of tweedy bird innocence and say the Y word: Whhhhyyyyyyyyyyy??! That stumps 'em every time. Never fails. And when you get someone like Dad who tries to fight fire with fire (i.e., by adding his own question mark onto the end of it and tossing it back in your direction), your last resort can always be the 'c word: 'cauuuuse!!

The rest of my vocabulary to date includes: Mommy, Daddy, Dayan (that's me), Jack, Billding, 'Tina, Joashbeth (Joan-Beth, my teacher at school), Earnie & Bert!, Grover, Elmo, Telly, Cookie Monster, Big Bird, Ms. Rogers, telkari [TV], tired, vasinyt [tired], tuukka! [hair!, i.e., gimme your hair to hold onto while I drink this here breast or bottle dry], Namnam [breastmilk], Namnamchair!, toisanpain [again], tutti [nipple/bottle], I yike dat [I like that / I don't like that (i.e., circle one of the above)], eggies, keppis (kethup / catsup), roastbis (roast beef), chicken, bagel, cheese, noodle, riisi [rice], korkka [suolakurkku (pickle)], Daddy'sbeer! (pronounced in a deep, solemn voice), Mommy'scoffee?, hot? (especially following preceding), cold, pepsi [seltzer mixed with juice, soda, any cold drink except milk...sometimes even Pepsi], juice, appelsinni [orange juice but used to mean apple juice], banani, gummybears, karki [candy], candy!, chokate! [chocolate], more pop!, choochootrain, airplane, car, auto, truck, bus, bussi, tractor, jeep, skateboar', skates, bicycle, motorcycle, crock [clock], come! (...Mommy!, Daddy!, Jack!), fwippers, fwippersbook, choochootrainbook, Earnie & Bertbook, book, raquet, bat, ball, baseball! (also:fooball, sockerball, tensball, gofball, etc.), bakisana [basketball], play!

(often precedes any or all of the preceding sports), hitit! [hit it, not Hitite], catch!, sit!, keiperkupp! [kuperkeikka, or somersault], koulussa, mukaan! (whenever someone attempts to go somewhere, anywhere, without me), diswon! [this one!], Iwannit!, NOOO!, yes, please, thanks, youwelcome, O.K., whatsamatter, U.O.K.?, I kissitbetter, better?, good?, bad?, tase [taste] good / bad?, kiva [good], hauska [nice], music, piano, saxaphone, drums, dance, juoksit, ah-going?!, ah-doing?!, I yuv you, big, pissi [usually preceded by uh oh!], kaakka, potti, horsy, cat, dog, bird, elefanti, pig, sheep, moon, stars, starfish, where?, who?, what?, WHYYYY?...oh ohh, there are too many to put down here.

November 10, 1992. Today Mom, Dad, Jack and I went to the airport and got on a big airplane and flew to Los Angeles (where Daddy is to take a course while I'm at Disneyland). At the airport Mommy slipped away quietly while we were standing in line at the counter. In answer to my question a Mommy go? Daddy whispered to me in Finnish that she had gone to the bathroom. But since no one around us could have possibly heard him I asked aloud, "pissi pottaa?" When we finally got to our hotel rooms we were all too tired to go out for dinner, so Mommy picked up the phone and called room service. When she finished placing our order I realized that she had forgotten the most important course, and I ran over to the phone, picked it up, waited a second or two and said I wannit bubble gum, bye.

November 11, 1992. We went for a tour of Los Angeles today, ending up at Newport Beach at a place called Jack's Shrimps. I knew it wasn't my Jack's Jack's Shrimps but some other Jack's because my Jack didn't know about it until he asked a local. Anyway, we went in and ate shrimp until this little shrimp walks in the door with his parents and they sit in the booth right behind us. Well, I lost no time introducing myself, but all in vain: this kid could do nothing but suck on tutti and stare. When he finally gathered the charisma to make contact, he did so by contacting Jack (my Jack) physically, with a sweaty little palm. I laid down the law. "My Jack!, my Daddy, my Mommy!," I told him. He realized what was good for him and immediately withdrew his hand.

November 12, 1992. Today while Daddy was in class, Mommy, Jack and I went to Disneyland. Wow! When I grow up I want to live there. The place is full of bigger-than-life cartoon characters who come up to you in the street and let you hug them and play with their shoes. (Goofy's shoes were so big, I simply had to check for toe room [like they do in the shoe store], after which Goofy did the same to me.) As Jack was carrying me around today I noticed that his top shirt button was broken. I pointed this out to him several times, but he seemed indifferent to the grave significance of the matter.

November 13, 1992. At breakfast today I noticed right away that Jack had tended to his broken button dilemma (either by putting a new one on or by changing his shirt-I couldn't quite tell which). He was impressed that I noticed.

November 14, 1992. Today we just hung around the hotel like a bunch of hotel lizards or something. Mom and I spent a good deal of time at the hotel pool.

November 15, 1992. Today Dad took his test and met us at noon, and we all went to Disneyland again. On the way to the bus Jack asked me the name of the trees outside

the hotel (he seemed to have trouble remembering or something) and I told him, "pumpkin trees." At Disneyland we got in line for the water ride, "Pirates of the Caribbean," but when Dad read the sign aloud concerning the possibility of getting wet I got cold feet, so to speak, and told Jack I did not want to get "water-wet." From there we went to eat lunch but ran into the "blues brass band" along the way, and I danced to their music in front of lots of people who seemed surprised that I knew all the steps (including splits). We then went to the children's petting zoo where I hugged a lot of goats and watched them spit raisins out of their peppus [behinds]. (Actually, they were not raisins at all and I wasn't fooled for a second.) The zoo keeper who has to clean up after these guys found it amusing that I followed them around entranced by the "raisin"-making process. Jack pointed out what he thought to be a rather rare bird, but I recognized it immediately: "a chicken with a big tail" (a turkey, I later learned).

November 16, 1992. When we got ready for breakfast I called Jack and asked him, "a doin', Jack?," a question to which I would not accept a simple answer such as "fine." I repeated the question ten or eleven times until I got a more satisfying answer. After breakfast we went to the pool, and I showed Dad around, including the gym room, where I knew exactly how to start up the exercise machine (by pressing "start"). After that we were picked up by Betty-lou Margulis who took us in a big van back to her place in Palm Springs. She was nice and insisted that I call her "Grammy" (in spite of the fact that she was not at all related to me). I met her in the middle and called her "Bey'lu." On our second day there we went to a mall, and while Dad and I were waiting for Jack and Bey'lu we bought a cookie. Bey'lu spotted us and came over, said hi, and proceeded to break off a piece of my new cookie (which up until that point had been in pristine condition with not so much as hairline crack nor the slightest sign of former restoration). I was mortified. Tears of despair flowed from my eyes like two rivers simultaneously overflowing their dams. Bey'lu reacted quickly and bought me another cookie. Even though the new cookie would never entirely replace the original one, it did make the situation easier to bear. She said that that was one thing she'd never do again, and I was glad to hear it.

October 17, 1992. Bey'lu took us to Autrey's restaurant for barbecue and Western dancing. Next to our table was a piano and a country western singer with his guitar. After his first song I was the only one to clap, but after a couple more songs the other people in the restaurant caught on and clapped too. I then went out onto the empty dance floor during his next number and showed everybody how to dance to that kind of music. When he finished I clapped again and said to him, "thanks, man."

October 19, 1992. We flew back to Philadelphia yesterday, and I'm laying low and taking it easy for a day or two.

November 20, 1992. Last night Dad was on the phone with "Peter" (Sorlien, the appraiser from Boston) and I told him to say "goodbye Peter" because he was not paying as much attention to me as he was to Peter. Dad said O.K. but could he "finish talking to Peter after saying goodbye." (? What?) Well, it seemed like an innocent enough request, sort of...and so, somewhat confused, I consented until I realized, of course, that it was a trick, a means of stalling for time. No, I was not angry; let's just say I was very disappointed in Dad. (The idea that I'd need an attorney to look over the most casual of verbal contracts with my own father! I was losing patience the more I rolled it over. I

came back in and said, very sternly, "No! Say Goodbye Peter...hard!" (i.e., don't take no for an answer; hang up with him immediately and permanently, and don't let me catch you speaking to him ever again, so help me Gob!)

November 24, 1992. Boy, sometimes Dad makes me want to scream. Today, for instance, while I was in the middle of fixing the refrigerator door handle (which I do whenever I take it apart [which I do whenever it needs fixing (which it does whenever I take it apart, etc.)]), Dad interrupted me for no other reason than to put the orange juice inside. Needless to say, I was pissed. I said "no, no, nooooo!" and I ripped open the door, took out the same juice container, put it on the floor and closed the door again so I could resume my repair work.

December 1, 1992. We've been having a contest around here to see just who loves whom the most. Dad tells me "I love you, Daniel" and I respond, "No, I lub you, Daddy!" to which he usually counters, opening his arms wide, "Oh, that's sweet. I love you this much." Well, I'm not quite the type to just sit back and be bettered, so I open my arms just as much (proportionately) and finish the contest right then and there with, "I love you too much!" Well, I don't know what it is he finds so funny about this, unless he figures he's been outdone by his own son and there's nothing much left to do about his extreme embarrassment but to laugh. But then again, Mom laughs at it too, even when it's done to her. (I must be missing something.)

December 20, 1992. I know what I want for Christmas, but I'm afraid the message isn't getting through to Santa's receptionist. I make sure that every sentence ends with motorcycle, especially the sentences beginning I want..., but Mom and Dad respond as if I were expressing my desire in the conditional, such as if one were to want.... Last Sunday, for example, Mom and I were reading the newspaper and I asked her for the section she had just put aside. It turned out to be an advertising flyer for Toys R' Us, fully illustrated, coincidentally, with all the motorcycles I have ever wanted to own. Well, needless to say, no one has ever read a page of print more closely. My stare nearly wore the ink off the page. When Dad walked in the room and asked what it was that I was studying, I pointed to the most expensive of these objects of desire and, choking back sudden tears, said "Buy me motorcycle!" Dad's response was predictable. He was sore at Mom for "letting such subversive literature fall into the hands of the young, innocent, and impressionable." He thought of various ways of getting my mind off motorcycles but failed miserably. For example, to his feeble excuse of not having enough money I told him not worry because I did. "And how much money do you have, mister," he clucked, seemingly stunned by the news, but still confident that he had put the last nail in the coffin lid to this motorcycle business. "Five," I told him matter-of-factly (five being my favorite quantity of anything at all, except, maybe motorcycles, since I firmly believe that when it comes to motorcycles, a man usually has more than he needs but less than he wants). "Oh, really? Five, huh?" he said, apparently happy I didn't happen to say one hundred and five (which is just about how much the motorcycle cost, before tax). "Well, sir, I'm afraid five won't be enough. You see....[blah, blah, blah]" I wasn't about to let him continue like this, rubbing salt into my gaping lack of motorcycles. I lowered the corners of my mouth into a rectangle, let the tears roll, cranked the volume up to high and let him have it with everything I had, "I WANT A MOTORCYCLE!"

December 21, 1992. Today Dad and I went to Toys R' Us to look at motorcycles. He was careful to avoid using any terminology even remotely suggesting the scenario that we might actually buy one. He was merely going to let me ride a few, as if meeting me in the middle or something. (Of course, this was not meeting me in the middle. Meeting me in the middle would have been leasing a motorcycle and buying it back at the end of the lease period.) Well, anyway, I picked out a big one with training wheels and he looked relieved, evidently thinking it too big for me and, hence, no direct threat to his wallet. Well, I educated him and fast. I hopped on it and drove off, steering effortlessly through parting crowds of unbelievers, turning here, then there, up this aisle, down the next, all to the clippity-clop of Dad running behind me. After an hour or so he suggested that we call it a day and go home. (A day?! It's only 8:00 p.m.!)

December 22, 1992. Jack came over and brought with him a big box for me. I opened it and found a train just like the one I rode at F.A.O. Schwartz in New York some months back. Wow! I was so excited to ride it that I didn't want to wait for them to put the batteries in and assemble the track and all. Yet, at the same time I knew that my riding it was contingent on these crucial steps, so I helped put the batteries in and assemble the track and all. The process took considerably longer than anyone could have predicted, even without Dad's help! I was getting desperate. (I was almost considering asking Dad to help.) Well, by the end of the evening I finally got that out of my system, leaving me able to invest my full concentration on motorcycles.

December 25, 1992. Today we opened up all the packages under the Christmas tree that Joulupukki had put there during the night. Although he left all sorts of nice things for me, he had done nothing whatsoever about the motorcycle dilemma. Zip. Nada. I quietly added his name to my fertilizer list. (It's difficult not to see this whole motorcycle affair as some sort of conspiracy. I wouldn't be surprised to find the CIA in on this one too.)

December 27, 1992. This morning Dad and I were singing my favorite song, the Mommy's gonna buy you a... song. I love that song! Have there ever been lyrics written with more meaning? Well, anyway, as I was saying, Dad and I were singing this. This means, of course, that unlike when Mom and I sing it, the song was not being sung correctly. Dad always forgets what it is that Mommy's gonna buy you when the mocking bird won't sing. There we are, singing right along until the buy you a... and he stops and looks at me, his mouth still wide open, waiting for me to finish his promise for him. Being rather quick on my toes I know how to take the torch when it's being passed to me, so before the last dot of his dot, dot, dot, I added (on just the same tone) the important missing word, m o t o r c y c l e. Well, you would have thought I said something ridiculous or something! All I did was to say the first thing that came to my mind, and when I turned around I found him convulsed in laughter with tears streaming down his cheeks.

January 1, 1993. Mom and Dad get exasperated at my amazing propensity to ward off naps. It seems that my naps are more important to their health and well being than they are to mine. Just what is it that they want to while I'm off in tukka-tutti-telkari land, I

just don't know, but encouragement is just not the word for their attitude toward my naps.

January 3, 1993. We went to visit Aunt Clara and Uncle Cody today. I floored everyone with my cleverness by picking out Finland on the globe after having been shown it only once. Uncle Cody made a reality check by spinning the globe around several times so that I would be able to start from scratch, but I was not thwarted. I found Finland each and every time, and each and every time to the sound of gasps and groans of astonishment from up above (i.e., the adults, who are always up above, somehow).

January 6, 1993. Leos Janáček [Czech, 1854-1928] is my favorite composer. I ask for him by name now. Actually, when I say "I wannit lissen Janáček," what I really mean is "I wannit lissen the "Intrada" from the Glagolitic Mass [Mass in old church Slavonic, 1926]," but it takes far fewer words to be general than to be specific.

I have instituted a new ritual concerning music in our house. Every night, at just the right time, I instruct Dad to get two popsicles, I usher him in to the living room, gesture toward the floor and the CD player, and wait for the good times to roll. What we do is lie down on our backs, cross our legs with knees bent, suck on Welch's fruit juice popsicles ("pops") and conduct the music with whichever hand is free and/or least sticky. We usually start-at my request of course-with the "Intrada" to the Janáček Glogolitic Mass and, when that's finished, move on to the same thing by pushing the button on the remote control without getting up off the floor. Then I repeat the process until I've finished my pop.

January 6, 1993. Mom, Dad, Jack and I went to the Philadelphia Museum of Art last night for their traditional Wednesday night festivities and dinner. The dinner was great. Jack kept asking me if the food wasn't very very good, and I felt obliged to agree by saying "very goooood!" and then spitting it out in my plate. After dinner we went back to the staircase to take in some more ethnic folk dancing of undetermined nationality and then went for a walk through the European "period rooms." This is a term that basically translates into DON'T TOUCH! and sometimes even DON'T EVEN COME IN HERE! Along the way I pointed out a few pieces that caught my attention (including a Sèvres softpaste porcelain tureen and cover that I knew instantly would fit the decor of my toy box) and I moaned mournfully to Jack, in a tone of voice intended to convey that, alas, I already knew the answer, "I wanna buy that!" Now, why does everybody find my desire to spend a little cash so very amusing? Dad, laughing, asked how much money I had on me. I told him, "five" (I always have five), and he said "that's not quite enough, Daniel," to which I rightly reminded him (as if he didn't know that he had strayed from the real subject) "but I wannit, buy it!" Jack said I had very good taste. Mom and Dad agreed. (But nobody bought me diddly.)

While upstairs we walked into a room wherein was hanging Poussin's Birth of Venus (or some other such thing derived from Ovid and chock-full of ridiculous gods and goddesses standing around with time on their hands and no where else to spend it). I looked at it for a minute or so and then turned to Jack and said, "that's fuuuuunny!" Every one agreed. (I think they were all too shy to question the old master before I came along.)

January 16, 1993. Today Dad and I went for a ride in town to see Jack. Dad seemed just a bit put off when, on his way to the office for an hour, he said goodbye to me and I

merely waved him off with a cursory "bye" (as in "what's keepin' ya? Go already! Wait'n for an engraved invitation to leave? See 'ya. Bye!").

Jack and I are very close friends. This may be largely due to the fact that we think alike, but it definitely has also to do with physics. You see, Jack's mass is so many times greater than my own that he actually exerts a gravitational force upon me. And although gravity may be weaker by a long shot than the electromagnetic force or either of the nuclear forces, it has a substantially more lasting effect on my relationship with Jack. This is because unlike the other forces, gravity's pull is long-range in effect and always attractive. And what this means is that I am attracted to Jack whether I am with him at, at home ten miles away, or in Finland.

A simpler illustration of this phenomenon might be afforded by a look at my effect on Jack's cat ("Cat"). She simply cannot resist my pull. Whenever we end up in the same room together, she ends up in my arms, whether she likes it or not. Now, how else do you explain that but for gravity? It is quite reasonable to expect that if her mass were closer to that of mine, this probably wouldn't occur—at least not until hers exceeded mine by a considerable amount, at which time I would end up in her arms every time I walked in the door of Jack's house, and she would be half-carrying, half-dragging me from room to room like a bag of potatoes.

Now, this is not to say that my relationship with Jack is restricted to a physical explanation. Hardly. I really love the guy as well. (And who can explain love?) He not only knows how to do just about anything, but he also usually does it too. And better yet, he does not tire of repetition. This is an important quality—one quite difficult to find in adults. Not to say that Dad isn't very patient. (Of course he is. What else am I supposed to say about the guy who is helping me write this thing!) It's just that he is very patient only up to a certain predictable point—the point wherein he becomes very, very impatient.

For example, he'll teach me a game, and he'll play it with me over and over again like your supposed to (in keeping with the eternal law of repetition), all the while seeming to enjoy himself. And then, all of a sudden, he'll look out the window, see that it's dark outside, look at his watch, run into the kitchen to check the calendar on the wall, run back in, as pale as a palladium, and shout "Daniel, we've been at it for nearly seven hours! Can't we try something else?" Jack would never do that, you see. The difference is that Jack would keep on truck'n until Dad or Mom came in and said, "Daniel, you and Jack have been at it for nearly seven hours! Can't we go home! Surely Jack wants to get up off his knees and stop pretending he's a porcupine!" (Of course, pessimists would argue, naturally, that had Dad or Mom not come in at that precise time, but at even a moment later, Jack himself would have broken down and said something similar, but I'll leave such irrelevant speculation to the theoreticians.)

January 17, 1993. I'm definitely not the hot weather type—indoors or out. Now whenever I go into a store, regardless of how long I'm going to be in there, I start shedding layers—hat, glubs [gloves] coat, carf [scarf])—right at the door. Last night, for example, Dad and I went to Wawa to buy me some lollipops. As soon as I got in the door I said to Dad while wrestling myself out of my encumbrances, "I'm taken dis offff!" Dad replied, "Daniel, sweetheart, couldn't you wait until we are actually inside before you do that? We're blocking the doorway, honey." Have you ever in your life heard such irrelevance?

January 21, 1993. Yesterday was the worst day in my life, bar none, period. (Yes, it was even worse than those few memorable, insufferable days in my life in which I entirely skipped my nap.) The day started off innocently enough: Ernie & Bert, tutti & telkari [bottle and television], socks & shoes, etc. But later in the morning Mom and I went to Dad's office to have lunch with Dad's work people (Bill-ding, etc.). I didn't suspect anything until about 11:30. Suddenly I felt quite cold, quite listless and quite quite not hungry. By the time we all sat down at the Frisk & Borodin Appraisers, Ltd. conference table to eat, I felt not only not hungry but not hungry enough to give back all the food I had eaten since yesterday afternoon. (Jack offered me some of his tuna sandwich and it looked completely inedible to me. This in itself should have been sufficient cause for concern, knowing my recent admiration for tuna fish.)

Well, all of a sudden the little man in my tummy-the one who actually eats all those tuna sandwiches-started walking on the ceiling, shaking the walls and stabbing at the floor with a spade. I had trouble explaining to the startled and scared faces before me why I was suddenly beside myself, crying and pulling down my pants and up my shirt to expose my tummy to whatever medical attention might show up. I spit up just a tiny bit, but it nausea wasn't my present problem so much as the sudden, intensely sharp pains that visited me there. Mom, Dad and Jack discussed various doctors that I should be taken to and various ways of getting me to them, but all I wanted to do was crawl under a large stone and make myself very scarce. I felt suddenly colder than a polar cap, so Mom set me up on the sofa and buried me under a mountain of overcoats. In between the attacks of pain I was so tired and so lethargic that all I could do was lie there staring up out of half-closed lids. (Even had you presented me with a motorcycle at this point I wouldn't have cared, so awful did I feel!)

Mom and Dad and Jack were scared. Talk of doctors escalated to that touching hospital emergency rooms. No sooner did I turn around than I was being buckled into my seat in the car for a short ride to the hospital. (It turned out to be a hospital specifically made for people my size. Unbelievable!) We waited in the emergency room for an hour and a half, all told, and by the time the first doctor saw me I was in no mood to negotiate with anyone about anything at any price. (Why is it that big people wait to ask the most stupid personal questions were you're in the least position to answer them?) Well, I for one was not at all surprised to learn that what I had was probably not an innocent little stomach virus. The doctor was afraid instead that I had a textbook case of innerreaction, interruption, interception, i n t u s s u s c e p t i o n. (It's actually much much worse than it sounds, and it doesn't sound very pretty. It is doctortalk for a telescoped colon, a phenomenon involving the movement of a small portion of the colon in upon itself.) She brought in another doctor who feared the same thing. In answer to Mom and Dad's question as to whether I might just have a stomach virus they both said, "possible, but if we just sit back and wait to see if it goes away we may run the risk of something very serious, something requiring emergency surgery (and the possible removal of part of the colon) to fix. It turned out that I was just the right age to have this and that the only way to determined that it was indeed intussusception rather than a tummy virus would be to X-ray my intestinal tract while barium is injected up my watchumacallit.

I didn't really follow the flow of all this technical talk until they got to the part about my watchumacallit. I gotta hand it to Mom, though; she's a gentleman if there ever was one. She and I were alone in the X-ray room with the doctor and assistants (Dad and

Jack were requested to wait outside) and Mom actually asked my permission for them to stick that tube up my peppu. Of course I refused. (Who wouldn't?) But she very nicely but firmly asked me again, and from her tone I quickly gleaned that my answer had little bearing upon what the future held for me. In other words, I was being given the choice to have this thing stuck up my peppu with my permission or without it. And any self-respecting person knows its more self-respectable to have the inevitable happen to you with your permission than without it. That way you can participate in your own fate rather than just sit there like someone who has no idea why he's face down on some weird machine with a tube up his peppu.

Anyway, the enema was a success. After humanely offering me some morphine to take my mind off the presidential inauguration, they stuck the tube up my peppu and filled me with barium. While it was up there I realized that I had to make pissi. I asked for a potty to in which to make pissi and was quite taken back by the doctor's reaction. He suggested to Mom that I should wait until he was finished. Mom reminded him that I was a mere lad of 2 1/2 years and that the good doctor had a choice: give the little man something to piss in or keep his [the doctor's] mouth closed during the shower; after all, it was remarkable enough that someone so young during such circumstances would have the maturity to ask first before shooting. The doctor was persuaded and I was given a dixie cup which worked just fine with not a drop spilled. Mom and Dad were really proud of me but the doctor was apparently unmoved.

Well, to make a long story short, they not only found out that indeed I did have intussusception, but that the pressure of the barium pushing through had straightened out the intussusception. In other words, I had it but until I didn't. Well, it's a little late to make a long story short, but less than twenty minutes after my morphine and barium enema, as Mom, Dad, Jack and the nurse were all steering my stretcher down the hall, I was feeling well enough to give my first I wannit order. I wannit... chocolate.

I spent the night at the hospital to recuperate. Mom and Dad slept in the room with me (on reclining lounge chairs)-along with a few other people my age and their mothers. I had an I.V. tube sticking in the back of my left hand all the while and was perfectly understanding about the necessity of it (although the medical explanation left me confused). The next morning at about a minute past six the door was swung open and the room was filled with the sound of marching feet-about sixteen pairs of them. Doctors. Like policemen, doctors rarely travel in ones-or even twos. From where I was it all looked like some gigantic caterpillar in white had wiggled into my room to ask me how I was (and, more likely, how my insurance was doing). Did they think I could answer questions after seeing a sight like that?

It wasn't long before I was feeling my old, frank, unstoppable self. While Jack was visiting later in the morning, I heard talk of going home some time soon and I set everybody straight, "no, I go Jack's and play!"

January 24, 1993. *Mary Poppins*. Has a greater film ever been made? I have seen it in it's entirety no less than one hundred and sixty-seven times during the past two or three days, and it only gets better upon each viewing. That's the litmus test for truly great art. *Ernie & Bert* [and most of the rest of *Sesame Street*] passes this test. But, then again, so does "Mr. Neighborhood" as I like to call him [Mr. Rogers] and Barney [the original family values dinosaur]. I guess I'm going to have to rethink this litmus test.

I have recently gotten in the habit of telling the folks that I intend on returning, "I come right back, O.K.?" It works particularly well when we're sitting around the dinner

table and I'm not as enthused about eating as are they (about my eating). I take a bite, chew it a while, surveying the eyes focused on me (imploring me quietly to swallow) and then climb down from my chair, saying, "I be right back! Is that all right with you?"

January 29, 1993. As of 10:00 p.m. last night I have seen the film *Mary Poppins* four thousand six hundred and twenty-three times. (I am taking a break to write this while Dad is rewinding the tape to the beginning for me.) I now know all the songs well enough now to sing along, and I can keep pace with most of the dances too. (The chimney-sweeps' "step in time" routine is the only one I still need work on-that's tough! It involves climbing up on the blanket chest to dance the chimney-top number where the chimney sweeps are silhouetted against the sky-as well as ducking the rockets that Admiral Boom fires at them.)

February 10, 1993. Mom and I went back to Children's Hospital on Monday for a checkup and I was scheduled for a test to be given yesterday. Luckily for me, Mom started wondering why on earth I had to take this test besides giving the poor technicians something to do. When we went yesterday she talked to a few doctors and found out that the test wasn't all that important anyway. Boy, I love Mom!

Anyway, on the way back home we stopped off at Dad's office and visited with Jack and everybody (except Dad, who was out on an assignment). Well, Jack and I were sitting, chewing the fat, so to speak, and all of a sudden it occurred to me when I looked up in the direction of the mantel that the bronze sculpture head of the old peasant man looked like a particularly odd thing to stick up on your mantel where everyone could see it. I mean, there's this person's head there without a body and nobody thinks to even stop and question it. I asked Jack, "what's happened to him?!"

February 11, 1993. Last night we went to the Academy of Natural Sciences to eat strawberries, grapes, cheese and crackers. Everybody was dressed up and trying to behave themselves. Dad told the man from the newspaper what my name was so that he might not forget to mention me in print (probably about what a help I was with the strawberries). When we were all done at the food tables we followed the herds of people throughout the galleries to look at dinosaurs and stuffed animals and things. While I was still showing Jack around I noticed that he was having a little trouble with one of the supposedly automated display vitrines. He kept pushing the button where the arrow indicated, but absolutely nothing was happening inside the case. I asked (as if I didn't know) "What's wrong?" and Jack responded (as if I couldn't guess) "I doesn't work." I said, rather incredulously and not without a bit of impatience, "Put money in it!" and Jack laughed out loud-as if the entire notion of bribing machines to work for you was a new one or something. (I have seen Dad get all sorts of things out of those display cases-coke, pretzels, peanut butter crackers, you name it-and never without offering the machine at least a couple quarters first [and sometime entire dollar bills when the machine gets really uppity]. So how does Jack think he can come along and get preferential treatment?)

After that incident, Jack and I ran into a museum attendant walking a tortoise through the crowds, evidently on their way to the cheese and crackers. At the pace it was walking it seemed, rather, they were on their way back from the cheese and crackers!

February 14, 1993. We went to Jack's for dinner last night and brought along my Mary Poppins tape to watch with Jack. (This was sort of Jack's idea, because he heard so much about my participatory enjoyment of the film.) Well, not only did Jack agree with Mom and Dad that it was highly entertaining, but I myself found this viewing number 45,678 to be just as interesting and compelling as the 396th or the 23rd.

I have found a use for most of Mary Poppins in everyday life. Example: you want your parents to do something for you and they're just not moving quickly enough. So what do you say? Spit spot! Another: Dad wants you to eat your breakfast cereal and you want to stall for time. What then? Just a spoon full of sugar helps the medicine go down, the medicine go dohw-ohwn, the medicine go down....

February 17, 1993. I made it into the social column already and I'm not even three. It turns out that our dinner of grapes and strawberries at the Academy last week was just a set-up to get me in there and become famous overnight. Mr. David Iams made it a point to mention me in his coverage of the event.

February 18, 1993. I didn't watch Mary Poppins today, or yesterday. Mom and Dad are concerned. The reason I haven't watched it is because I have a new favorite: So Dear to My Heart (also Disney). When I want to watch it I just ask for Heart and everybody knows exactly what I mean. (Why do they groan so? And why does Dad always ask me if I said Mary Poppins after I ask for Heart? Do the two sound alike? Not to my ears.)

February 23, 1993. Mr. Janáček, move over! Please let Attila the Hun, Lord Invader, Lord Executioner, The Tiger, The Lion, and The Caresser sit down beside you: I'm suddenly a Calypso convert. I don't know how it happened except that Dad had Calypso Breakaway 1927-1941 on the stereo a few nights back and all of a sudden I found myself singing the chorus to the Keskidie Trio's Don't Le' Me Mother Know ("Take me, take me, I am feeling lónely...") And after seeing the CD case only once I knew exactly where to get it to ask Dad to put it on the next evening. (Dad is still talking about this.)

March 6, 1993. Isn't it always the case that the most remarkable things always happen to you only when you leave your diary at home? Well, it happened again. Uncle Jack came over last Friday (2/26/93) morning and took us for a ride to the airport. I figured to myself, this shouldn't take long-I'll finish my diary entry when I come back. Well, next thing you know we're getting on an airplane and getting strapped in and all. I objected, having seen both Airplane I & II and not being without a vivid imagination of my own. Mom attempted to pacify me and persuade me that everything was going to be all right, la di da, and that we were on our way to meet Mary Poppins, la di da, and so on and so forth, la di da, and rather than listen to her go on and on about it all I just shut up, and it worked. Well, we musta been on that airplane for months, because when we got off it there was no snow on the ground and it was summer out there.

When we arrived at our room [Epcot's "Caribbean Beach Resorts] I announced that I didn't like it and that I wanted to go home. (I was just in one of those moods.) Little did I know as I was standing there naysaying that about 50 yards from our room was a sand beach with a state-of-the-art jungle-gym and a swimming pool beyond any ever built. (It had steps in it like this.) Well, sooner than you could say Supercal@#\$\$^docious we

were on the bus to Disneyworld and I was hugging Disney characters and eating Mickey Bars an' all.

The only problem was that unlike last trip I was scared by a lot of things this time. We went into a theater to see a live production of something or other with Mickey and Goofy and the crew but everything seemed much louder, noisier and more violent than I remember from before. Mom and Dad and I decided to leave in the middle. Lots of other attractions were scary to me as well. We watched an outdoor production of *Beauty and the Beast* that was pretty close to my tape at home but even scarier when it came to the Beast part. I didn't like that one bit. A few days later Dad and I stumbled upon an outdoor performance by the muppets, and even that was too violent and loud for me, so Dad once again took me away immediately and told me that it was too loud and violent for him as well. But the worst was when Dad was away in Georgia doing an appraisal and Mom and I were having a good time and all of a sudden one evening we looked up in the sky and there were fireworks booming overhead and I didn't like that one bit. We came home (to our room) immediately and I talked about the fireworks for the rest of the trip, asking "There are no fireworks there?" wherever we went. The closest I allowed myself to fireworks was on a T-shirt I asked Mom to buy me. (They're not loud and scary on a shirt.)

The highlight of the trip, needless to say, was the pool. It was steaming hot (which made it nearly impossible to climb out of into the cold air) and had steps in it so broad you could swim on each of them. I spent hours in it each day. When Dad came back from Georgia I had him take me down there first thing in the morning when nobody was there and when it was real cold out and the pool was steaming all across it. We stayed in for about an hour and a half. Later in the morning Dad said I looked "besotted", my eyes were so red from the chlorine. In fact, that brings me to the best part of the highlight of the trip-the part about me swimming under water! I don't know how exactly I discovered it, but all of a sudden I found myself walking on my hands along the third step, kicking my feet and looking straight ahead of me with my head submerged and my eyes open! Mom and Dad were impressed beyond description. So were many of the onlookers who asked "How old is he?" My favorite trick was to stand up and then jump down in a half-dive/half-bellyflop and stay submerged for about 5 seconds. The only time I lost the knack of this was while Dad was filming me and asking me to do it again for him. (That's the way it works always. It's never quite the same while the camera is pointed at you.)

Well, something really funny happened one night when we were all at the food court eating lomein noodles. Mom got up to go buy something or other and I was busy flirting with a couple of little girls across from our table when their father asked me if I had as yet seen Mickey Mouse. Or at least that's what Dad said he asked. To me it sounded a lot more like "What's in your mouth?" So I showed him! (Lomein noodles, of course! What did he think, Oysters Rockefeller at a place like this?)

Another milestone in our trip was my flawless use of the toilet for micturation purposes. I took my diaper off, went in, lifted the lid, and without needing to stand on anything made pissi right into the water where, I am told, it belongs.

March 7, 1993. This please business is tiresome. Every time I give Dad an order to get up and go get me something or other he stops in his tracks, reconsiders and asks that most stupid of Dad questions: "What's the magic word?" I am always tempted to learn some medieval incantation with which to properly satisfy him. If I could only

remember the whole of that Supercala... whatever it is, I would use that. Anyway, last night I ordered Dad to fetch me something or other and, predictably, he gave me his "what's the magic word" line and I muttered his mantra (preese!) and he said OK and got up to get it for me. What he brought back was not at all what I asked for and I let him know it. He asked me where it was, and when I told him, responded, "Well, if you know, why don't you go get it?" So I gave him some of his own medicine. I said "Say preese!"

March 8, 1993. Dad took me to the "Ambler Y" (whatever that is) and we went swimming in the pool for two hours until someone blew the whistle and we all had to get out even though I wanted to stay in forever. Dad was amazed at my bravery and ability concerning the subtle art of bellyflopping. This ancient and venerable ritual of water worship is best learned by intuition; as soon as you try to learn it, it vanishes and you end up diving-which looks ridiculous. Here it is in a nutshell: First you plant an adult in the shallow end about five or six feet from the edge, just so you have something to aim for. Then you hold your arms out like a plane and pretend to be walking a tightrope (like Bert does in that perennial classic, *Mary Poppins*). Then, when you're good and ready (or when your adult appears to be losing concentration), you leap off, stretching your arms straight in front of you and letting out a blood-curdling scream of joy and abandon tinged with the recognition that you haven't really the slightest control where you're gonna touch down. The next phase is always sketchy because it happens so quickly. Everything is wet, noisy, clouded and confused-with a pervasive smell of chlorine. Then, as if miraculously, hands emerge from the depths of the pool and fix themselves snugly under your arms and hoist you up above the surface where things are a bit clearer, less wet and but much colder. Then when you have climbed back up onto the side, you repeat the process. Fifty, sixty times-or until the whistle blows.

March 10, 1993. Sometimes I offer something to Mom or Dad and they fail to respond correctly. It's awfully frustrating. Especially after you've gone to the trouble of being polite and generous. The best way to deal with it, I've just learned, is to ignore it. Now, when I offer Dad a cookie and he says "No thanks, I'm not hungry right now, sweetheart, but thank you all the same for your thoughtfulness," I just answer, "O.K., here!" while keeping my hand extended. It works every time. He takes it, laughing, eats it, says "Oh, thank you very very much," and goes to tell Mom. I can see from this that he really wanted it fairly badly all along and was just afraid to admit it. (What does he think, I would offer him my very last one or something?)

I did the same with Mom yesterday. I offered her whatever it was, she said no thank you sweetheart, etc., and I said "try it!"

March 13, 1993. Uncle Jack came over and watched videos with me last night while Mom and Dad went to Mom-mom Florence's funeral. (She died while we were at her house on Wednesday night.) We watched *Beauty and the Beast*. It was my eighty-fifth viewing and Jack's first. I have watched it so often now that I'm not scared of the beast anymore. My favorite character is undoubtedly Gaston, and I am especially taken with the scene toward the beginning where he drops Beauty's book in the mud. (Dad, an incurable book lover, winces at this scene because the book gets muddy.)

March 14, 1993. This morning when I woke up Dad came into the room and asked me if I slept well. I nodded yes. (I mean, how would I know. I was asleep all the time, dagnabbed!) But when he asked what I dreamt of, I leveled with him: "Motorcycles and bicycles." (Any other stupid questions?)

Sometimes Mom and Dad could use a lesson on manners if they want to continue being role models for me. Like this morning, for example, while I was trying to watch *Beauty and the Beast*, Mom and Dad were jabbering on and on about something or other completely irrelevant to the film. Not whispering, mind you. Talking. So I waited for a slow moment in the action and turned to Dad and said, "Shhh, I'm watching *Beauty and the Beast*!"

March 15, 1993. My new video-fixe is Fantasia-particularly the "batman" episode (as I call it, anyway). I think it's largely the music that gets to me. This Moussorgsky guy could really stir up the goose bumps when he wanted to. Dad brought me home a recording of *Night on Bald Mountain* so I could listen to it whenever I was not watching it on the TV (which turns out to be whenever I'm not sleeping). (Dad understands artistic fixations. He's like me: if he discovers he likes a piece of music, he listens to it till it falls to pieces.) Dad also bought me a recording of the Tchaikovsky symphonies, figuring that with my taste for big dark brass fanfares, I would be powerless against the fourth symphony. Right on target! I can conduct that opening ten times in a row without getting tired!

March 19, 1993. I've been in a pissy mood this week. I don't know what it is, but everyone gets me hot under the pajama collar-even if they don't actually do or say anything openly hostile or antagonistic. I think it is the pervasive feeling of powerlessness I am so keenly aware of these days. (O, to be back in my salad days, when I was oblivious to politics!) I am powerless against the iron will of Mom and Dad not to buy me a motorcycle, for instance. It's not fair, this two-against-one stuff. Why don't I have someone big (and, more importantly, rich) on my side? And this teeth-brushing stuff-Gob, I hate that! What is it with these people that I've got to be put to such discomfort each morning and night, just so I can do like they do! And then, while I'm on the subject, what about not hitting people with my sword? Yes, that really gets my goat. How come when people get jabbed with swords in books it's literature, but when they get jabbed with swords by me it's just not nice? That's just a double-edged standard if you ask me.

March 26, 1993. Cookies are not animals, Mom! Sometimes I think she needs to go to school more than I do. Yesterday I asked for certain cookies that we were evidently out of. Only Mom wouldn't quite come out and confess it, preferring to talk about the cookies we did have. Well, we debated the substitution value of cookies until one thing led to another and Mom resorted to an unfortunate metaphor: "Oh that's a whole different animal!" Animal? I said "We're not talking about animals, we're talking cookies!"

March 27, 1993. Men are different than women. It all comes down to pippolis. If you got it your one of us, if not, not. I don't understand why it has to be that way, however Mom reassures me it is. She illustrated the concept with an attempt at a syllogism: "Daddy has one and he's a man...," but I objected vociferously to this accusation

(especially since Dad wasn't there to defend himself): "No! Daddy's not a man!" I admonished her. "He's my friend!"

March 28, 1993. Beethoven is the greatest! I'm now a devoted follower. I ask for my favorite symphonies by number. (I only know the 6th and 7th, so as yet it isn't really difficult to do this.) Dad borrowed a video of Carlos Kleiber conducting the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam in a performance of the 4th and 7th, and I really got into it-particularly the first movement of the 7th. (Who can resist the galloping momentum of that piece, I ask you?) Now I can identify by name whistled tunes from the first movements of the 6th and 7th symphonies. (I can also tell you who wrote Ulysses.)

March 29, 1993. Kokkonen is the second greatest! Where have I been all these years? A couple days ago I picked out a CD of his [Joonas Kokkonen's 3rd Symphony] that I noticed he hadn't played for me yet (there are still many of those, but this one really bothered me for some reason). He said, "Naah, you wouldn't like it, I don't think-I'll play it for you if you want, but I really don't..." etc. Well, that's all you have to say to me and I love the piece without even hearing it. So I pressure him, he puts it on the machine, and WHAMMO!, I'm hooked. It's not the music in itself that's so great, when I stop and consider the sensation. It's the whole effect of listening to something someone you're age is not supposed to like while looking at a fabulous CD booklet cover illustrated with some artwork that looks like a batman mask that was left too long in the dryer. Dad refuses to admit that it's a picture of Mr. Kokkonen. He insists that the real Mr. Kokkonen is the regular looking old man in the picture inside the booklet, but I am nobody's fool. I ask for Kokkonen all the time now (I have renamed him Kokkenan for ease).

April 6, 1993. Dad played something for me yesterday that must have been commissioned for me or something. It's a smith's song with a part in it for banging a sword with a hammer on an anvil! Can it get any better than that? Dad says its called the shchmeedterleedt, smidaleid, schmiedelied, whatever, from Vogner's Zig-freed (whatever that is; he says its the opera's from "the Ring," but that doesn't help me much). Anyway, it's infectious stuff, and I can't listen to it without hitting something, anything, with a hammer. I'm also fairly impressed with the Ride of the Watchamacallits, where they ride on horsies in the sky.

April 8, 1993. Sometimes I even impress myself with my erudition. Today, some woman came over to the house to ask Mom questions about Finns for a book or something she's writing. The woman looked up at our picture of Jean Sibelius and asked, "Is that your father?" Can you believe it? Is that your father? I mean, the man's got a face as distinctive as Barney's and she doesn't recognize it? Well, anyway, after Mom enlightened her about Sibelius, I decided I could hold back no more, and I instructed Mom to lift me up to the shelf where the CDs are kept. In haste I mistook something else for what I was looking for (due to the similarity of a good many of the CD jacket spines), but on my third try I presented Mom with a recording of the Sibelius Violin Concerto to play for our guest. All were impressed.

April 11, 1993. We were playing baseball out back today and things were just not going as well as I had remembered last season. There must be something to this spring training thing, because we were all really rusty. It looked like just a bunch of people outside swinging their arms around and not hitting anything. Well, at first I thought it was just me. But then on my third strike, Mom apologized to me for having failed to throw it correctly (at the right height and distance, etc.), and that's when it dawned on me: It's not me, it's them! So I consoled her with something or other I picked up goshdarn knows where: "You need a little practice!" Now, is that really so funny? Mom and Dad were laughing so hard that it made me feel as if I had said something that wasn't true. But you could just see for yourself that I had hit the nail on the head.

April 15, 1993. I think I would like to go into the Pizza business. It probably would never have occurred to me were it not for my recent friendship with Paul and Olga, who run East Wadsworth Pizza (around the corner from us on Germantown Avenue). You simply can't help but like Olga. The woman gives me pizza, soda, pistachios and candy every time I walk in the door. And Paul...what can one say about Paul except that he's a true renaissance man. This guy not only knows how to make Pizza, but he can play basketball better than anyone I've seen off a television screen. The other night he took Dad and me across the street to play basketball with some of the guys over at the Northwestern Center. I think I showed them a thing or two. They were quite impressed with my ability to dribble the ball, especially with both hands (as I have been long accustomed to doing).

April 21, 1993. Yesterday Martina came over for about an hour, ostensibly to play but really to eat. (Momma, can that woman pack it away!) After peanut butter on crackers with juice in the garden, we sat together on the chaise lounge eating corn chips and arguing over whose chaise lounge it was and who should be allowed to sit on it alone to eat corn chips in peace and quiet.

Martina is a typical woman. Women do not listen. They talk cleverly enough, but when you answer them you can tell they're not at all involved in your side of the story but are merely preparing their own next lecture. For instance, I'm trying to show her how to use a golf club (a very useful bit of knowledge if you're a man with professional aspiration, like me), but does she shut up so she can learn something? Noooo. All the while she's yakking about...about...her shoes! Can you believe it? Her shoes! Well, at first I figure she's just disagreeing with me, and I can handle controversy. But after a few minutes it begins seeping in upstairs that the two of our conversations are not dovetailing as they should when two people are in the act of disagreeing, let alone discussing. So, I stop and she keeps going on about how the shoes are not mine (mine! I was saying the golf clubs were mine, not the shoes! Who cares about shoes, anyway!) and how she had them before, and on and on and on until the cows came home and went out again and were on their way back a second time!

An even better example happened a couple days ago. We're sitting together discussing things that were on my mind when all of a sudden out she comes with something from the planet Mars concerning the little blue football in my hand matching my pants or something.

"What?," I said, disoriented by the sudden change of subject.

"Your football matches your pants," she calmly repeated for my edification.

Say what?, I'm thinking to myself, my jaw hung open to rest on my knee just in the way it might had someone come up to me and said "hey, fishes have anuses too, you know!" (Great, I'm happy for them! Now where the heck was I?).

"Your football matches your pants."

Have you ever been confronted by someone speaking Sanskrit, Church Slavonic, or some other foreign language with which you have not the slightest experience, and you're not sure which end of the sentence is the beginning and which is the end, or whether a reply is expected, or even recommended? Well, that's precisely the state of confusion in which I found myself.

I repeated my question, this time slower, so she'd understand. "What?," I said.

"Your football matches your pants."

I stared at her blankly, hoping for a hand to emerge from the clouds and give her an instantaneous sex change so we'd be able to communicate.

"Your football...."

Time out! Now, I know what a football is and I know very well that I'm wearing pants. And the concept of matching is one I conquered quite some time ago (e.g., my sword matches your grenade launcher; my motorcycle matches your football helmet; I matched your castle with these here matches; etc.). So why is it that her sentence made no sense to me? I took the sentence apart, word by word in search of syntactical sense and what did I find festering there where understanding should have been? Woman Talk. Yes, only a woman would bother to notice that someone's football matches his pants, for [goodness!] sake! This woman had reduced my manly football to a mere accessory, like a handbag, and my decision to play with it a goddamn fashion statement!

Of course, by this time she was giggling, no, shrieking, her brilliant observation at the top of her lungs, thinking that volume was all that was needed to drive the exquisite poignancy of her observation home to me. And even Mom was in on it by now, hoping to help out in matters she understood instinctively as a woman.

"Your football matches your pants, kulta [dear]."

I had been left alone behind enemy lines. I felt I was the victim of some huge conspiracy, and that I'd been cheated, hoodwinked, and sold. But then I remembered that Mom was a woman and, as such, could not help herself. My position was simply a matter of being outnumbered. (Even on a one-to-one basis a man is always outnumbered in the presence of a woman, but two-to-one? [Can they do that?]) Where is Dad when I need him?, I thought to myself. Surely Dad would have understood my state of confusion. For, he's a man, like me. Men are easily confused. (And Dad must be very manly, because he is confused more often, and more seriously, than are most.) I just wished that Dad was with me for support. Surely the two of us sitting there staring blankly at these two women, resisting their womanly illogic with manly incomprehension would have made a dent in their presumptuousness.

April 23, 1993. Why is it they're so desperate to get me to nap? They'll do just about anything, these people, including taking me for a ride in the car to absolutely nowhere in particular. Today, for example, Mom tried to play her trusty ace up her sleeve, and it failed miserably. After trying various tactics, Dad suggested that a ride in the car "might do the trick." I knew what this meant and said "I no wanna go fer rideincar." This is when Mom grabbed for the ace. "Let's go to Toys 'R Us and buy a robot," she bargained proudly, figuring that this was an offer the little man wouldn't refuse. Surprise! I

collected my wits and replied with proper coolness, "No, you go buy it and bring it back; I stay here with Daddy."

Now here's the part I don't understand. They both found this very funny. Had I or had I not just outwitted the both of them pretty soundly?

April 25, 1993. Yesterday we all went down town to an art gallery [Gross McCleaf] to a reception for Kathy Fertig, who is currently "showing" there. Lots of friends were there. Unfortunately, none of them were mine. Mom and Dad and Jack knew lots of them but I had to introduce myself to the only person my height in the whole place.

Afterwards we went to someone's house [Jan Baltzell, friend of Kathy and David Fertig's and daughter of Digby Baltzell and the late Jane Piper] and played frisbee with coasters and things. I insisted on serving myself cake and tart and then carrying it myself on a paper plate through the house. I really don't see the big deal about it but Dad was running behind me through the house, trying to help me settle the plate down on a flat surface or something. You'd think it weighed 75 pounds or something!

People were impressed, of course, that I was able to correctly answer the question, Who wrote Ulysses? (That gets 'em every time.)

Today Dad and I went to the playground at Sedgewick Street again (we've been going there a lot these days) and played ball (baseball-football-socker-handball-volleyball-basketball-hockey-golf, sort of). Every time I'm up to bat I get a crowd of admirers gathering around me. Am I really that good, or are they just waiting to borrow my bat?

April 26, 1993. I've been suffering from a cold again and it seems that every time I turn around these days, someone's grabbing my nose with a tissue. It's getting to me. My sleeve has worked perfectly fine up until now, being right there when you really need it and all. But they want me to use Puffs™. Since it's so important to them, sometimes I actually ask for Puffs™, but once the appointed gofetcher is launched on his or her errand and safely out of the room, I use my sleeve. Yesterday Mom was really getting on my nerves concerning this matter. She ended up chasing me through the living room and kitchen, all just to wipe my nose. Well, remembering that I had some help waiting for me in the mud room, I disappeared into my phone booth, so to speak, and emerged as Super Boxhead, wearing a cardboard liquor box over my head to protect me from my rather formidable foe. It worked. She laughed so hard the tissue fell from her hand. I gotta remember this one at toothbrushing time.

April 27, 1993. When things are going rather roughly with the authorities and you're in need of sympathy and pity to take their minds off of discipline and rules, the best thing to do is to act helpless. The best roles to play are those of infants, kitties and puppies. Fawns, cubs and calves are more difficult but definitely worth trying whenever the former roles lose their edge. I don't know where I learned the trick. It may have been from watching "Heart" [So Dear to My...]-the part where the black lamb gets the bottle of milk, etc. But really, it's so hard to say where I get my material.

May 1, 1993. I insisted that Mommy buy me a pair of Ninja Turtle sneakers. They were previously owned and real cheap an' all. Mommy's sometimes like Daddy, though, and said, "No sweetie, their too big for you." Too big for you! Can you believe that? Has

woman ever, since the beginning of time, uttered something more irrelevant? They're Ninja Turtle! What the heck's size got to do with it?

May 2, 1993. Daddy doesn't have a clue about things mechanical. He told Mom he wasn't getting a close enough shave with the electric razor and asked Mom to pick up a replacement part for it. I said to him, "let me have it. I show you." And after taking a good look at the culprit piece, I told him right off, "It not broke-you just need more batteries!"

May 4, 1993. I had my first Dentist appointment today. Mom was really proud of me because I cooperated so well. Since she was so impressed that I had opened my mouth so wide for the dentist, I decided to do this for her for the rest of the day as well. And when Dad called from the office to ask how it went I said, "look..." and opened it wide for him to see too.

May 5, 1993. I must take after Dad when it comes to my innate sense for literalness. Jack called me on the phone and asked me what I was doing. I was stunned. How short a memory could a man have as to ask somebody such a question? "Talking to you!" I told him.

May 9, 1993. Yesterday was Mom's 40th birthday and we went to New Jersey to celebrate it. It was amazing. Over there they have ostriches and llamas and giraffes and monkeys that come right on the highway as you're driving-and right up to your window. And we saw bears and lions and tigers and rhinos and miniature horses. Wow! Why doesn't everybody want to live in New Jersey?

After we reached the parking lot, finally, we walked to where all the people were. (In New Jersey they keep all the animals and cars on one side and the grownups and children on the other.) There I went swimming for an hour or two in rubber balls, rode on cars and W.W.I airplanes and spent fist fulls of Dad's quarters on noisy machines. One can easily imagine my response to the suggestion that we leave this place and go home. It was something on the order of Gee whiz, Dad, Mom, with all due respect, I would really prefer not to!, but it involved just a pinch of kicking and screaming for emphasis.

May 10, 1993. Yesterday was Mother's Day and we went to another amusement park in New Jersey. This one was called Clementine. They call it that because-because that's its name. Well, we had fun, period. I surprised everyone (Mom, Dad-everyone) by my penchant for things fast and dangerous. I probably acquired this taste from being strapped into a car driven aimed by Dad for 2 3/4 years. (Is that how Mom got hers, I wonder? Or is it just good genes?) Anyway, the nice thing about this particular amusement park is that they allow short people like me (or like anyone else under 42") on many of the fast rides if accompanied by an adult. So, I insisted on going on all the ones Dad didn't want me to go on and had a grrrrreat time. My favorite of all was "Neptune's Revenge" log flume. It's like a roller coaster that gets you not just nauseous but wet. Wow! I went on with Mom first and loved it so much that I insisted that Dad come next time, and after he came with once I insisted on going back just with him, but

it broke then and we had to get out, and Dad had that look on his face you might see on an army conscript's face when he learns peace has been declared just before he's called.

Then I wanted to go on "The Whip"-the one where the car you're in is whipped around this oval on a cable and metal casters on a metal floor. Each time we approached the whip part I threw my hands up in the air (since Dad was holding me anyway and there was no technical reason I had to be holding the bar) and squealed with delight. I went on that one a couple of times too.

But possibly even more fun than any of these was the "Rubber Castle," a huge room made of inflated yellow rubber where you run barefoot and fall and get up again and fall again and do somersaults-occasionally on purpose-and get up again and run again and fall. And when I needed a breather, I went next door to the "ballroom"-pretty much like yesterday's ballroom but no less enjoyable.

May 17, 1993. Yesterday Daddy wasn't feeling well and Mom and I went and picked up Jack and returned to Clementine Park. This time I got chance to go on all the good rides-the ones Dad was nervous about on our first trip, like the roller coaster and the cars that ride on the undulating disc real fast, etc. I loved them all and went back over and over and over. Dad was amazed when he heard about this. (What kind of sissy does he take me for, anyway?)

The evening proved to be somewhat anticlimactic: the flashlight Jack got me at the park failed to materialize at home, and after looking everywhere and sending Mom back to the car to look, I decided to myself that that flashlight and only that flashlight-not the big flashlight in the kitchen or even Plato's ideal flashlight-was the only thing left in this pitiful world that would ever make me smile again.

I was depressed and angry. (The world seemed to me a weary, stale, and flat sort of place altogether lacking profit.) And then we started playing with the toy helicopter we got at the park and everything was fine. (Whew!)

May 22, 1993. This morning Mom and I were lounging about in bed with our (hers, technically) coffee when suddenly I remembered what was lacking from my life at that precise moment-a bottle of apple juice. I asked Mom for one and she pointed out to me that one was already made and waiting for me, but on the stand in the hall, and that I'd have to go and get it if I wanted it. I said, "Hmmm, I wannit...preeese!?" Mom said, "If I'm not going to get out of bed to get it and you're not going to get out of bed to get it, just how are you planning on getting your bottle of apple juice?" A reasonable and practical question. I pondered it for a moment, starting at the top of my list of potential options and working my way methodically to the bottom. "Oh, Daaaaadddyyyy! Where are youuuuu?" I intoned.

May 28, 1993. Martina called yesterday and said she wanted to come over to give me a gift. I told her, "Come here and I'll love you." Mom thought this was really cute. (Why "cute?" What would she have answered? Oh, just mail it to me?)

May 30, 1993. Today, when Jack called to see what I was doing, I told him I was going to the "swimming pool club." When he asked when I'd come and see him, I said, "Maybe next time, then." Dad laughed when I said this. The "swimming pool club" was the Flourtown Swim Club. The water was cold but I wouldn't admit it to Dad for fear he wouldn't go in. I kept saying "Let's swim!" until he went all the way in and took me under the armpits and brought me in. It was every bit as cold as he had feared but I said

it was "fine" until about 15 seconds later, when I decided that enough was enough and that I was indeed freezing.

June 1, 1993. My new very favorite Disney films on video are *The Little Mermaid*, *Pinochio*, *101 Dalmations*, *The Rescuers*, and *Peter Pan*. I have watched each of them about a hundred times. So have Mom and Dad, of course.

June 2, 1993. I'm toilet trained as of today, and I did it myself, so there! It's really all a trick of memory, when it comes down to it. I now wear underpants instead of a diaper, and I'm even getting good at remembering that I that I'm wearing underpants instead of a diaper.

June 4, 1993. Today I finally got all my stuff over the fence into Jeanette's yard. It was no small task, I'm telling you. I have been working on this project for a couple of weeks now, but after each attempt the stuff mysteriously ends up right back in our yard. After the golf clubs and golf balls and baseball bats and baseballs and croquet balls and clubs, I finally reached that point where I felt unsatisfied until I had moved the entire contents of our home to Jeannette's. Don't ask me why. I like this stuff an' all...it's just that...it's just that...I want people to pay attention to me, dagnabbed!

You see, these two people, Joshua and Laurie, like our house so much that they offered Mom and Dad money to leave it so they could have it for themselves. (Can they do that?) I was not too enthused about the whole idea. But worse yet was the fact that they were over here to talk to Mom and Dad yesterday about this matter, and I was treated as if invisible. I made several attempts to offer my opinions, but they looked right through me, so intent were they on this house. (All I can promise at this point is that if they move in I'm moving out; I will not share my toys with two complete strangers.) I remembered one way to become visible. I removed my pants and, pointing to the tree, announced "I'm gonna make pissi here, O.K.?" Believe it or not, no one heard or acknowledged having heard my public announcement, but when I began watering the lawn I heard over my shoulder the conversation come to a crashing halt. It was wonderful. I was having the first ten seconds of my fifteen minutes of fame, and it felt good. Dad broke the silence by explaining to our guests something about how this (my action) is how they make the grass grow so well, or something or other.

As I see it so far, there's a good side and a bad side to this house-selling business. The good part is that I'm glad to be done with this "let's keep the place neat so we can sell it" business (which means Mom and Dad putting all my toys away so that I have to take them all out again). The bad part is that we're going to spend a large portion of our life in the car looking at new houses (there being absolutely nothing wrong with the old one, mind you!).

June 5, 1993. I insisted that we go to the swimming pool club today. The water was very cold again, so I stayed on the edge most of the time, egging Mom and Dad on (with little success). I said, "Dive in, Mommy, Dive!-Here, I push you.," etc.

Dad kept telling me not to run, for fear of getting "a big booboo." (Imagine, a grown man using such silly language!) But its difficult not to run at a place like that. (So many balls, so little time.) So I developed a type of speed-walking that resembles something you might do in a walking race at the Olympics or something. It involves running without lifting your feet higher than you really have to. (Evidently, its not the speed Dad

minds so much as raising my feet high-go figure!) He and Mom were most amused watching me, largely because this type of walking involves kicking the old elbows back real high, which must be seen from behind to be appreciated, I'm told.

June 6, 1993. Dad had on some music I liked, and when I asked him, What's this? he said "It's by him." You can imagine my dismay. What's that supposed to mean, anyway? So I asked him again, and this time when he said that I saw where his hand was pointing and it all started making sense. "Yo! Hannes Brahms," he said, pointing to the print of the man at the piano over the fireplace. "...chellosonadanumberwon ope' us blaah, blaah, blaah," he continued. (Please keep in mind, I only asked what it was.) Well, anyway, Mom came in the room as Dad and I were playing on the sofa, and in answer to the inevitable question concerning what we were doing, I told her "lissning Hannas Brahms!"

June 7, 1993. I've had few accidents concerning matters of the pants since I stopped wearing diapers about a week ago. That's partially because I am so eager to try out every toilet I find-wherever I am. I even sit on the toilet without the aid of a special seat. And toilet paper-can I use toilet paper! Why, that's the best part of all! I rip off a sheet, drop it in, watch it flutter to the water and then follow it round and round and down the bowl. Usually I have to add one more, or even two, in case there wasn't enough. (One never knows how insatiable are those cloacal gods to which we sacrifice!)

June 13, 1993. I like asking adults if they 'member things. It's always interesting to see how much they don't. (Don't 'member, that is.) Today we were with Jack at a restaurant-the kind where they give you crayons to write your name with all over the tablecloth so they can find your table easier when they're bringing the food-and I quizzed Mom about alphabet letters I was drawing. It started with Mom drawing an S and asking me what it was. However, I did not quite like being on the interrogated side of this inquisition, so I took the crayon from her and drew a letter that probably doesn't exist, technically, but that really should because it looks sort of like a person's face (and I know they don't have any of those letters in the alphabet yet). Anyway, I asked her, "'Member that?" Even Steven.

June 18, 1993. We just got in from New York where we (me, Dad, Mom and Jack) stayed over night for some reason or other. Our home there [The Surrey, 76th & Madison] was really nice and big. A man who seemed to know us was waiting for us outside. He was so glad to see us that he helped carry in our bags. He took us into a very small room to wait (probably while they were getting our home ready, or something). Then, when the door opened, we came out again and walked to our home, which was big and nice. There were these two big bedrooms with big beds for jumping, each bedroom with a bathroom. And in between the bedrooms was a big dining room/living room area and a kitchen and hallway and a smaller kitchen. And best of all there were three big TVs to watch, and even better, a nice sofa with firm springy cushions covered in exquisite fabric for jumping while watching one of the TVs.

Speaking of TV, Jack and I were watching a movie in the room that I was particularly interested in, as it contained love scenes with kissing and all. Suddenly, in the movie, a woman opened a door to receive a very very long and strong kiss from one of her many lovers and I turned to Jack and said, "boy, I hope she's going to have a good time!"

June 19, 1993. I'm becoming much more close with Will. Today at the swimming club we spent a couple hours playing together. The two of us must have jumped into the baby pool 60 or 70 times from a running start near the grass. In fact, neither of us can walk now without pain because of the wear and tear we put on our feet (from the rough cement). So now we walk on our heels with elbows lifted high in the air.

June 24, 1993. Mom has been asking me to curb my foul language. She seems to think the expression Oh Shit! is inappropriate for someone my age (I'm nearly three, for Christ's sake!). She has even gone so far as to offer me alternative expletives, such as Oh Rats!. I used this one with discretion and discernment today when we were at the cash register of a store. However, my diligent use of her whimpish euphemism went unnoticed, so I ended up having to use the real word anyway in bringing the matter to her attention: "Mom. Mommy. Oh Mooommyyy! I said Oh Rats!, not Oh Shit!"

July 2, 1993. The weather's been hot and muggy and conducive to jumping in water over and over again, and so we've been spending a good bit of time at the swimming pool recently, jumping in the water over and over again. You can't spend too much time at a swimming pool when it's an adult pool-and who has time for baby pools any more when your third birthday is just around the corner? There's just so much one can do at a big pool. First there's jumping in, then there's coming up and paddling like mad, and then there's being hoisted up to the side again so you can do it all over again. It's a crying shame they close the pool down at 8:30 pm. How much pool-jumping can one really get accomplished in only 8 1/2 hours?

July 3, 1993. You know, it seems like its getting a little hotter each day now.

July 4, 1993. You know, it is getting a little hotter each day now. I hear Mom and Dad complaining about it too-particularly Dad, who's like me (i.e., he likes it cold and he likes to complain).

July 5, 1993. It is so hot and muggy these past days that we've been spending more and more of the day at the swimming pool club, and more and more of our time at the swimming pool club actually in the pool, and more and more of that time in the pool actually submerged in the water, etc. Lately my first words out of my mouth upon waking are "swimming pool." I'm getting pretty good at jumping by now. In fact, I'm actually swimming as well. I tell Dad or Mom to go out real far (at least 6 feet from the edge) and I jump or dive in and swim to them under water.

Whew! It's hot out there. We just got back from 8 1/2 or so hours at the pool and I'm ready to go back!

July 6, 1993. So that's what it's called when it feels like an oven! "The mid-90s." I just heard Mommy tell Daddy that it's in "the mid-90s" when he asked her for "a blanket" (his term for a blanky) just now and the sweat perspiration was dripping from her forehead as she spread it out over him. He's been sick in bed with a forehead as hot as our house since late yesterday. (Mommy had the very same thing last week, come to think of it. It seems a rather elaborate thing to do just to imitate somebody.)

July 8, 1993. Well, it's even hotter now than it was before, and this has got me in a pissy mood. Dad and Mom have been less and less able to satisfy my demands over the past few days. My bottle is never precisely the right temperature, the water ice I get is never exactly the flavor I was most desiring-in short, life has been losing something of its edge lately. Add to this the pressure of knowing that one is turning three years old in a day and will soon be expected to behave like one that age. (I have less than 24 hours of terrible twos to get out of my system, after which I will be expected to be a little gentleman. Makes me want to throw up.)

July 9, 1993. I am three years old today, but I don't feel like a three-year-old. What I feel like is a...is a...well, a well-done pizza pie. I'm supposed to have my birthday party in two days and all I can think about is that maybe somebody will bring me a big bag of ice. (Ahh!) Mommy asked me what I would most like for my birthday, evidently thinking I had long forgotten my obsession with motorcycles and would ask for peace on earth and good will towards men or something stupid like that. Well, no sooner was the question mark after "birthday" out of her mouth and my answer was out of mine, and it wasn't peace on earth and good will towards men, I can tell you. Here's two hints toward what I told her: it begins with motor and ends with cycle. Well, later on in the day after Daddy came home from work I opened my gifts. No motorcycle. Nothing that could even be misconstrued for a motorcycle. Not so much as a small torn and crumpled pale Xerox copy of a photomechanical reproduction of a poor photograph of a motorcycle. Yes, it was clearly to be one of those dreaded, predictable, tiresome non-motorcycle birthdays-the kind whereon there's not a mention of motorcycles all day.

Well, my gifts were fine and all, and Jack came over a little later and brought his non-motorcycle gifts to give me too (which, as neat and interesting as they really were were nonetheless like rubbing sodium in a skin abrasion). The funniest part about it all is that everybody's been asking me how old I am now. Surely their memories can't be that bad, especially when all I've heard talked about in the past few days is this upcoming birthday of mine-this non-motorcycle birthday of mine.

July 10, 1993. Today I feel like Daddy looked a couple of days ago-like a limp dishrag. All I can make out when I open my eyes is Mommy and Daddy peering down at me and muttering something like "poor thing," "poor little guy," and "poor little hot potato." I don't know what they mean by hot potato-suddenly it's cold in here. Why is everybody sweating so much? And, more curiously yet, what's all this talk about checking in at a hotel to escape the heat? How about yesterday or the day before, when it was 100 degrees! Today feels like 45 degrees, if you ask me. (Talk about bad timing!) Anyway, we got in the car and drove and drove until we arrived at this great big cold hotel [Guest Quarters Suite Hotel in Valley Forge at the Chesterbrook exit of 202S.] that's kept as cold as a walk-in freezer. (Luckily they have blankies here for me.) Jack came here too, and when he arrived there was talk of leaving again (to go shopping for food). Well, I wasn't going to be left behind, sick or not sick, and I informed everyone of this. "But Daddy's going to stay here with you, sweetheart." Uh, uh. One goes, we all go; sorry, but that's my rule. So out we all went (blanky and all) in the car to get some food at the supermarket. I was sprawled limply across Dad's shoulder until we were in there for a few minutes when suddenly I felt good enough to raise my head and look around. Something about the place looked familiar to me and I said, "hey, wait a minute...this is Superfresh!" Don't ask me what's so funny about this, but Dad roared. And when he

repeated it for Mom and for Jack, they laughed out loud too. ("Hey, wait a minute...this is Superfresh!" Hmm. Well, it's true, but it's not exactly funny. Go figure!)

July 11, 1993. Slept fitfully last night, in spite of the air-conditioning. I was feverish and sleeping shallowly. I kept sitting up and asking if I could do this or that, like jump on the bed or I don't know what else. But neither Mom nor Dad could understand a word I was saying.

July 12, 1993. While eating dinner in our suite last night we saw on TV coverage of the "Heat Wave of '93," with which we had had first-hand experience. It turns out that not only did the temperature remain at about 100 F. the day we checked into the hotel, but it reached the same each day since (with nights averaging about 80) until today (when it is expected to only reach 95). I wouldn't have known otherwise, because it is so nice in this place (which we are checking out of today). Also, it turns out that over 40 people died due to the heat in Philadelphia alone during the past 8 days.

July 17, 1993. Yesterday we went "down the shore" as they say, curiously, to visit the Fertigs at their summer place on Long Beach Island. Uncle Jack was there too. (Boy, he gets around!) We went to the beach and waded into the water which went up and down and up and down so that you were above the water one second and beneath it the next. It was too funny for words. After our swim I suffered Mom to bury me in the sand. I could be a beach bum with little in the way of provocation.

Today we went to a birthday party for our playgroup. I had loads of fun except for my inability to deal with Joshua, the big bully. He's just too damn big! How is it the one kid who happens to have just the toys I want happens to weigh twice what I do? Around closing time, the Sapons were looking for the yellow plastic toy camera that Ariye brought with. Laura asked me if I had seen it and I volunteered immediately to help her look for it. As the first person I happened to meet along the way was her baby Jacov, I asked him, "Excuse me, baby, you see a yellow plastic camera?" A few minutes later Dad announced to me that it was time to be leaving. I informed him firmly that I was not ready yet, so he asked me if I could give him a rough idea, "give or take a day or two," as to about when I would be ready. I told him even more sternly, "three minutes!, O.K.?"

July 20, 1993. It turns out that the death toll in Philadelphia alone due to the heat wave was something like 100, but the relatively high count has its source in the city's distinctive framing of the definition of "heat-related death," which, unlike most cities, includes a broad range of ailments exacerbated by heat beyond the more customary hypothermia. (I don't have a clue as to what any of this means. Dad asked me to write this, "just for the record." So why doesn't he keep his own journal, dagnabbed!)

July 21, 1993. I have been studying political science, sociology and psychology recently, and using Mom and Dad as subjects of my experiments. Although all the data has not been collected and examined as of yet, one finding that has become clear already is that there is considerable latitude available when you are testing the boundaries laid down by some parents-if you know what you're doing, that is. And the moral to be extracted from this finding is that honey does work better than vinegar, if you know what I mean. I mean, when the temperature gets hot you can always use nice words to get yourself off

the burner. For instance, you're hitting Mom with a hammer, say, and she asks you to stop, first nicely, then not nicely. Just at the point when not nicely detonates into hard feelings between the two of you (especially on her side), you say "I'm soooooorry! I won't do it any moooore!" and presto, you get hugs and kisses instead of reprimands. I found it works without fail even in the context of such highly inflammatory acts as pissing on the antique Heriz carpet in the Living Room. This trick is something the old folks are rather funny about, which is the only reason it is of any interest to me, of course. I don't know what the big deal is about that rug-I'm allowed to pee just about everywhere else! (Unless, that is, they haven't found my other places yet!) In any case, even this felony is forgiven when I apologize.

Now, the extreme limit to which this technique may be pressed into service with positive results has yet to be tested-at least by me, yet. But this important bit of scientific data gathering will be my chief occupation from now on. I should have an answer to this most vexing of questions within weeks.

July 22, 1993. I'm getting a little closer to that answer. I have recently learned about the power of tears. Mom and Dad don't like to see me crying, judging from the way they run to me and cuddle me when I do. So, I figured I'd use crying as a threat-and it works. When they don't give me what I want I give them fair warning: "I'm gonna cry..." (the operative word pronounced slowly and threateningly, like craaa-eeee.) The thing is, you gotta be ready to deliver those tears if you play this game. (And that has yet to be a problem.)

July 23, 1993. I have a new pal. He's this guy a whole year older than me that I met at the swim club and who has an enormous traveling kit of toys with him all the time. His name is Christian, and his mommy's name is Christian's Mom. I admire Christian. He never takes no! for an answer-or even yes! or maybe, for that matter. In fact, he's right out of some Hollywood shoot-em-up and even kinda looks like what you would get if you crossed Chuck Norris, Sylvester Stallone and Dennis the Menace. But he'd be a lot more menacing looking if he didn't always have something hanging out of one side of his nose the way he does.

Christian is teaching me the ethics of handling firearms. He's got water guns coming out his you know what. And he's not afraid of using them either. All you got to say to him is "Don't shoot me, please" and he'll shoot you till you're as good as drenched. And laughing like a hyena all the while. You just can't help but admire a guy like that, if you know what I mean. To me he's kind of a symbol of our times, like James Dean was to the last generation and Attila the Hun to the one before that.

July 25, 1993. Last night, while we were at some Thai restaurant with Jack, and I was insisting vociferously for ice cream before the entrees were served, Mom and Dad found it the appropriate time to discuss my current mode of behavior with Jack. It seems (according to these rather unreliable scientists, that is) that I am currently behaving like 3-year-olds do behave. This is welcome news, as it obviously resolves me of any and all responsibility for my thoughts, attitudes and actions, as of July 9, in the year of our lord one thousand nine hundred and ninety-three. Amen. What is unsettling about all this lack of personal responsibility is the attendant lack of individuality that comes with the package.

The best way to describe this new mode of behavior of mine is to say that my "fuse has shortened," considerably. I may liken it to having had a fuse coming out of my bad mood say about 6 or 8 inches long until quite recently. Turning 3 years old, however, all that is left of that wick is a tiny vestige you gotta reach inside to find (thereby effecting rather instantaneous combustion.) What is truly remarkable about all this is that my physiology has kept apace with all this. For example, my tear ducts have developed to the point of being able to offer up streams of legitimate-looking salt solution at the drop of single word like no, or even yes.

When we got back to Jack's house after dinner, he gave me a birthday gift-the Disney animated film, *Rescuers, Down Under*, a sequel to the *Rescuers* I already have, love and know by heart. Mom and Dad looked just as excited as was I-probably because they've seen everything else of mine a hundred or so times and are in need of some new material. One thing I've learned about adults by now is that repetition just isn't to them what it is to us.

July 27, 1993. At breakfast today Daddy was telling me what a nice time we're going to have in Wyoming next week, what with "lots of grass to run in and lots of pool to swim in and lots of horses to ride...." I couldn't help but stop chewing, ponder momentarily, cock my head and observe, "hmmm!, sounds very expensive!"

August 1, 1993. Well, here we are in Wyoming and all I can say is they better deliver on the horses and grass and stuff, because I was damned well behaved and grown-up an' all on the trip! I mean, less than a week after I declared that I would not be going on any airplane, thank you very much, they had me strapped into first a big plane, then a small bus to get to a little plane, then a little plane to get to a roadster, and then the roadster to get to the house. Frankly, I would not have so much as winked had we arrived to find a mule team waiting for us. The leg of the trip on the big plane [Philadelphia to Denver] was the difficult part for me, because I had to crawl over and under perfect strangers to get places and stuff, and the plane was packed. The next leg, Denver to Sheridan, was considerably easier to handle. It was on a private \$3.5 million dollar 8-passenger Beechcraft turbo-prop plane owned by Daddy's and Jack's client, Mr. P.A.B. Widener (the guy who asked us out here in the first place). Now this is travel I can handle. A man doesn't feel like a piece of luggage on a plane like this! We had two pilots who were more than happy to show me around the cockpit. (I decided to let them do the actual flying because it was getting dark and I'm not one for flying solely by instruments. I wanna see where I'm going, thank you.) One of them came back and served us drinks and napkins. The ride was comfortable to say the very least. The seats, which were all leather the softness of my peppu to begin with, had control buttons here and there on them that allowed you to recline, turn, bend, extend, contract, swing-out and swivel, wallow-you name it. I am told I behaved like a real "Mensch," whatever that is. (Passenger, I suppose, probably from the Greek or Scandinavian or something.) I said to Mom just as we were taxicabbing down the runway, "This is a good airplane! The other one was broke." Dad was amused by this and asked me to elaborate on the subject. I explained, "Cause...cause [God, I love that word!] it can't fly...cause...it was broke!" "Oh," he said. I don't think he had an inkling of what I was talking about; I didn't have a real clear idea myself. .

August 2, 1993. Why are we here?

August 3, 1993. I wanna goback home.

August 4, 1993. I still wanna goback home.

August 5, 1993. This is no vacation. Dad's still away all day working, but it's just at a different work than his work. Mom takes me here and there, but its all new to me and I don't know anybody. The supposed "beauty of the landscape" evades me entirely, sort of like the "beauty of Horace's Latin." There are horses to look at but not to ride. And those that they do have for you to look at have eaten all the grass. The restaurants here are like time machines-not back to another era, but another hour. And worst of all, Martina and Will and Chris-at-the-swim-club are far, far away.

August 8, 1993. We came back yesterday. Boy am I glad! Boy are Mom and Dad glad! They obviously don't like air travel. Neither of them can sit still for a second it seems, always getting up to find me under the seat or in the bathroom or down the aisle tweaking wrists or climbing up somebody's seat and waking them up or. (It certainly isn't my fault, you know, I'm just built with a battery too big for my chassis.)

August 13, 1993. Dad and I were on the way to the swim club and were singing Ring-around-the-Rosie when all of a sudden he changed the lyrics on me. I objected, understandably, because you couldn't possibly rhyme it the way he changed it: "The cows were in the meadow eating butter cups. In came the farmer and they all sat down!") But then I figured I'd give him some of his own medicine, so to speak, and I adopted his lyrics and pretended they were the correct lyrics until Dad got scared that maybe I actually thought they really were correct and therefore rushed to convince me that ...stood up was the right ending. But I kept running with the ball, so to speak, and said, "Nah! That's a different song." And, while I was on that side of the road, so to speak again, and liking it just fine, I decided to change some more too, including the stuff the cows were eating, which really sounded better as peanutbutter cups anyway. And who needs cows when you can use kawls, which are a lot easier to pronounce.

August 15, 1993. Ahh, Sunday mornings, how I love them! First you open your eyes and call, "Daddyyyy!, I wanna boddle, preeeeese!" Then, after watching te-eh-vision for an hour or so, you go downstairs with Dad for breakfast. He likes to have cereal and milk or toast and cheese or eggs or other unbelievably awful things; I prefer such delicacies as, for example, cold Chicken McNuggets with whipped cream. (Ahh, my mouth waters at the mere thought!)

August 20, 1993. As of quite recently, I find myself taking a real pleasure in figures of speech that are, well, unclean. Ever since I learned that shit was on the, well, fertilizer list, I found myself powerless against the urge to employ it, or even some rather banal substitutes for it. Poopie, for one. Yes, poopie. I can spend hours a day telling Mommy made-up stories about things of no particular importance, all focusing on the word poopie. It might start out to be your normal tale of a boy and his dog, or better yet a boy and his father on their way to or from the Wawa (drawing straight from life as we know it), but inevitably it ends in poopie. And not like accidentally stepping in it or

something; no, it's much more deliberate-in fact, the story inevitably turns upon it. And even funnier than the stories are the sudden revelations concerning poopie. Like, "Oh my gosh! Daddy forgot all about the Chicken McNuggetspoopie!" (Isn't that incredibly funny?) Poopie!

August 25, 1993. These days, the thing I like to do better than anything is fight. I don't mean disagree, dispute, altercation, quibble, bicker, contest, argue, quarrel or take issue with. I mean fight, and I mean the kind with no holds barred. And there's no place better to do it in than the bed. The problem is to find opponents with the proper amount of stamina and sustained interest. Mom's basically all right except that after an hour or two she always wants to do something else. Dad, on the other hand, would be a real good bed-fighter if only he didn't always want to go to work during the day or go to sleep at night. Sometimes when he professes to be too tired to fight (I can't imagine being too tired to fight-oh, that I never know that feeling!) I psyche him out by calling him names, like pillow-poopie, and then he's ready.

August 29, 1993. It's been hotter than sun-poopie out there the last few days and we've been spending a lot of time at the swim club with my mentor, the great prophet of disreputable doings, Christian...whatever-his-name-is. But even better was yesterday when we went back to Clementine amusement park in New Jersey. They finally finished building their water park there, and we went to try it out for size. Disneyworld it's not, but it is definitely a step up from the swim club in the diverse ways there are to get wet and stay wet. (And it's leagues above Superfresh, where you can't even get wet without making pissy in your pants.) Well, anyway, the highlight of the place is definitely this tube ride where you sit in these huge rubber doughnuts and float down this stream through showers and everything. We went through twice, it was so much fun.

September 4, 1993. Yesterday I had my first movie theater experience, and it was good. Dad came home from work early and we went to some place far far away [The Village Mall, Horsham] where some people were showing Disney's Aladdin on real big in a huge dark room where you could sit anywhere you want and eat anything you want and, better yet, say anything you want, when you want. Does it get any better than this? (I would not admit this to Dad or Mom, but I was scared for the first few minutes. I got over that fast enough, however, and couldn't refrain from exclaiming "I like this!" throughout the movie.) What I can't understand is how come Mommy and Daddy liked this too. They usually prefer real boring stuff-especially Dad-stuff I tend to disparage as movie-poopie.

September 5, 1993. Dad took me to the swim club yesterday and I nearly talked him into bringing Christian along with me to McDonald's in my usual way (you ask if you can go, then you go and invite Christian and get him all enthused and all until his mom gives up and says yes too) before he and Susan (Christian's mom) decided to take us to Burger King instead because there was a miniature golf course next to it. Well, needless to say, I'm a regular born golfer and got 3 holes-in-one-out of only 18!

September 7, 1993. I have finally perfected my dolphin-dive so that I can get to the bottom of 3 or 4 feet of water. And when I come up I can swim free-style just under half

the width of the pool back to the steps. Some of the Moms at the swim club say I "swim like a fish," and they tell their kids to watch me and learn.

Yesterday, after swimming, I took a nap in the car on the way back and when I got up I was in bed. Uncle Jack was downstairs, and when I came down we went to a restaurant [the Persian Grill, Whitemarsh] where I played soccer with Dad in the grass behind the parking lot. On the way back, Jack and Dad were talking about somebody who was not me but was using my name anyway. Thinking they were talking about me, I figured I should remind them that the guy they were talking about was right there in the car with them, but Jack said, "no, Daniel, this is another Daniel we're talking about-an older man." I replied, "well, this little baby's name's Daniel too."

September 13, 1993. Mom finally made a long-standing wish of mine come true-she bought me a batman costume. (It's like dying and going to bat-heaven...except that it's really better because this way you can have what you want here on earth and still look forward to bat-heaven.) The only problem is that my life has become totally unmanageable now that I finally have what I've always wanted. It's like some curse or something. I mean, now that I finally have it, the only thing that I can possibly aspire to is wearing it absolutely perfectly-which cannot be done! For example, I insisted on wearing it in the car today when we went with Jack to visit Howard Shearer (or however you spell it). After finally getting strapped in and situated and all, I suddenly realized that there was this wrinkle in the costume that could only be righted by starting all over again and dressing again. But you can't expect parents to understand things like this-nooooo!-and instead of being reasonable and pulling over to the side of the road so I could get out of my seat and undress and dress again a couple of times until I was satisfied, they tried to convince me that everything was fine and that we'd be home soon and could fix it there and blah, blah, blah until I just wanted to torch the car with everybody in it and then put the char in a trash compactor and mash it to the size of a thimble and drop it into the middle of the Atlantic ocean, out real far and deep...where the sharks are! (Gob, I get angry even just writing about it!)

September 10, 1993. Well, I never thought I'd live to see the day, but today, September 10, 1993, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization signed treaties saying that they recognize each other. Well, it took long enough! I mean, after staring each other down all these years-all my life and then some!-they ought to at least recognize each other!

September 11, 1993. Today Mom and Dad and I went to my school [the co-op pre-school at the Unitarian Church of Germantown] to clean the place spic and span for Monday, when I'll be starting school. I think I'm gonna like this place.

September 12, 1993. I like this place!

September 15, 1993. Mom and I can't wait until this introductory week at school is over and I can begin full time (3 hours a day, every day). I think especially Mom.

September 17, 1993. Today I went for my 3-year-old medical checkup and passed with flying colors (whatever that means). I measured 36 1/2" tall and weighed 26 1/4 pounds and had a cholesterol reading of only 120. Although I came in low in the

percentiles (I can't remember the specifics, so ask my Mom), they were much higher than last year.

September 27, 1993. We went to New York for a couple days (Friday to Sunday) and stayed at the same hotel (The Surrey, 76th, between 5th and Madison) as the last couple of times. (I impressed uncle Jack and a small crowd of strangers waiting for the elevator in the lobby when I correctly identified some music playing softly over the lobby speakers as Beethoven.) It was great-I was sick with a fever the whole time. No, actually, I was well enough briefly on Saturday to go to F.A.O. Schwartz toy store. (Can one actually be too sick to go there?) And that's where the great part came in. Amid four thousand different toys buzzing around me I spotted way up on high a big red motorcycle with my name on it, so to speak. I left my body temporarily, so transfixed was I on this particular piece of equipment. Jack took one look at my gaze of longing and asked if I might possibly want to own it myself. (Was this what is called a rhetorical question or is this man just slow with reading body language?) I knitted my brows together, squared my mouth in preparation for crying (just in case the deal fell through) and said yeesss.

And it was at this point that the most difficult two days of my life began. You see, it turns out that in today's world of high finance and commerce you can be said to "own" something without actually having it there in front of you. Jack bought the motorcycle for me, but because of its size, he had it shipped to Philadelphia by something called "UPS" (almost certainly an acronym for Uniformed Perpetrators of Sabotage), and, alas, I was just as motorcycleless as before I walked into the bloody store! Walking out of F. A. O. Schwartz with this in mind, suddenly New York seemed the last place on this sad piece of dirt we call "earth"-especially as some UPS truck carrying my motorcycle was making its way out of the city, into the tunnel, on its way to my fine fair home town of Philadelphia, where I was not.

September 23, 1993. The last couple of days have been a real test of my manchildhood. The motorcycle only came late yesterday afternoon; in between Lincoln tunnel and yesterday afternoon there was nothing to fill my empty life but unfulfilled desire. The curious thing is the anticlimactic nature of finally getting what you've dreamed of. I wasn't excited at all when Jack walked in the door with it. I had just gotten up from a nap and everything still had that certain flat look to it that typifies the post-nap world.

October 8, 1993. Batman and Robin have become my heroes. I find them immensely more satisfying role models than my look-alike, Winston Churchill, or even than Mahatma Gandhi, Bertrand Russell or Dad. I spend a good deal of my waking hours parading around in a batman suit (complete with cape, mask and boots but usually with little else). Realizing that I was short one Robin, I appointed Dad the new Robin one day when he arrived home from work. I'm afraid I'm going to have to put up with such a Robin until I find a more experienced one. I even have to sometimes utter the bat-command "Robin, back to the bat-cave!" twice before he responds. (This will never do; in a more serious situation, lives could be lost for such incompetence.)

October 10, 1993. Sometimes I think I was brought into this world to make it a safer place in which to live. Dad, for example, would be lost without me. When Mom wakes up on the wrong side of the bed and gives him poopie about doing this or not doing the

other (or doing the other and not this), does he go and call the Ninja Turtles or Batman or any of the other heroes at our disposal? No! He just stands there like a wimp and takes what's given him. This bothers me. (On the videos, this is precisely the place the victim steps aside, shines the bat signal, through the window, and awaits justice.) I don't like to see that kind of emotional bloodshed going on if I'm not the one giving it out. So, yesterday, as Dad was preparing to crawl into the dog house, so to speak, I felt obliged to butt in and admonish Mom (shaking my finger like good admonishers always do), "Don't yell at Daddy or he's gonna be very, very sad!"

October 11, 1993. Yesterday we went to Jack's house with Howard Sher (whose house in Wyndmoor Mom and Dad are hoping to buy) to take part in the annual Croskey St. block party. I shied away from the activities and insisted on going inside. On our way upstairs, I turned to Jack and told him to watch as I stepped through the staircase railing. He was obviously impressed, but I also sensed a tinge of sadness come over him, as if he too wished he could do that. I told him, "don't worry, you can do that too...when you get smaller."

October 13, 1993. I've taken a brief respite from my duties as Batman-in order to be Superman. Mom knuckled under to my insistent requests for a Superman outfit (and made one herself) and I now take it off only to make pissi-sometimes.

October 14, 1993. There's one book that hasn't yet (to my knowledge) received a Pulitzer prize and should-Find Waldo, a magnificent, engrossing read that keeps you coming back for more. It's one of those books that is filled with so much detail, you can't look at it enough. Dad "reads" it to me at night before turning in. (He says this is the only book he knows, the reading of which requires quotation marks around the verb.) Actually, he attempts to read me the captions, but I'm so focused on finding Waldo, I rarely give him a chance to finish (out of impatience to move on to the next challenge).

October 17, 1993. Daddy is now a teacher at my Sunday school at the Unitarian Church. The way I look at it, this automatically makes me a privileged pupil who doesn't have to behave myself like the others. Dad looks at it slightly differently, of course. And for the first time since I can remember, he actually "outwitted" me. When we were sitting around the table listening to Dad read a story, I decided to wander away and play elsewhere, largely so everyone could admire my privileged status. Dad asked me to return to the table and I effortlessly ignored his request. He asked me again with a particularly italicized *p l e a s e*, and I took even greater delight in pretending not to hear it. There was a moment of near silence in which I could hear his gears turning and his oil burning. Then, without getting up or raising his voice he got me and good. Raising his right hand in unconscionably insidious persuasion, he asked the class words of devastating effect: "how many would like Daniel to return to his seat and behave himself so we can continue with our story?"

I was stunned. How could he do this to me? His own son! The traitor! To think that I let this man sleep in my own bed with my own mother! With reckless disregard for my god-given privileged status as teacher's offspring, he had willingly sacrificed me to the whims of some kangaroo court composed of my own peers so that he might prove his authority.

I turned around to glance at the popular uprising he had unleashed with those words and found myself outnumbered by a 100% opinion of raised hands and unspeakably smarmy grins. Did I feel sheepish! After quietly slithering to my chair and sitting in it as inconspicuously as possible, all I could think of was what I was going to do when I became a teacher of this class some day and Dad misbehaved. Revenge shall be mine, and it shall be sweet. (I will do such things-what they are, yet I know not; but they shall be the terrors of the..., etc.)

October 18, 1993. My relationship with Dad has succumbed to periods of name-calling. (After yesterday, is it any surprise?) It seems that whenever I'm feeling my most oedipal I come up with my best insults to toss his way. He's not as quick on the draw as I, but he is catching on. He has yet to beat my last challenge-yesterday I called him a BIG RASCAL-RYPSYY-POOPIE! I don't know what it is about saying things like this, but when he sticks his face right in mine and asks me, "are you calling me a BIG RASCAL-RYPSYY-POOPIE,?" I cannot help forgetting my agenda and breaking into laughter.

October 20, 1993. I can't wait for tomorrow after school, because Mom is going to take me to Evan's house to play. (Does it get any better than this?) Evan is absolutely my favorite schoolmate (unless you're counting Jessie Horowitz, of whom I also have a rather high opinion). Evan is 4 but still wants to play with me, the little dear. And furthermore, he is into batman in a serious way, costume and all. When we're together, hours fly, toys fly, sometimes fists and tears fly-but in the end we still respect each other.

November 5, 1993. You can tell I'm my father's son when it comes to my ability to focus and obsess. For the last week I've been drinking only orange juice in my bottle, and I simply can't conceive of how any other fluid might have ever passed through my lips. I see this as not too far removed from Dad's ability to spend a whole month seemingly interested only in Bartók quartets, followed by another of only Wallace Stevens poems, followed by another of only Francis Bacon paintings. (Now this is weird; orange juice is at least nourishment.)

November 15, 1993. Mom took me today to my new favorite place: a place somebody actually built for kids to run around without shoes. It's great. You actually can't wear shoes in there, it's so great. They actually make you take them off at the entrance! Can you believe such a fabulous place exists! (You still have to wear clothes in there, but I can deal with that if I'm at least shoeless.) It's called Discovery Zone, but I call it Diskoweryzone-musementpark, a name with more of a ring to it. One just opened behind the Cedarbrook Mall in Wyncote. It's this huge carpeted place with a curving snack counter overlooking this huge city-like jungle-gym of a playground of rubber and foam and water-mattress and plastic balls and stuff-and the parents can come in with the kids! And best of all is a little arcade in the back where you can play whack-the-alligator and skee-ball and basket-shooting and all sorts of things that cost a quarter a pop. (Dad keeps telling me he's out of money, but I wasn't born yesterday, you know.)

November 16, 1993. Dad took me to Diskoweryzonemusementpark and we had a great time. After a couple hours of arcade games Dad finally put his foot down and said enough. But by that point we had enough tickets awarded by the machines to buy a water-propelled rocket ship anyway, so I took it like a champ.

November 17, 1993. I had a headache today, like Mom often has. I've got the look down pat: fingers on temples, eyes squinted as if by glare, forehead stretched out and wrinkled. I am thoroughly convincing. When Dad came home from work I told him about my headache and he expressed sadness and sympathy and asked if Mommy had administered aspirin or Tylenol. I said, "Oh dear, it won't help." "Oh," he said, "then is there anything I can get you?" "Yes," I answered, as if waiting all day for the opportunity. "I wanna go to Wawa to buy sump'n...candy," I said with my most whiny voice I could muster.

On the way back with my Nestle's Crunch Bar I told Dad I still had my headache and he said, "well, when we get home we'll get undressed and get into bed and I'll get you some aspirin and something warm to drink and you'll feel better." Very nice, but pointless. And I told him so. "That's very very nice of you," I told him, "but I don't think it'll work."

November 22, 1993. Lately I've been going through another bout of separation anxiety concerning Mom. In the evenings when Dad comes home from work Mom often goes out to do things she claims she "can do easier without [me]." What on earth could this be, I wonder? I cannot picture anything in this world that would be facilitated expressly by my rather conspicuous absence. Perhaps teeth-brushing. That's the only thing I can think of that I don't like to do. Or perhaps she just sits in the car. If so, I certainly don't mind missing that either. Well, anyway, the last few evenings I've put up a pretty good stink about leaving me. I would go to the front door and open up my arms and plead, "please don't go, Mommy, please!" This would upset her to no end. (Is this what they call "gilt," or is it technically gilded?) At any rate, this evening she attempted once again to leave and I stopped her in the living room and said, "please don't go, Mommy, please!" and she asked me, "what are you talking about...what is all this?," to which I responded, my arms around her thighs, "don't go...you don't have any shoes on." Well, both she and Dad thought this was the funniest thing since sliced bread.

November 26, 1993. Yesterday was quite a day. Mom and Dad threw a lavish Thanksgiving party for me. (A Thanksgiving party is basically a birthday party, but nobody brings you gifts or anything because it isn't your birthday.) I was touched. My guests included Aunt Clara and Uncle Cody as well as their grandkids (Dad's cousins "once removed," as they are technically called-but, I must surmise, back together again) Emily, Nicholas and Danny, as well as Danny's Mom and Dad (Anita and David). When Dad set the dinner table he arranged for me to sit with him at the end, and I noticed that mine was the only one of the ten place-settings wherein the fine Charles Field Haviland hand-painted china and Piccard gilt crystal stemware had been replaced with modern pedestrian five-and-dime type transfer-decorated and mold-blown junk. But being the gentleman I am, I was determined not to get angry. Just even. So I didn't say a word about it, but when it was time to sit down I climbed into Dad's chair, and by the time he came to sit down after carving the turkey and serving everyone I was already firmly rooted in his place with his plate full of my food. Well, take a guess who sat in the high chair and ate off of cheap china for Thanksgiving! Revenge may be a dish best enjoyed cold, but served on the right china it can afford immense satisfaction even steaming hot!

December 5, 1993. I'm losing my patience with Dad's incompetence as a waiter. When I am feeling peckish, I like to have something brought up to me to eat while I'm watching

Batman, Spiderman or Incredible Hulk (going downstairs to eat in the kitchen would involve missing precious moments of these remarkable films). I usually call down to Dad and place my order and it usually doesn't come until I make a big stink about it. He is still under this delusion that if I'm hungry enough I'll come down stairs myself and eat in the kitchen. It's getting on my nerves. Last night was a prime example. I called down my order while he was in there doing the dishes and nothing happened. I called down to him again after about 10 minutes and still nothing. Then I yelled even louder. He came to the foot of the stairs and, trying to remain calm, explained that he'd make me something for me to eat if and when I came downstairs, because this was not a restaurant or catering service, your eminence, la di da. I was pretty hungry by now and quickly losing my patience with such terrible service. I put my hands on my hips, began clumping down the stairs as loud as I could, and muttered, "Ahh fer Christ sake!"

December 6, 1993. Honey works better than vinegar. This much I've learned in my dealings with the authorities around here. I can stand on my head and spit nickels, demanding this or that, and I will go unnoticed most of the time (unless Mom's around). But lately I've decided to employ the old trusty child-terrorist tactic #2985643. 997/2(b): You put your arms around your victim, look deep into his or her eyes, wipe the rascally grin off your face the best you possibly can-like chocolate, you never get it off entirely, you know-and say, "Daddy [or Mommy, etc.], I love you...but can you get me my bottle that I dropped on the floor?" Of course, you can alter the end of this formula by exchanging the object with anything else you want (e.g., "...but could you buy me another Batman costume so I can have [raising several fingers] this many?").

December 8, 1993. I keep citing Dad and Mom as sources for some my most memorable bon mots, but have I learned nothing at school? Of course I have! Indeed, I have picked up some very valuable things at school, such as We don't do that here! This helpful admonishment is remarkable in its universality-it can be pressed into service for just about everything from parental kisses to reprimands.

December 14, 1993. I made a painted plaster sculpture for Dad as a Christmas present and insisted that he open it right away. He was impressed beyond words, and so I helped him along with a hint of the subject matter. "Batman..." I began, thinking he would be deft enough to carry the ball, in a manner of speaking, and run with it. He wasn't. He repeated after me, "Batman..." and seemed pleased with himself and relieved that he had settled that matter. But, of course, my sculpture wasn't only about Batman, so I felt obliged to help him recognize Robin too. He repeated after me, "and Robin..." and once again thought he had that chore pretty much done with. But when I added Spiderman to the list to complete the immortal triumvirate, he suddenly got bold and creative, erroneously presuming that my masterpiece was some sort of free-for-all. "And Incredible Hulk..." he smugly volunteered.

I was stunned. Incredible Hulk? What? True, this was the name of my latest favorite hero-one whose name was on my tongue when I woke up and went to sleep. But he wasn't in my sculpture, for gripe's sake! I stared at him and then at the sculpture and then then back at him a look of complete disbelief on my face, wondering if was in need of an appointment with his ophthalmologist. I said, "Nooo!, the Incredible Hulk's not in there! Just Batman, Robin and Spiderman!"

December 18, 1993. I asked Dad if he'd take me to Wawa to get a pop and he in turn asked me if I wanted to go to go food shopping at Superfresh with him, because if I did he'd get me some good pops. (Nice try, Pop, but I'm 3 1/2 years, not days, old!) I wrinkled my brow and answered, "No, I wanna go to Wawa and get some bad pops."

January 9, 1993. Yesterday, when I woke up there was snow and ice everywhere; hours later I was swimming in an outdoor pool-this is what happens when you ride an airplane.

We arrived in Disney World yesterday. The plane ride was much too long to require staying in my seat-about 2 hours two long. At Orlando airport we were picked up by David Titus, Dad's friend and client from St. Simon's Island, Georgia. He drove us to the hotel because he was going to be staying there too. (I prefer to call him David Fertig even though he doesn't look a bit like that David. Titus is just so hard to say, I guess.) Before turning in, Mom and I took a dip in the pool, in spite of the unusually chilly whether (for Florida, anyway). It was really not bad at all-so long as you didn't get out of the water. (Once out in the frigid air, there's really no warming up without being rushed to your room and let stand over the heater at full blast.)

Today, Dad and I took a swim first thing this morning. He asked me once or twice if I was cold (as I was shivering a little), and I flatly denied the allegation. Then, all of a sudden, without the slightest warning, I was C*O*L*D! He couldn't get me back to the room fast enough, though he threw me over his shoulder, wrapped in two towels, and ran like the dickens. I was angry but might nevertheless forgive him one of these days.

January 10, 1994. We are still in Disney World. We didn't get back to our house [room] until late last night, having spent the day and evening at the Epcot Center. I understand that this is where we're going again today-maybe, but not until I've been in the pool long enough to transform myself into a prune.

Yesterday's visit was overall fairly satisfactory, but I would concede an ounce of enjoyment in anything until I was made the proud owner of a carton of popcorn (which was available only from a stand in front of the American pavilion, far far away from where we were). And of course, once you've had enough of that salty stuff, the only thing you can keep your mind on is something cold with which to wash it down-like a Micky's Premium Mousekateer Ice Cream Bar. (And this, when it is available at all at Epcot, is several countries-continent even-away from the popcorn, thereby adding immeasurably to the overall sense of desperation that typically accompanies being in the company of adults.)

What I like best of all about Disney World is the almost endless opportunity to run away from your (my) parents. My (your?) parents don't appreciate this quality in the least.

January 11, 1994. Yesterday we came home late too, after another day of Epcot. I refused to go on a few of the ride attractions because of a newfound distrust of tunnels and similar dark regions. I think my main objection to these types of places is the realization that while in them I can't run away from my parents and make them worry. Of course, this means giving up an important source of control I have come to wield over them. (And, as everyone knows, giving up control is not child's play.)

January 12, 1994. Yesterday we went to Disney-MGM studios where I got a chance to meet the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. I even got a photo opportunity with one of them. (Cowabonga!) They're considerably larger in person than on TV.

On the way back from the Ninja Turtles I insisted that Dad stop the carriage so that I could pick up a little dried leaf from the ground. It was this tiny little thing-the very kind of thing you'd miss outright if you didn't have your eyes peeled and your attention honed.

Dad and I went out to dinner with David Titters (that's as close as I can get, and they're just going to have to make due with it). On the way back from the food court I spotted kids in the pool and told Dad I wanted to go swimming. Surprisingly (for this would make the third swim of the day) Dad said yes without my needing to resort to my bag full of theatrical and political tricks. After walking David to his room, I noticed that Dad was walking neither in the direction of the pool or the room (where we might presumably change for the pool). I looked down (for I was riding on his shoulders, of course) and asked with a meek voice intended to indicate reluctant preparedness for disappointment and possible emotional breakdown, "where are we going?" "To the room," he replied, adding, "to change for the pool...why?" "Because," I answered with assertiveness, "we're going the wrong way! It's that way," I said, pointing behind me (for Dad was headed in the direction of the parking lot, which was about as far from either the room or the pool [or anything else for that matter] as one could hope to get). I may not be old enough to be a rocket scientist, but I do know how to get back to my hotel room, for crying out loud!

January 13, 1994. Last night, seated at the table with Mom, Dad and David Titters, I suddenly realized what was wrong with David Titters's head and I announced my finding loud and clear for the whole restaurant to hear: "Hey, you don't have any hair!...You don't have any hair!...He doesn't have any hair!...Look! He doesn't have any hair!"

Mr. Titters was very modest about the whole thing and just sat there looking at me rather sheepishly, evidently afraid of standing up and taking a bow and getting the full credit (for, certainly it was his and not mine; I only discovered it, after all). As Dad had made a somewhat less conspicuous mention of his baldness when he first met Mr. Titters some 13 years ago (on arriving to appraise the latter's mother's estate, he said he'd like to call for another appraiser from the office so that "we can get finished today and be out of your hair"), David Titters merely shook his head, muttering, "must run in the family."

January 15, 1994. Yesterday we left our home and came back home to our other home, the one with the ice in front of it. (The temperature has been in the single digits and teens for the past couple of weeks now and the thick carpet of ice laid down by the ice storm we had the day before our trip is still everywhere around our neighborhood (although nowhere in town or anywhere). Uncle Jack met us at the airport and brought us home. I insisted that he come in and play with me. (After all, how would you like to be the center of the universe all day with no one to play with except for two remarkably patient and overly-attentive parents?)

While getting undressed, I felt an itch on my shoulder, presumably from one of those mysterious things you find in sweaters only once you're wearing them, or, no, maybe from one of those whatchamacallits that bites you and then flies away, leaving

you scratching all night long-what do you call them! Well, I was frustrated for not remembering the name of those critters and I insisted that Dad tell me. The only problem was that I was too impatient to frame the question in any meaningful way and he didn't have a clue what was actually wanted of him. I reworded my question: "What is itching?!" And, leave it to Dad but doesn't he start mouthing off about the "physiological mechanism of itching" and "the mild stimulation of pain receptors" and "the typical response to the sensation," and blaah, blaah, blaah till you started seeing spots before your eyes. (I declare to my Aunti Nomian if you picked off a piece of gum from the underside of your shoe and you said to my Dad: Look at, Dad. Do you see that gum? That's gum. Declare to my Aunt he'd talk about it for an hour so he would and talk steady!)

Mind you, all I wanted to know was what the hell was the name of that damned insect that takes your blood and leaves you scratching! Finally, almost at the point of losing it entirely, I said to Dad, "where's my book with the flowers in it?" Of course, being Dad he didn't have a clue what I was talking about. Mom might have understood that flowers means insects when you can't remember the word for insects, but Dad? Nooooo. Well, anyway, I found the book and opened it up for him and found the page with the mosquito on it-keep in mind I'm still beside myself with itch and lack of the desired knowledge-and I ask him, "This! What's this!" "Oh, that!," he says. "That's a mosquito." Cheez-its™, that's all I wanted to know in the first place, dagnabbed!

January 16, 1994. Dad took me swimming today at the Ambler YMCA and I had a ball, so to speak. Not only did I perfect my treading water, but I treaded it in the deep end (8 or 9 feet, but what does it really matter since the so-called "shallow" end is over my head too?) without fear. And, better yet, I showed Dad my new water trick, never before shown to anyone, anywhere, at any price: underwater somersaults. Yes, that's what I said. Underwater somersaults. I jumped in, came up, treaded water a few seconds, went back onto my back, threw my head down, my legs straight up in the air and, in a flash, ended right side up right where I began. The expression on Dad's face was worth at least eleven hundred words.

January 17, 1994. Dad told me they had an earthcake in Los Angeles. A big one. Measured 6.6 on somebody or other's scale. Mom and Dad were watching what purported to be coverage of the event on television, but I could not see the earthcake. One thing I could see though was that they keep their city in terrible condition. Things falling apart everywhere! Cars sticking up out of the ground, half eaten; huge cracks in the street left unfilled. Worse than around here, if you can imagine such a thing.

January 20, 1994. Finally, I have met cold weather I don't like. The temperature dropped down to minus 5 degrees yesterday, with a wind-chill index of minus 35-50. (In Pittsburgh, wherever that is, they had 22 below zero before the wind-chill index was factored in!) I didn't go out at all, but I had been out the day before, when it was about 5 above with wind-chill temperatures of about minus 20, and I cared for it not at all (in spite of my numerous proclamations about liking the cold). Dad went to work by train yesterday and said that it was so cold that he had to work hard to keep his eyelashes from freezing together. In fact, it was so cold out there that the [acting] Governor came on TV to announce a state of emergency for the whole state and ask people to close

businesses, stay home, turn down the heat to 60 and turn off all appliances not absolutely necessary.

Dad stayed home from work today due to the weather (not to mention an extra inch or two of snow we got early this morning). He thought he was going to get work done on his 'puter (why don't they spell this pewter ?) but, surprise! He forgot about Batman! Mommy said, "Batman, let's play upstairs so Daddy can work." Yeh, right!, I thought to myself. You must be kidding. We can do that anytime; Daddy's trying to work now.

January 29, 1994. The sky has been in a real bad mood recently-it's been almost continually either snowing, raining and/or sleeting-and above all f-r-e-e-z-i-n-g (even to my way of thinking). Even when it warmed up, it seemed spiteful. Today it went from about 11 degrees up to about 55 in about 6 hours. And with it came lots of rain and, worse yet, fog. I don't mean fog, but FOG-as thick and dense as shaving cream. Dad told me when he got home tonight that it had taken him 2 1/4 hours to get 6 1/2 miles this morning, between the fog, the heavy flooding and the thick patches of ice underneath all the water. (He told me he actually got stuck on the ice on a steep side street he took to avoid a couple of feet of water, and that he had to call the police to come and stop the traffic for him so he could let the car slide down into the intersection without hitting anyone. Wow! I love that kind of stuff!)

February 11, 1994. I've been getting sloppy about this journal because one day is beginning to look like the next-snow, ice, freezing rain, snow, freezing rain, ice, etc. We just had another 5 or so inches today, after having gotten an inch or two here or there during the last week. (We haven't seen our sidewalk since December, and it doesn't look like we'll be seeing it again until April at this rate!)

This afternoon I really had to give Mom a piece of my mind. We were at our desk, as usual, trying to get some work done. But once again our different chores were in conflict and she was in my way. Mom was sitting on the desk chair trying to look at a bank statement; I was crouching upon the desk top, stooping down, trying to fish out from an open desk drawer whatever I could find that felt new. My job was unquestionably more tricky than was Mom's. (After all, anyone can sit in a chair and look at a bank statement they're holding in their own hand right smack in front of them, for crying out loud. It's only a small step between that and outright cheating, if you ask me.) Don't get me wrong; my stark nakedness was not at all the issue here. To be fair, what Mom objected to was largely that one of the papers she needed was under my left foot while her pen and the canceled check she had been looking for were both under my right. (And my naked butt was in her face-though I don't think that figured into this at all.) Anyway, she started in with this parental control thing that she and Dad (particularly Dad!) must have picked up from T.V. somewhere, asking me to please give her some room so we can both use the desk, etc. (Well, if ever you want to make my butt dug-in for the winter, just ask it to move. She should know that by now!) Needless to say, the more insistent she became, the more anchored upon that desk I became, and the more interested I was in something I couldn't possibly hope to find in that drawer, just on principle, damn it! She repeated my name in that tone typically reserved for reminding you of the relative disproportion of power distributed between a parent and a child (Gob, I hate when they do that!), and at that point I figured I had about as much as I could take. I stood up and looked down at/on her, the pen impressing sharply into my right foot (which was loath to move lest it concede territory), and with my hands on

my hips I gave her a piece of my mind: "You got balls to talk to me when I'm trying to work!" When Dad heard about this, he said, "Oh boy, that's one for the journal." ? Is he keeping a journal too?

February 18, 1994. Today was a very important day, according to Dad. Sean and Kathy Duran came over to look at our house and then we got in the car and went to some place where I got dressed up like Batman and terrorized some folks in the reception room while the four of them sat at a big conference table with some other people and signed papers. Afterwards, Dad explained to me that we had sold our house to the Durans so we could buy one we like better. (We? What's he talking about? We! I like this one just fine, thank you!) Dad explained that the new house, which I've purportedly seen a couple of times during the last few months but somehow don't remember, is more fun, easier to get around in and, more importantly, is on a quiet street in walking distance from a fine public school and has lots of attractive, private grounds for playing. Well, he though he put that matter to rest once and for all and looked pretty self satisfied with himself. But he hadn't consulted me yet and heard my concerns. So, after a moment's pause, I dropped the big question, the one I knew they hadn't given any thought to in their adult-like impetuosity but that nonetheless remained the only important issue in my mind: "How we gonna get all my toys over there from here?"

February 21, 1996. Today we went down town to visit Jack. We went for a walk while Dad was at the office. They got rather bothered by my desire to keep ahead of them by a block (even though I was waiting for them at each street), and finally Mom gave me a stern talking-to and asked me to promise I wouldn't do it again, blahh, blahh, blahh.

Of course, only a fool would promise to give up something he likes just to satisfy authority, unless he gets something back for his efforts. The fact that Mom of all people (being as sage about child politics as she normally is) would forget this simple fact and ask me such a stupid question left me wondering if I had, indeed, correctly heard the question. So I just ignored it. She asked me again, this time in a tone which left the question mark at the end barely recognizable-like it had been largely erased from the page in a sudden change of heart. I liked this not. Following the third framing of the now straight-forward imperative (now lacking the least hint of question or desire for my participation), I put the matter to rest with ease: "I don't understand the question; I'm just a little boy!"

When we got home, Dad and I decided to play ball in the living room while listening to Berg (i.e., I decided we would play ball and Dad decided that if we had to play ball, we would at least have to listen to Berg while doing so). Well, during the game I realized that I was no longer the incredible hulk (the unintelligible hulk, as Dad calls him), in whose costume I was dressed, but was suddenly Naked Man (another of Dad's names for characters who don't really exist according to the historians at Marvel Comics). Dad had no problem with my undressing, but he as a deep-down dislike for my habit of leaving my costumes and other clothes on the floor wherever they happen to have been shed. And he started mouthing off about this in his rather typically tiresome manner until I remembered an old trick I've seen him use: "Shh!," I admonished, "I can't hear the music!"

After changing the subject, I decided that we'd play dice. I found one and asked him what it was. I was taken back by his brash reply. "Die," he said, with the slightest edge of sternness discernible, in retrospect. Such an imperative from my own father, and over

such a seemingly innocent and reasonable question! Could it be that he was an underprivileged child who never was allowed to play with dice? Or was it that I forgot to insert his favorite word please into the question. Whatever the reason, his reply was by any reasonable standard unwarranted by, and inappropriate to, the question. Yet he repeated it-this time with a broad smile on his face, as if my look of shock awakened in him some understanding he was lacking the first time around. "Die," he said, softer this time and followed by an explanation, the tone of which (more so than the content) calming me immediately. "It's called a die when a you have one and dice when you have more than one." Well, as soon as I heard that simple article a before die and knew therefore it was a harmless noun he was talking about rather than an ominous verb in the imperative, I relaxed. Furthermore, I had indeed heard of this word "dice." In fact, I was suddenly convinced he had it wrong and that the word dice was the only correct term, plural or singular. I voiced this opinion ("no, its just dice!"), challenging his authority like Mom often does (and wins). He corrected me, rather pompously, I might add (once again, in retrospect). Finally, I put an end to all this highfalutin theoretical stuff and demanded that he "show me in the book!" He knew I meant the dictionary, and he immediately got it down from the shelf, opened it up and showed me. The fact that there were no illustrations of either of these words and that he proceeded to show me anyway I found touching and rewarding. Pretending right along with him that I could be persuaded by proof unaided by visual illustration, we pondered the primary and secondary meanings, along with any etymological significance. Of course, he could have had the book open to didynamous or diethylcarbamazine and I wouldn't really have known the difference, but it was the spirit of conspiracy he invoked that I so enjoyed.

February 27, 1994. As I may have mentioned earlier, Dad and I do our men's night out on the town on Sunday afternoons. We typically get in the car a little after noon (following two or three hours of wrestling and running around) and drive in the direction of the pool without ever getting there until long after I've fallen asleep. When I wake up, we've always parked in about the same place, in the lot in front of the Ambler Y, facing Bethlehem Pike. Unlike any waking at any other location-which can take anywhere from 15 to 45 minutes-that done in front of the Y is nearly always quick, good-tempered and decisive; there's no sense, after all, in wasting precious swimming time on stuff as boring as a bad mood. Usually, I open my eyes, look past Dad in the front seat (usually reading a book he has brought with my nap in mind) at the traffic way off on Bethlehem Pike, and say, "Well, let's go!"

Today was no exception to this. We got in there and I jumped in without even sitting down on the side and getting wet first-so intent was I on showing Dad my new accomplishment: the backstroke. Well, it's not really a backstroke. It's more like doggy-paddle on your back, but it works (it get's you there). Furthermore, it's not really a new accomplishment: he's seen me attempting it here and there for the last three Sundays. It's just that I'd been giving it some thought during the week, and I'd decided it was going to be this week that it would really work. And it did. I instructed him to watch, and I proceeded to launch myself off backwards from the side and swim on my back half the width of the pool, at which point I broke into a vertical doggy-paddle (very close to what might be judged mainstream "water treading" but somehow not quite). He was what you might call flabbergasted; I was what you couldn't avoid but call proud of myself.

When we got out of the pool and dressed, I issued a directive that we go to Burger King for a chow-down. I used to insist on MacDonald's, which was literally unavoidable (i.e., as it was on the way back and Dad couldn't cover it with a drop cloth and pretend he hadn't seen it). Dad passionately dislikes MacDonald's. (Curiously, however, he never suggested Burger King to me until I insisted on it because of the miniature golf course next to it.) He doesn't seem to mind the extra drive involved in routing us to a Burger King instead. (After Burger King we typically do 18 holes, weather permitting, and then go somewhere for ice cream or mischief or both before going home to tell Mom all about it.)

When we got home, Mom wasn't back yet, so we wrestled until she did. Dad told her about my back-stroke, and she was really impressed and happy. He then gave her an account of my dressing for our trip in a way that sounded to me much funnier than I remembered it myself. It was all true, but it was the delivery which made it seem so funny. He said I was putting my superman costume on and, having already put on my blue leotards, was slipping my feet into the red panties Mom bought me with this usage in mind and muttering with high seriousness: "A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do!"

March 3, 1994. All right, what's going on here? We're snowed in again, all schools closed and nowhere to go-this being our 15th snowstorm this winter (and 12th this year)! In all my [3] years I don't remember such an inhospitable winter. We haven't seen our sidewalk, what with all the ice, since early December (but for a day or two in between that are hardly worth the mention). Last night the wind kicked up so hard that our bed was shaking throughout the night.

March 4, 1994. Today Evan came over and we had fun until his mother came and broke up the party. We had a fairly sentimental goodbye, with Evan bursting into tears at the thought of leaving me. I followed him to the door and watched as his mother carried him, crying, from the porch. In hopes of consoling him I shouted out, "I know how you feel!"

March 13, 1994. Yesterday Dad took me in town to see Curious George "live" at Border's bookstore. He is considerably larger than he appears in the books and video. In fact, he is taller than Dad. I sat myself right next to him on the floor in the middle of the room while some woman read a story to us (about 50 of us) from one of the books about him. We were considerably less interested in the story than in the celebrity value of the afternoon. I took an immediate liking to George and found myself petting him and cuddling him while the woman read. A gang of us followed him out and wouldn't let him go home. I was with Jonathan Gay, Jr. and his father and Jack (as well as with Dad), and when George finally got away, Jonathan, Jr. and I ran to ride the escalator (with Dad pushing through the crowd after us). At the top, just as Dad feared might happen, I got my knit mitten caught in the escalator. Dad got to me just as I got really scared, and he got my hand out of the mitten and carried me off as the tears started in every direction. He forgot about saving my mitten (which was my only concern) but Jonathan, Sr. was behind us and he got it. It looked like heck, and I cried with renewed purpose and vigor when I saw it.

We went back to Jonathan's apartment after the reading. I pointed one of Jonathan's guns at Dad and told him to put his hands up. Like an obedient father, he did as I said,

and I shot him. Dad seemed both surprised and irritated to be shot in this manner. He reprimanded me, saying that it's simply bad manners to shoot someone without provocation, especially after they've gone to the trouble of obeying your orders and disarming themselves, because such a state of surrender is predicated on a sense of trust established by the willingness to achieve a state of vulnerability that would preclude the necessity of exercising force.

So I said, "O.K., put your hands down," which he obediently did, and I shot him again with the satisfaction of having gotten it right and put the whole affair to bed.

Today, Charlie came over to talk to Dad about some furniture in some pictures. I started to get tired of not being the center of the universe, so I interrupted them a few times-each with greater volume and urgency. They were becoming immune, somehow, to the interruptions, I was forced to rather more drastic measures. I went upstairs and changed into Superman and heralded my landing downstairs with an announcement that Superman was here, da daaa, etc. This worked for about as long as it takes for two guys deep in discussion to turn around and see what all the commotion's about and turn back to their pointless jabber. Moments later I reappeared at the foot of the stairs as, da daa: Batman; then Robin; then Spiderman. Altogether I got 1.4 seconds of their undivided attention. This had not been a good investment of my time and energy. I was getting desperate. Finally, I decided I was unable to continue in the role of Mr. Nice Guy, so I went up to Charlie and asked the intruder point blank "when are you leaving?" He replied with a chuckle, admiring my candor, no doubt, "after I show your father this last photo." I waited until said was done and then, for fear of any more photos or other excuses to stay on, I fetched Charlie's coat and hat and brought them right to him, saying merely "here."

March 18, 1994. Can you believe it? Snow again? This makes the 16th snowstorm this winter!

March 25, 1994. Today it was nice and sunny for a change. Dad and I went out for a walk and I noticed someone vaguely familiar approaching us. It was a big girl or a "young lady" (I have yet to learn how to distinguish the two) and I knew I had met her before but was too embarrassed to stop her and ask the famous ice-breaker, "haven't we met somewhere before," etc. Well, when I heard Dad say "hi, Shiela," I couldn't believe it. Shiela! This was the little girl who babysat me only a year ago! My they grow fast! "Hi, Daniel," I heard in a recognizable voice as Shiela passed us. I turned my head to watch as she went by, and when she was [just about] out of earshot I confided to Dad "my, hasn't she gotten big!" When Dad laughed I got angry and told him to shhhh! (I don't like being laughed at.)

April 10, 1994. Today Uncle Jack picked us up in his car that now sounds like a motorcycle and drove us to the airport where we got on a plane and got off and got on another and got off in Jacksonville, Florida and were met by David Titus, now "Uncle David," who had someone drive us all to Sea Island, Georgia where he has rented us a pair of luxurious rooms on the ground floor of "Hamilton House" at "The Cloister," a 5-star resort. This place is fancy with a capital F. The bathroom/shower/dressing room area is about the size of our 1st floor at home. The bedroom looks out through big sliding glass doors to a manicured garden with privacy hedge overlooking the sea (done so you can see the water but not any people would might be walking on the beach).

What I liked most about this arrangement was the ease with which I could pee. Unlike at home, where I have to walk upstairs to the toilet, here all I had to do was open the sliding doors and water the flower beds and bushes.

April 12, 1994. I had so much fun yesterday I forgot to write. They have a nice big heated outdoor pool here that I am beginning to consider my home away from home. I feel like something of a celebrity whenever I go there because there is never any end to comments from strangers about how well I swim. A typical scenario one might overhear would go: "How old is your son," asks a surprised looking parent to Dad while watching me do underwater somersaults backwards and forwards. "Three and a half," Dad would respond with the effortless fluency of someone who had been asked that tricky question several times before. "Three and a half!?" the stranger would challenge, wherein Dad would correct himself somewhat, "Well, three and three-quarters, actually." "Three and three-quarters!?", the stranger would repeat in a voice that showed no diminution of surprise even with the additional three months of time I had just been given to accomplish my miracles. "Yep," Dad would say, sure of himself now and trying not to brag, show off, or even hint that he was the proud father of a prodigy. "Good God!," the inquisitor would declare. "He should be in the Guinness World Book of Records, this one!" "Yea," Dad would modestly agree. "And you should see him swim too."

And not only in the pool was I something of a sensation. I won a shuffleboard tournament of sorts as well. I played against a girl over twice my age and beat her 22 to minus 2. (It was my best game ever, however, as I was not able to approach that skill I exhibited there at any subsequent game.) Many of the employees of the Cloister remembered me from this game and would call me "the champ."

April 14, 1994. Yesterday I spied something in the gift shop that filled me with desire and intense unhappiness-"The Vortex." This is a sort of small light rubber football of nerf-ball type that comes with a stiff tail of sorts on it like the tail of a missile or something. It's chief virtue is the way it is balanced and shaped (spiral-twisted ovoid), allowing the thrower to achieve unprecedented heights. It was love at first sight. I was on Dad's shoulders while Uncle David was buying us a very very small \$15 bottle of sun-tan lotion (one of the real "buys" here at Sea Island). I tried to contain myself and asked in a controlled whisper above my pounding heart, "what's that, Dad." "Sun-tan lotion," Dad responded quite naturally, thinking that I too was confused by the price into thinking Uncle David had purchased something far larger and more satisfying than a little bottle of white stuff. "No that!," I retorted, losing nine-tenths of my patience in one fell swoop. Dad turned around and saw what had gotten my attention and said, picking the box up, "hmmmm...something called 'Vortex™,' a kind of football with a tail on it." "I want a football with a tail on it," I suggested, just in case he though maybe I had might be satisfied with such an obfuscatory answer. "Ahhha," Dad acknowledged, trying to be nice while not promising me anything he could not make good on. "Eighteen dollars!," he added, having turned the box over to inspect the price sticker. "Sorry, sweetheart, but that's nearly criminal, that price." It was at this point that I lost the other one-tenth of my patience. "But I want it, the football with a tail on it!," I cried in a ready shower of hot tears dripping down into his hair. "I know you do, sweetheart, I know," he said with the gathering calm of the eye of a storm, intoned so that his

subtext was unmistakably clear: i.e., put it out of your mind forever, because it's not gonna happen, kiddo!

Now, if there's one thing you can say to me that's sure to unwind me on the spot and want to make me reach for my revolver, it's that "I know you do," etc. God, I hate that. What I want to hear at critical times like these is not some kind of acknowledgment of my desires but a gratification of them, for gripe's sake! Not I know you do, sweetheart, I know, but rather, How 'bout if Daddy buys you one right now?

"How 'bout if Daddy looks for one more reasonably priced, sweetheart," I hear offered cautiously between my sobs in a kind of plea-bargain. "You mean right now?" I asked, suddenly dry-eyed at the thought that he was simply going to take the one right beneath the one he was holding and find it priced at just the acceptable price. "No, I mean we'll go somewhere else to find one." SOMEWHERE ELSE?! We're standing right in front of a whole stack of the damned things with no time to spare before I shatter in a thousand small pieces and he's talking about going somewhere where we don't even know if they have a toy store, let alone footballs, let alone footballs with tails on 'em! The mere fact that he used that term "somewhere else" was clear indication to me that we're talking no time in the particularly near future here. The nebulosity of those vague words sent chills down my spine and almost instantaneously unleashed another warm shower into Dad's hair.

"Well, how about if we go and talk to Mommy about this matter, sweetie," he offered, pathetically, too little, too late. We did and after a good deal of needless verbiage spent on the matter concluded indeed that I would indeed get one, but only if we could find it in town, where it would surely be offered at a reasonable price. This was presented to me as progress, but one need not be a rocket scientist to observe that this was a title promotion in place of a pay raise, if you know what I mean. (We were exactly where we were before the discussion.) O.K., I'll go in town, if that's what it takes, but I want it yesterday. "When?" I asked. Mom said she'd take me tomorrow and I said, "No, today!" She said I'd have to get ready quick, then, as the stores close early and it's a long bus ride, and we'd need to change, blaah, blaah, blaah. I agreed, not hearing a word she said because the only word in my head was VORTEX™

All I remember from that point is Mom reprimanding me about this, that or the other, vaguely having to do with farting around and not letting her get ready to go, and how this all was somehow connected to the vortex™. Well, we missed the bus that would have gotten us there in time and I showed my disappointment and Mom angrily reminded me how she urged me to get ready and let her get ready, etc., etc., etc. and I felt confused, betrayed and craving for revenge. Had you come up and offered me a dollar for my mother at that moment I'd 've taken it, or even bargained down a bit for good effect. I looked around for something lethal with which I might see her off to the other world but then remembered that the best weapon a guy my age can wield is a healthy pair of tear ducts. So I instructed my sudden enemy to stop the carriage and come look at me, and when she did, I squared my mouth, screwed up the remaining facial features, got the glands working, and said, "you wanna see me cry?"

After I got over the adrenaline rush and forgave her, I learned that it had been decided that Dad would take me in town tomorrow to achieve the same end. This smacked of manyana, but you know the old adage: manyana with vortex™ is preferable to today without.

Now, the question remained, what was I to do with the fourteen hour and 35 minutes and 20 odd seconds that separated now with then? Talk to Daddy! Oh Daddy,

will you buy me a footballwiththetailonit? [vortex™]...I gonna be so happy when you buy me the footballwiththetailonit...I love to have footballwiththetailonit...When is it we go to get footballwiththetailonit?...When's that?...in how many days?...tomorrow?...is that now?...oh...when?...I can't wait for the footballwiththetailonit...how long will it be from right now?

This morning at 6:00 on the dot, without an alarm clock or wake-up call from the front desk, I sat up and said, "Is it today you're gonna buy me the footballwiththetailonit? "Daaaad...wake up, quick, is it today," etc. As I write this, I have been in possession of a vortex™ for several hours, and all I can say about the thing is that it is indeed a lot of fun and I am glad to have it and all, but it really wasn't worth all that fuss they put me through over it.

The real question on my mind, now that this business is behind us, is WHEN ARE WE GOING SWIMMING? I posed this question at lunch and Dad responded by saying "in this much time," showing me about a half an inch between his forefinger and thumb. I fixed my fingers in a generally similar pose, but with no less than an inch and a half between the two operative points and said to him, "but I already waited this much!"

April 17, 1994. We left for back home and I volunteered to take goodbye pictures with the camera. Everyone laughed when I instructed them to say cheese. (This is what is said, is it not?) In the airline terminal I met a boy from Boston going home with his parents. He said he had a Double-Dragon™ costume at home and that he'd let me try it out. I saw a deep and promising relationship unfold before my eyes. When we landed in Philadelphia and Mom and Dad were standing up, saying goodbye to this guy's parents (who, with my friend, were all staying on board for the final leg of the trip home to Boston), I announced I was staying. Mom nor Dad had ever heard me speak of airplanes but in the past tense, if not the conditional. Having never landed without being first off the plane because of me, they were not prepared to hear me talk in terms of hanging around on board. Finally, the truth came out and I explained my lack of hurry, "but he's going to lend me his Double-Dragon™ costume when we get to Boston!

May 9, 1994. I woke up at 4:00 this morning from a nightmare and insisted on watching a video in the front room. Mom and Dad attempted to talk me out of it but I explained, "I wanna watch a movie because I don't want to watch my dreams."

It was Mom's birthday yesterday. Boy, I love that woman! I've been absolutely impossible these last few days, no, weeks. I don't know what's gotten into me but it doesn't take much to get me ticked off-particularly after a nap.

May 31, 1994. We're moving today from the old house to the new house. I told Dad that this will make our new house our old house, right? Dad was never one for abstractions. He had that look on his face that told of vast incomprehension-rooms of it. After a long pause, he said, "right," but it was obviously just the word right posing as the question what did you say?

What most concerned me about this move, of course, was the sense of violation I felt concerning my physical space, my belongings, my access to those belongings, and my life style. I said to Dad with urgency in my eyes and voice, "just don't let the [moving] men see my diapers!"

The only way I've been able to deal with this move has been to explore the full extent of my access to my old way of life, including my possessions. Unfortunately, Mom and

Dad have been pretending to be distracted by other things all day and have not been showing the proper attention to my requests. Example: "Will you help me find my other batman cape-the one that leaves the bat-signal shadow? I want it, will you help me? Please, I want that cape. I must have that cape. Mommy, will you find that cape for me? Mommmmyyyy? Daddy, will you find that cape for me? The one that leaves the bat-signal shadow? Dad?

June 1, 1994. Yesterday was terrible. Even though Mom and Dad made their first project the refurbishing of our new bedroom so to ease the transition for me of old house to new, I was not won over. When we finally all got in bed very late last night I announced, "I wanna go back to our old house." Dad looked like he was going to cry. (Apparently he missed the old place too?) He said he'd take me back there whenever I wanted but that I should at least give the new place a try like the "rest of us" (him and Mom, the very two who bought the place and had financial reason to get used to it and fast!) were going do. What's there to try? I'm here and I don't like it. No need to invoke future tense when what' said is done!

June 18, 1994. Mom's been trying to get me off my apple juice bottles at night because the Doctor says juice is bad for my teeth at night. So she's been trying to sell me on a bottle filled with, well, WATER! I told her last night though, "water?! Water is not good for me!"

June 20, 1994. I visited the township pool at Waverly Road and had a great time. I was allowed to go off the diving board, and even though Dad wasn't permitted by the lifeguard to wait for me in the water, I wasn't scared. He sat on the edge and I jumped in a swam to him. Over and over and over again. Then I met Josh Porges, son of Barbara and Jeff Porges, who live over on Crescent Rd. behind Andrew. We hit it off famously and I insisted on going to his house. Then, when Dad picked me up, I insisted on him coming to mine. But it never materialized, and I was not too happy about this.

June 26, 1994. I was in one of those dangerous moods today. I felt like peeing in a rare new place. I found one-in the Master Bedroom, but it proved to be a bit more than I was prepared for. Well, I heard Dad's footsteps approaching in the hall, so I met him at the threshold to prepare him. "I'm soooooorry," I said, as plaintively and sincerely as I could muster. "Uh oh...sorry for what?," was his cautious, wincing reply. "I'm soooooo-ooooorrrrrrrryy," I repeated, hoping that would take care of any further explanation. Daddy said "Daniel, why is the floor wet in here-have you been playing with...."

"No," I said, relieved at the opportunity to express by innocence for something (for, indeed, I had not been playing with anything involving water-not pure water anyhow). "It was the fan," I said, pointing to the culprit sitting on the floor near the window.

"The fan?," he asked.

"Yes, I made pissi in the fan and it went all over."

"Daniel!," Daddy addressed me, with a conspicuous tone of formality in his voice, sort of like what I'd imagine morning role call at West Point to sound like. "Why did you do that?," he asked, as if a good reason would satisfy his curiosity and we'd be able to move on to more pressing matters.

"Because," I said, "I forgot."

After a pause, he answered, "you forgot? What did you forget?"

"I forgot that it (the window fan) was not my potty!"

This may have been the reason he seemed to be looking for, because he broke into laughter while trying to explain the so-called "danger" of performing this trick (something about pissi being water and water conducting electricity, etc., etc. (To Dad everything is dangerous, which is precisely why I usually ask Mom when I want permission to do daredevil stuff.)

July 5, 1994. The most irresistible epithet in the English language is currently Poopie-butt! No, actually, I probably use that one less than the incomparably expressive Diaper-rash-poopie-butt! Either of these may be pressed into service to address anyone you wish to disparage, provided said person is not an adult within earshot.

July 9, 1994. Today is my birthday. This is good because it means I get gifts. I love gifts. The gift-giving started early today. Uncle Jack was my first victim. He was the first to show up, and I met him at the door, naked as usual (me, that is). I said "Hi Uncle Jack, I have a surprise for you!" and quickly ushered him into Mom's study. In her study I pointed up into the closet to a box up high on a shelf and said "here, get that down for me and I'll show you." He did as he was told but soon learned that he had been used: Mom was trying to hide that gift from me so she could present it to me later in the day on my birthday (and didn't think I knew what it was and where it was. Ha!). Later in the day all sorts of people came to bring me things: my Uncle Brian and Aunt Debbie and their numerous children, a couple of whom ran around the library with me, pursued by demons. Then Aunt Clara and Uncle Cody, and Aunt Anita and Uncle David with Danny, and Will and Maggie and too many others to count.

July 25, 1994. Uncle David, the one without any hair, has been staying with us since last Saturday. He's good fun. He doesn't have any hair. I like him. But he doesn't have any hair. I ask him why he doesn't have any hair, often. He says he "lost it." Can you do that? Can you really leave it somewhere and forget where it is? I don't understand, so I think I'll ask him why again. (He's bound to break down and level with me if he sees I'm persistent.)

Anyway, Mom went for a haircut yesterday and left me to watch the two Davids, and I made sure they weren't going to just sit there and talk about architectonics of the Petrarchan Sonnet or something. So I got Dad to promise to take me to the pool (the Conklin pool out in Elkins park). We went and spent a couple hours of quality pool time, had a hot dog and an ice cream and came back home to wrestle on our new king size waterbed. Dad was exhausted; I was merely energized. Finally, after we all settled down some, the two Davids looked at their watches and observed that "happy hour" was only minutes away. They poured themselves some of that awful smelling whatever it is and sat down to talk about "litter-ajour" or something and in comes Mom asking what we did for the afternoon. Daddy turned to me with a big smile and said, "Daniel, why don't you tell mommy where we all went and what we all did this afternoon," to which I replied, without a moment's hesitation, "just sitting, drinking, and reading."

Then, after Mom left the room, Dad was telling Uncle David about my social skills—particularly my ability to break the ice with older women when I'm out in public. He told him that I am good at picking up women, or something like that. Well, I showed him just how right he was when Mom walked back into the room. I ran over to her, put

my arms around her legs, and attempted to lift her up, saying "see how I can pick up women."

September 1, 1994. I am losing my patience with the puritanical attitudes prevailing in the household with regard to where I piss. What basic joy of life are they going to try to confiscate from me next? (Writing on the walls?) Is it too much to ask to be able to piss in my own room?! (There, at least, one can have piracy [sic]-especially in the corner between the bureau and the wall.) Don't they know a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do? Toilets are for wimps. (I mean, can you imagine Spiderman or Batman using a toilet? Heck no! They can go just about anywhere they want.) What ruffles my bat-feathers most is this business of asking why did I do it. Gob, I hate that! Why? Why? Because I wanted to! That's why. (I'm not incontinent, for gob sake!)

Come to think of it, I pick my most exciting, novel pissing places when I'm, well, pissed. I mean, I think when I'm feeling powerless at the mercy of the adults, who have established a proper place for everything, I derive a satisfying sense of power and control while putting out fires in unofficial, unsanctioned places.

September 6, 1994. I'm about at my rope's end. I think it is actually time to start looking for a new Mom and Dad. These two are not working out as well as I'd have liked, so I'm afraid I'll just have to let them go. It's not that I feel unloved or anything, it's just that they don't dote on me quite the way parents of only children are supposed to. Take, for example, the dilemma with my wardrobe. To date I have only 7 Batman capes. Can you believe that? SEVEN. That's just about one for every day of the week, leaving nothing to change in and out of during each day! And every time I mention the possibility of having a spare or two made up for me by Mom, I get an annoyed answer, such as "but you already have SEVEN Batman capes, Daniel!" I could throw up when I hear these words. Today when this happened, I popped my cork. I told Mom she wasn't a good Mommy. Then I told her she wasn't a beautiful Mommy. Feeling as if even that hadn't hit home, I told her I was going to go out and get another Mommy.

September 15, 1994. We're back at "The Cloister" on Sea Island, Georgia, for another week with Uncle David. (We've been here since the 10th and are going back the 17th, in case you're interested.) At any rate, I've been getting a lot of swimming and pool lounging in-between meals and sleep. Dad seems overly interested in my diving abilities. He keeps bringing the video camera to the pool to capture me doing my best off the diving board, but somehow I just can't bring myself to perform when it's expected of me. I prefer to wait until he's just put down the camera and is on his way into the pool himself. My best yet was a somersault off the diving board (off the water about 4 or 5 feet), although I landed pretty-much feet-first.

September 18, 1994. We got back from Georgia yesterday, Uncle David in tow, and were invited to a cook-out at the Collings's this afternoon. Michael got a bug up his peppu about sharing the baseball bat with me, so Dad and I tried to talk him into cooperation nicely. He would have none of it. Seeing that Dad's involvement was futile, I tried my own hand at a little diplomacy. I told him with a fatherly concern, that if he didn't let me have a turn at the bat I wouldn't be his friend anymore. I was shocked to see that he was perfectly comfortable with that arrangement and that he hadn't really given the slightest thought to the full impact this action would have upon his life. I realized that

I'd have to hit him where he lived, so to speak, so I told him, raising my right foot onto the rear bumper of his parents' Volvo, "Then I'll have to climb onto your parents' car...." Just like I thought, this got through to him, and he quickly let go of his iron grip of the bat.

September 19, 1994. Today I went to my new school (All Hallow's Nursery School on Greenwood Avenue) and met my teacher, Mrs. Gardner. I like her and so does Mom. I was eager to go there and was even more eager to stay once I saw Zack there.

October 2, 1994. Today, while out for a drive with Mom and Dad, I decided to practice discussing with Zack. Mom and Dad were talking about whatever it is Moms and Dads talk about and I was feeling a bit forgotten and abandoned all the way back there in the back seat. So, I engaged in a conversation of my own: "I am not-you are too; I am not-you are too;" etc., etc., etc. Well, that elicited a little attention from the front seat. Dad looked in his mirror and Mom turned around and both said, "Daniel, sweetie, what are you talking about?" I said, "Oh, I was just practicing discussing with Zack."

October 10, 1994. Oh, I feel awful today! I have the dreaded ear infection again and I was up all night tossing and turning in pain with a fever. And to add insult to injury, when Dad came home he made a cup of very smelly tea for himself and I thought I was going to throw up or something really graphic. (This was Celestial Seasonings® Vanilla-Hazelnut Caffeine-Free After Dinner Tea [ingredients: roasted carob, roasted chicory root, cinnamon, roasted barley malt, roasted barley, natural vanilla hazelnut flavor, natural flavors, vanilla bean, and salt].) God, I hate this stuff! It is absolutely the most vile smell I have ever smelled in the whole universe since the beginning of time this century! I knew something was wrong with the world moments after Dad brought a cup of this stuff steaming into my room and sat down next to me on my bed to watch a movie together. I said to him "I can't breathe! What is that smell! Take it away!" It took him a few minutes to realize what I was talking about and then said "O.K., I'll leave it in the kitchen so you won't smell it." But later, when we passed the kitchen on the way to the family room, I smelled that smell again coming from the kitchen, and I said "There it is again-that smell-I can't breathe, I can't breathe!" So Dad rushed to the rescue and dumped this tea from Hell down the drain and rinsed the cup out good and hard to make sure nothing foul smelling would linger there. But it simply wasn't good enough. The smell had already permeated the very air I was ingesting, and there was no escape without immediate and extreme measures taken to protect and preserve my precious bodily fluids. I called immediately for the room freshener to be sprayed throughout the kitchen and hall region, and as soon as this was done I felt considerably better. Whew! The emergency was over. Life would pick up where it had temporarily left off. Dad, doing his best to repress laughter, promised me he would not make another cup of the stuff. I was glad to hear it, but what of the damage already done, I wanted to ask him?

November 11, 1994. Jay and Murphy Berger came down from Pound Ridge (NY) to see our house, and they stayed overnight in the guest room (which I didn't mind because no one else was in there using it). I helped give them a tour of the house, including a close inspection of the contents of the gothic cabinet. When we got to the last door on the left I took out one of the pierced silver demitasse cups [without its porcelain liner] and

explained gravely that "this is very, very, very old...but you can't drink from it because it has a hole in it."

November 20, 1994. Dad and I were playing with the building blocks last night-the cardboard ones made to look like bricks. Dad was reluctant to participate at first, having played this game four times in the last three nights, but I suffered him nonetheless to carry the basket of them up into the library, dump them out on the carpet, and build me a tower (even letting him use the step stool to facilitate reaching ten feet) a half dozen or so times so that I could run into it and knock it over. After the sixth or seventh time he plopped down on the sofa with the weight of a stray meteor hitting the earth and said "Oh Daniel! I need a break...give me a minute or two, will you?" (Can you believe that? I'm the one saddled with the demolition project, and he needs the break!) Well, at any rate, I decided then that I was no longer interested in continuing, even if he were to lift himself up out of his crater and plead with me. I said, "I'm going to go watch a movie...bye." "Wait a minute," he said. "Aren't you forgetting something? The blocks. You weren't thinking of just leaving the blocks all over the floor, were you? You weren't by any remote chance leaving them for me to clean up, were you?" At this preposterous suggestion I turned in my tracks and reminded him with almost parental gravity and self-importance, "I didn't bring them up here and spill them out on the floor, now did I? No, you did." He laughed out loud at this for some reason (I can find nothing funny in this) and answered, "True, but I only did it for you, at your request. The least you could do is help me put them back the way I helped you take them out." Without needing to give this sort of manipulation a moment's consideration, I countered, "Who carried them up here and spilled them out...me? No, you know that you did, not me, so I'm afraid you'll have to put them back."

December 18, 1994. Mom, Dad and I got back last night from a ten-day visit to Disney World, where we stayed with Uncle David at a resort. I had a great time and got to swim a lot and even go to Typhoon Lagoon (a life-long desire of mine ever since I learned of it on my second day of the trip). But in spite of my love of things Mickey, I must say that I'm awfully glad to be back home. (I even said to Dad once or twice while down there "I wanna go home," yet by the time we had to do so I had forgotten my homesickness and replied "I wanna stay here.") We had a great time, generally, but two of the rides truly terrified me-especially Jaws at Universal Studios. I burst into uncontrollable tears at the point at which the shark bit through the gas pipe and got blown up. I'm scared of fire-especially hot fire like that (unlike the kind of fire you see on TV that doesn't make your skin hot). Furthermore, not all the explaining in Mom or Dad's kingdom could convince me that that shark did not get hurt when it got blown up. After all, why shouldn't plastic sharks have feelings like other types?

But I loved all the fireless fast rides, like, for example, Thunder Mountain Express at Magic Kingdom. I also loved all the babes down there. I've rarely seen so many great looking [very, very] young women in one place before. My concentration fizzled each time a 4 or 5 year old came into view, and I politely excused myself from my adult company to go and introduce myself. "Hi my name is Daniel I'm 4 years old how old are you what's your name where do you live I live on Barker Rd."

When it was time for Uncle David to leave us on Saturday morning for his drive up north to Georgia, he came into my room to say goodbye, unfortunately interrupting something rather important on the Disney channel. With one eye glued to the screen I

gave him back a heartfelt farewell but became increasingly impatient with the length and formality of this cartoon-break. Finally, taking the matter into my own hands, I said "...Bye, I'll miss you...You can go now."

December 23, 1996. This morning at school we had a Christmas presentation/performance for the parents. We all wore round red stickers on our noses (to simulate reindeer, I presume)-except for me (mine having fallen off somewhere). I was conspicuous among my peers, and not only for the want of a red nose. I was the only one not singing, the only one not waving my arms about to the spectacular choreography, the only one snapping my fingers, and the only not standing (I was too tired, so I just sat down on the floor right where I was. Thomas joined me.)

While we're on the subject, it is worth indulging in a little self-appreciation for my generous ability in finger-snapping. Single-handedly, without official training from any recognized institution of higher learning except for some informal instruction from Dad, I have taught myself to snap my fingers with the authority, decisiveness and clarity of an adult. I know of no other 4 year old who can do this, and I find it difficult to understand that I have yet to be discovered by a talent scout. I now find myself snapping my fingers whenever my fingers are not otherwise gainfully employed.

December 24, 1994. I thought this day would never come. Mom and Dad agreed to have the Christmas gift opening on Christmas Eve (like they do in Finland as opposed to Christmas Day like they do here)-largely, I suspect, so that they wouldn't have to wake up at 3:00 a.m. to my questioning whether it was Christmas yet. I made out pretty well, but the inevitable post-gift-opening-stress-disorder set in immediately. I was soon asking Mom and Dad if I could open their gifts too, so as not to have to come down off my high with too hard of a hit.

December 25, 1994. My new favorite piece of music is, next only to Beethoven's Seventh and Janáček's Glagolitic Mass, the scherzo of Dvorak's G-Major string quartet (no. 13). It's one of those irrepressible, foot-stomping hum-dingers you simply can't describe without dancing to it.

December 27, 1994. I'm getting the uneasy feeling that Dad is gradually losing his memory. Every once in a while he asks me, rather out of the blue, it seems, where we live-even if we're already home! He seems to derive some sense of comfort from hearing me recite it. Today he even derived a laugh, for some reason, when I told him "214 Barker Road, Wyncote, Transylvania." What's so funny about that?

December 28, 1994. Ever since that dreaded Jaws event at Disney World, I've been attempting to exorcise this ghastly memory by asking Mom and Dad to act out the whole scenario with paper cut-outs of tour boat and shark-over and over and over.)

December 30, 1994. I know how to play checkers now. Dad taught me the game yesterday and already I've beaten him no fewer than three times. (I'm sure he's going around explaining to people that he let me win in order to stoke my enthusiasm for the game, but I wasn't exactly born yesterday, you know.) I like to play checkers with Dad-especially when he makes embarrassingly dumb moves that leave him wide open for disaster. (But as embarrassed as I am for him, I don't lose any time in swooping down

for the booty; like I told him a couple of times, he's just got to learn to watch the board better before he moves.)

January 1, 1995. I felt like I had a hangover this morning. We stayed up really late last night over at Michael and Lizzie's place and didn't get home until nearly 12:30, having played hard all night with them (and with their friends Adam and Jeremy)-all without having had a nap! But I feel like new now that I've beat Dad at a couple of games of checkers. We're leaving soon for Uncle Jack's new year's party.

January 7, 1995. Dad took me to swim at the Abington YMCA yesterday and today, and boy did we have fun! The pool is rather small, but it is still considerably less crowded than the larger Ambler Y pool. I can swim the length of the pool two ways: my own modified version of the breast-stroke (wherein I go under, come up for air, and go under again, all the while alternating my scissors stroke with doggy-paddling in a manner that simply cannot be imitated) and on my back.

January 10, 1995. I know how to play chess now! (Boy, I'm smart!) It only took Dad three evenings of instruction to get me to the point where I was clear on just what was what and who was aloud to move where and when. (I prefer checkers.)

February 5, 1995. Yesterday we got our first snow of the winter-13" of it, too! Wow! It's great stuff, snow. We all went out in the back and played in it for a long time and then went over to Lizzie and Michael's to slide down their front hill with a snow-raft. I didn't want to come in. Later I helped Dad with shoveling the rather sizable rough edges left behind by the men he paid to plow the drive. I still didn't want to come in. And today, with a temperature in the teens and a wind/chill index of minus 20 degrees F., I still did not want to come in.

April 10, 1995. I'm not getting enough wrestling, plain and simple. Every time Dad walks in from work I ask him "can we wrestle?" and then prepare myself for the disappointment. If it were merely "no" I could deal with it, but instead I get something like "Sweetheart, I've just walked in and I want to change clothes and" blaah, blaah, blaah. So when then? He says "later, dearest, later-I'll let you know when I'm ready." So I wait a very long time-fifty sixty-nine minutes and eleven months-and ask him again. "Dad, can we wrestle." I hold my breath, bite my lip and prepare for the worst and, sure enough, hear him explain with reduced good cheer "Daniel, sweetheart darling, you just asked me that three minutes ago and I told you I'd let you know when I was ready; I haven't even finished changing clothes yet." So I ask him "when, then." "In just a bit, a little later, just after I..." blaah blaah blaah. So then I put on a very long video on my TV and hunker down for a long night and then, after a very long while, I go and pose the question again, but this time couched in pure tact. "Dad, I have to ask you a question but I hope you won't be angry."

"It's not about wrestling, is it?" he asks beneath a thin veneer of calm and control.

"No, it's a secret. I have to whisper it to you. When can we www-rrr-eee-sss...."

"...ttt-lll-eee? Daniel! I thought you said it didn't have to do with wrestling!"
Blaaahh, Blaaahh, Blaaahh. "All right all right, I see I'm not going to get a moment's peace until we wrestle, so let's wrestle."

Well, you might ask so what am I complaining about at this point, but here's what happens. After a half hour or forty-five minutes of wrestling (at least far, far from the sixty fifty-nine hours like I want and badly need) he stops and says "O.K., let's take a break and finish wrestling later, 'cause I'm tired and hungry,"

"Ohhhh!" I say, in deep disappointment.

"But Daniel, be reasonable! I've just walked in from a grueling eleven-hour day and I'm tired and hungry and I'm glad to wrestle with you, but you just can't expect me to..." blaahhh, blaahhh, blaahhh.

So later on we wrestle for maybe another hour or so (but certainly only a small fraction of any boy's physiological need for wrestling) and that's it for the whole day. Before turning in for the night I put to him the question once again, just in case. And then I have to listen to how much we already wrestled, as if that has anything at all to do about anything.

April 15, 1995. Last night we had dinner guests and I was very impatient with Dad who simply refused to come away from the table to wrestle. I had to resort to dealmaking. I climbed onto his lap and whispered "ppst...., I have a secret to tell you..." and when he gave me his ear I whispered, "I'll make you a deal...let's wrestle." You'd think this would have been a deal a man could simply not refuse but, believe it or not, he was unmoved. He whispered back in my ear, "what kind of deal is that? I mean, what's in it for me?" (Can you believe this guy? My own Dad, for crying out loud!) So, looking left and then right I collected my wits and whispered back in his ear, "I'll let you fight back!"

April 17, 1995. Last night Dad wouldn't let me wrestle with him until at least sixty fifty-nine o'clock hours and I fell asleep waiting for him. (This was in my room; we normally wrestle in the big waterbed in their room.) I gotta give Dad credit, much as it pains me, because he could have just put me in my bed and said to me the next day, "Sorry but you fell asleep," etc., but instead he whispered in my ear "wanna wrestle?" I was really fast asleep, but so wrestling-starved was I that you might say I was permanently on, well, wrestling alert. Without opening me eyes I whispered back to him without a moment's pause "Yes but you'll have to carry me in there 'cause I'm asleep."

May 3, 1995. Dad took me to play miniature golf last night. I love playing miniature golf with Dad, except when I have to wait for Dad to take his turn and except when I have to wait for the ball to stop. (It's much better if you can just do it like hockey and get rid of that ball as soon as possible so you can get to the next hole before Dad does.) Afterwards, we went to Burger King, and boy was I hungry! After gobbling down a Whopper Jr., I said to Dad "I'm [I was] so hungry I could eat a hundred and fifty-nine sharks."

"A hundred and fifty-nine sharks!," he repeated, almost incredulously. "Wow, that hungry?"

I looked in his eyes and saw that he was impressed, certainly, but somehow not quite to the extent that I thought he should have been, given the number of sharks an' all. So I qualified my statement somewhat to achieve the desired effect.

"Great White sharks!" I added.

May 5, 1995. On our way into the house from the car in the garage I told Dad to hold up a minute while I climb up the hood of Mom's car and look inside through the

windshield. "What? Look at that," I said, wearing the look of someone betrayed. "That's my tippy-cup in there! Boy, I see I have a bone to pick with Mommy!"

May 9, 1995. Yesterday was Mom's birthday. I feel bad for her because she doesn't get anywhere near the number of toys I get on my birthday.

Dad took me again to play miniature golf. I think I have a career in it, I'm getting so good. Dad's a pretty good golf partner, because he doesn't insist on taking his turn all the time; this comes in handy if you're trying to run the course without any tedious interruptions. The only thing that grates on my nerves about having him as a golf partner is his penchant for education. He'll say to me, for instance, "And which country do think this one represents?," pointing to the windmill churning at the end of the subject obstacle course, or "Do you know why they call that tower the Eiffel Tower," etc., etc., etc. (Who's they, anyhow? Neither I nor Mikie nor anyone else ever calls that the Eiffel Tower!)

Last night provided a perfect example. Seeing that I was admiring the harp rotating on the "Ireland" hole, Dad asked "Do ya know what that is?" Of course, I said "yes." (What does he think I'm going to do, admit he knows something I don't?) He was incredulous.

"You do?," he asked, knowing I didn't.

"Yep."

"Well then, what is it?" he queried, suggesting to me that he didn't know and was simply too embarrassed to ask the guy who ran the place right in front of his own son an' all.

"I'm not gonna tell ya," I said, feeling pretty smug with the thought that here was ignorance we two men were sharing. (Mom loves when I share.)

"You don't know."

"I do know, but I'm not gonna tell you."

"If you don't know...."

"I do know because I wrote a poem about it!," I insisted, putting my ball down on the tee of the next hole.

"A poem! Wonderful! Can I hear it or read it?"

"No," I countered with a rhetorical left hook out of God knows where, as I took a swing at the ball. "I lost it...it blew away...Grandpop Charlie has it with him in heaven."

Dad burst into laughter. He has a weird sense of humor, to be sure. I mean, here I went and put the last coffin nail, so to speak, in his efforts at finding me out-he's gonna have a hard time finding that manuscript where I put it-and he laughs like he has something on me!

"Harp. It's a harp," he volunteered after he caught his breath from laughing.

"I know, I told you that," I snapped, without even looking at him.

May 15, 1995. Sometimes I think Dad is simply not observant. He'll launch into some long lecture he thinks I'm interested in before finding out that I'm already something of an expert on the subject. Today, for example, as I was eating a Triscuit™ I made the mistake of asking him how they make Triscuits™. Now, anybody else would tell you in one or maybe two words, but Dad?-noooo, he starts off about wheat and what it looks like and how it grows and how they cut it and so on and so forth until you're not hungry any more or are contemplating switching to rye or something. Afraid I had unleashed something I'd never be able to stop, I said, "O.K., O.K., Dad I know about wheat and I

know what it looks like." Dad couldn't believe his ears. (He evidently thought it was some kinda secret, what wheat looked like.)

"How do you know what it looks like," he said with a smarmy smirk emblazoned ear to ear.

"Cause I looked at it already on the box of Shreaded Wheat™."

"But they don't show...."

"Yes they do! Go see for yourself!"

Dad was very impressed with me, for in all the years he has been buying Shreaded Wheat™ he never noticed that there are clearly depicted images of wheat sheaves to front and back of the box.

May 25, 1995. WE'RE GOING TO GET A POOL-A REAL ONE, LIKE...LIKE AT THE...LIKE AT THE, WELL, POOL! Mom and Dad and I drove out to a place where they had in-ground pools in the back yard and where a man talked to us until we were bored out of our minds (at least I was). I recognized him, because he had come to our house a couple of weeks ago, and he talked a lot then too.

May 28, 1995. I CAN RIDE MY BIKE WITHOUT TRAINING WHEELS! Can you believe it? I'm not even five yet (I'm four-and-three-quarters-and-a-half to be exact) and I can get on my bike, ride (including circles, figure-eights and daredevil stunts), and dismount all without the help of adults or training wheels. And what's more, I learned it all in only three lessons from Dad up at the schoolyard.

The first lesson was about two weeks ago. Dad ran with me, straddling my back tire, holding me under the arms, letting go for a second or two here and there (and catching me under the arms during those few seconds while I immediately leaned over toward the ground on one side or the other). By the end of this lesson Dad wasn't looking too good-he was wet with sweat and puffing for air-but I was already at the point where I could stay up straight for a couple of seconds at a time. The second lesson was a few days later and involved Dad running beside me with his right hand holding my right sleeve under my arm without touching me. It felt like he wasn't holding me until I started listing, when he would catch me just before the crash and burn stage. By the end of this session Dad was looking no better than he had at the end of the last but I was already staying perpendicular for four or five seconds at a time. (By the way, the difference between one or two and four or five is enormous in the world of gravity fighting.) A few days later (last week, just before Dad left for his Indiana business trip) was our third lesson (I say our instead of mine because it seems to me that Dad was progressing just as rapidly as was I). In this session Dad simply ran beside me with his arm hovering free under my right armpit. He needed to catch me only a few times (but he missed me once when I decided to take a sudden turn to the right). According to Dad I was already "riding without training wheels" at this point, even though he needed to run with me. (I suppose the distinction is that I was really doing it by myself; I just would have been crashing a lot without him.) But it wasn't until today that I felt I had arrived at the level of complete mastery and independence. Because today Dad rode my scooter along side me all over the schoolyard, on the pavement, over the grass, around the trash can, up hill, down dale (whatever that is). And I did it all by myself, including mounting and dismounting the bike. Dad looked as happy as I must have looked. (He certainly looked less perspired than after the previous sessions.)

June 7, 1995. A couple of nights ago Uncle Jack and Mom and Dad and I ate at Stazi Milano and had seafood with pasta and boy do I like seafood, let me tell you. I like mussels, clams, crab, lobster, scallops and, of course, shrimp. Dad ordered steamed clams as an appetizer but, alas, got to eat only two (only because he wasn't fast enough). When Mom asked if I like clams I said, "These are so delicious...I could eat a horse!"

June 10, 1995. Building a pool is great fun because of all the mounds of dirt and stones and mud and stuff that gets left behind by the tractors an' all. I've been host recently to some pretty dirty parties with Mikie, Lizzie, Andrew, Will, etc. What I really can't wait for is the pool, though, because then we'll be able to jump in and get all the dirt off us after playing. Dad and Mom will be very happy about that, I'm sure.

June 25, 1996. Yesterday evening Mom and I went in town to meet Dad and Uncle Jack and Andrew at a restaurant near Dad's office [the newly opened Fragrant Chives on the 16th block of Walnut]. I was very well behaved if I do say so myself. I had a lot of seafood, including softshell crabs for an appetizer and lobster with green noodles for an entree.

Yesterday was also a lot of fun because the men came to spray the cement into the pool. I explained the whole project to Dad because he couldn't be there. He was very impressed but I could see, none the less, that all this technical stuff was a bit over his head.

June 27, 1996. Mom and Dad and I went to the movies yesterday to see the latest Batman movie. It wasn't as much fun as the one with Jack Nicholson as the Joker (and it was a whole lot busier and noisier), but I had a good time anyway. This afternoon, Dad took me to see Pocahontas. We liked it, but not anywhere near The Little Mermaid, Beauty and the Beast, or Aladdin. I like when Dad takes me to the movies. I think I'd prefer going with Mom, though, because unlike Dad, Mom shares my enthusiasm for shoot-'em-ups. (I think I agree to go with Dad to see the kids' stuff so he won't have to go alone and be embarrassed.)

June 29, 1996. Over the last few months we've gotten in the habit, Dad and I, of reading fairy tales together-well, Dad reads them to me-in bed before falling asleep. Certain ones I ask him to read over and over, like The Emperor's New Clothes and Jack in the Beanstalk. The basic problem with the arrangement is that Dad invariably falls asleep before I do and I'm left holding the book, literally. So then what I typically do is go in to see Mommy and either have her finish it for me or we just hunker down and watch a thriller on TV.

In a couple days is July and my birthday's in July and I can't wait because of all the toys I'm going to get.

July 3, 1995. It turns out I'm a Wagnerite and didn't know it. Uncle David sent Dad a seven-volume video set of the complete Ring des Niebelungen recorded at the Met "under" James Levine (I love the terminology; do they hoist him up on a winch or something?), and we've watched half it together already-off an on throughout a few days. I think it's pretty cool (a word I don't toss around lightly, as you know). Every once in a while I will turn to Dad and say, "Isn't this beautiful?!" and he's delighted that I

think so. But even better than the music is the story, which could be right out of my Saturday morning cartoons...if it wasn't so silly at times! It's got pretty much everything a guy my age could want in an opera: uncouth giants with clubs, warty little savages, and an impressive roster of gods, all running (and flying) around in pursuit of the same pile of gold; a magic cap of gold mesh that makes you invisible; a magic ring that makes you ruler of the universe (and we're not just talking *de facto* here); a sword that's real hard to pull out of a tree; a fierce fire-breathing dragon that needs to be killed with that sword once you get it out of the tree; a bevy of lovely but ditsy maidens who pretend (really pathetically) to be protecting the gold; and a sleeping beauty who's real hard to get to without fireman's gear.

Does it get any better than this? I told Dad that I think Brünhilde [Hildegard Behrens] is so pretty I could kiss her. Dad suggested she might be a bit old for me but I don't care; any woman who can wield a shield and sword like her and still have time to do her hair is O.K. by me.

I found myself real caught up in the emotion of the music in *Die Valküre* during the duet between the very loving Wälsung twins. This is not how I had imagined brothers and sisters to love each other. Well, anyway, they do, and boy, there's no mistaking it from the music, which just makes you want to reach out and kiss someone. I asked Dad to fill me in with the old who's-who-and-who's-she-cheatin-on, etc. Dad did his best to make this Wälsung-style family affection sound rather predictable. Caught up in the general mood of things, I got up and turned around on his lap and put my arms around him, looked into his eyes and sang "I love you, you love me, we're a happy family..." etc., and he thought this was funnier than what was happening on the screen! Go figure.

I asked Dad yesterday if we could eat Chinese food, because I really loved those softshell crabs and lomein we had at the place on Old York Rd. So Dad ordered everything I asked for over the phone and I went with him to pick the stuff up. On the way we listened to the first movement of the Rakhmaninov 2nd piano concerto and Dad seemed real pleased when I asked him to rewind it to a passage I really liked.

My birthday's in six more days and counting.

July 4, 1995. Today is a very significant day, historically. It is precisely five days before my birthday, when I'll be five years old and get loads of gifts.

July 5, 1995. My birthday's in 4 more days. I can hardly stand it.

July 6, 1995. My birthday's in 3 more days and I feel like I'm gonna burst.

July 7, 1995. They've actually finished it! The pool is ready and we all swam in it and it was great and I'm so happy because I'm gonna be 5 in 2 days. I'm beside myself.

July 8, 1995. It's great to have a pool; I can't wait for tomorrow! Dad took me with him today to a faraway place to get the batcake [defined: a birthday cake with a Batman design in the icing]. I fell asleep on the way there and I slept on Dad's shoulder during the purchase and even slept through the drive back, so you can imagine how concerned I was when I woke up and realized how likely it was that I missed something. Boy was I disappointed when I clapped my eyes on that baticing. It was supposed to look just like Batman but it looked more like a plate full of dyed spaghetti. But-here's the important

part-I was every inch the gentleman and acted as enthused about the icing as anyone disappointed to that degree possibly could.

July 10, 1995. Whew! Where do I begin? Yesterday was so much fun I thought I was going to "implode!" I am 5 now and I had everybody come here yesterday to watch me be 5. (And I mean everybody [i.e., including their parents].) There must have been 50 people here! (And here is nothing higher than fifty except, maybe, sixtyninetythousandhundred, Dad says.) Well, to start with (forgetting the pool and all, for the moment), Mom had Dad put up the cable ride (where you hang onto a handled pulley device that slides across a cable between two trees) up in the back and we all took turns crashing into the tree, which is what you're supposed to do.

Uncle Jack came too, and he brought Andrew and little Jonathan with him. I ran to the door each time it rang and graciously accepted whatever gift I saw poised before me. (I got most of them opened and gloated over before you could say "hi, how are 'ye; thank's for coming, the pool's out back.") Uncle Jack brought me a great inflatable raft in the shape of a rowboat with paddles and all. Andrew brought me a neat sword he had made himself from wood with a gold finish to it. Even though Dad holds all weapons in disdain, even he liked this one. He thought it was beautiful and wasn't ashamed to admit it. Dad reminded me how much it looked like Nothung from Wagner's Rinse Cycle and I took it outside and showed everybody, holding it high above me like Siegmund did when he first wrested it from the tree in which Wotan had stuck it, shouting Nothung!, Nothung!

I decided not to tell everybody how unspeakably ugly the cake was, because it is my experience that if you don't tell 'em, they probably won't find out on their own. Well, when Mom brought the cake out, everyone rushed over to see this "Batman" they all heard so much about and suddenly there was a moment of silence while the congregation decided whether to conspire together in the pretension that this pasta dumped on my \$40 cake looked like anything more than a leftover dinner or whether to come clean and blow the whistle in the name of truth. Dad told Mikie's Dad he thought it looked like a "roar-shock" test, whatever that is, and Bob seemed to think that pretty well described it.

July 13, 1995. I gave Mom quite a scare today, and when I told Dad about it later he looked more than just scared. Basically, what happened was that I went through the glass door downstairs. And I mean through too, not merely to nor from nor at or with, but into and outof. Here's how it happened. I was running from the laundry room to the back door to go out to the pool and I had my hand out in front of me to push open the door [i.e., by the glass, not by the handle] and wham, suddenly I was on the ground outside surrounded by broken glass everywhere and the sound of shattering still in my ears. I was scared, it all happened so fast. Keith was here, cleaning in the kitchen. He and Mom came running because it sounded so bad. Even though my whole body went through the lower pane of the door, I remained with only the lightest of cuts to surface wounds to my arms and hands. Mom and Dad were so relieved I was O.K. that they almost hugged me to death (probably a better way to go, if ya gotta go). I could tell Dad was fighting off the temptation to lecture me about using the handle when you open a door. He was hugging me, saying how glad he was that I was didn't get too badly hurt and all, but I could tell there was something more in there trying to get out into daylight. I looked at his watch and said to myself, "by the time the second hand gets to the 6 his

lecture will have found its way to the surface. And sure enough, when the little hand hit the 6, bing, he just couldn't contain himself and started spilling over here and there about how you should never open a glass door by the pane but rather always by the handle, completely ignoring the fact that I learned that lesson already, and learned it well.

July 17, 1995. We've been going through a heat wave like nothing I remember. It's been near 100 degrees with nearly as much humidity for a few days now. (Saturday it was so bad I felt a little sick from it during the brief time we spent outside, largely because we had spent a few hours at Jessie Horowitz's birthday party at his house (which was largely unairconditioned).

I felt better that evening, especially after spending a couple hours in the pool. (Boy do I love that pool!) I taught myself how to use a mask, snorkel and flippers and wanted Dad to join me. He made a few lame excuses but eventually knuckled under to a constant barrage of pleases. So as to kindle his enthusiasm, after he got his mask on (his face all puckered up by the tight rubber surround) I told him, "Dad, you look really handsome in that." (I don't know why he thought that was so funny, unless he gleaned from my delivery that it wasn't entirely sincere.)

July 18, 1995. Our neighbor Harriet Snyder came over last night to take a swim with us in our new pool. She was quite surprised, for some reason, at my interest in women in bathing suits. (Don't all men ogle?) I knew she must have had a bathing suit on if she was going to swim (since she wasn't carrying one with her) and yet she was wearing a big shirt and no pants. So when she approached the pool and asked us how the water was I asked her, "hey, watcha got on under that?" She said, "Daniel!, who taught you to ask those kinda questions." And after she got dried off I went over to her and touched her bathing suit, right at her breast of course (I don't mince words or waste time, do I) and, as a pretext explained, "ah hah, it (the bathing suit) feels just like mine!"

Harriet asked to use our phone to call her father. I said to myself, so to speak, "what's wrong with this picture?" And then I figured it out and asked her. "Are you a children?" She asked what I meant and I answered. "Are you a children, because you are calling your Daddy."

After Harriet went home and we went to bed there was a fierce electrical storm that seemed to be poised over our house most of the night. Although I slept through 90% of it (to Mom and Dad's great surprise), I too was woken by a big bolt that exploded a big tulip poplar belonging to Bob and Ginny Comis right on the other side of our fence opposite the pool. The room lit up like daylight, accompanied with a rumbling explosive bang the likes of which we never heard, followed by the sound of a falling tree and crunching fence. Mom and Dad rushed to the window to look out, and what did they see but a huge portion of the top of the tree-like a small tree in itself-sprawled out over the fence, leaning down into our brand-new pool. I sat up, bewildered by the noise and suddenly scared because feeling myself abandoned. Then Mom and Dad jumped back into bed and comforted me back to sleep, which didn't take long.

July 26, 1995. Dad picked out a CD to play and was carrying his selection to the family room when I asked him what he had in his hand. When he showed me, saying, "it's Schumakofiev's [blah blah blah] number [blah blah blah] in [blah blah] minor, ope' us blah blah blah [or something]," I said "Oh, that's my favorite!" He seemed incredulous

and asked, "Oh, so you know it?," to which I responded, " Oh yea, I listened to that back in Finland...[and, while grabbing it from him to look at it] when I was in my Mom's tummy I used to read this..."

July 28, 1995. Today we had company over for dinner. It was Jack's family: his brother and brother's wife and their two sons and his brother's wife's sister. When uncle Jack introduced me to his brother, I answered "Guy?,"...what's your name though?" And when he repeated "Guy," I said, "no, what's your real name?"

July 29, 1995. Dad is such a stickler for rules and regulations. We were playing pool today and he reprimanded me for moving a couple of balls out of the way while setting up my shot. I responded, "but they're in my way!"

August 5, 1995. Today we had about 60 people over to celebrate Jack's 55th birthday. Luckily, Mikey and Lizzie were invited too, because the crowd was not thick with kids my age. We spent most of the time in the pool, where it was only a little wetter than the air outside.

August 6, 1995. Dad likes the new song he heard me singing today, the one going "diarrhea, diarrhea...." I think he was touched by its post-party poignancy.

August 7, 1995. Today a driver came to our house in a very long car with sodas in it. He drove us to a place called JFK (from where we were driven to a hotel because our Finnair flight to Helsinki was postponed 8 hrs. (from 5:30 pm to 1:30 am). Mom and Dad went to bed right away at the hotel and tried to get some sleep, but their attempts were futile due to my best efforts. I climbed up, down, over almost under each of them, wishing them sweet dreams and singing myself songs in languages hitherto unspoken by me or probably by anyone else. Dad got out of bed, dressed us and took me down to dinner, where I ate well and played well-played pool like a shark. Then we went up and I slept for a couple of hours until the front desk called to wake us so that we could catch our bus back to the terminal. I was an absolute angel on the flight, I must say. When we got off the plane and onto the bus for Helsinki keskusta and our Hotelli Vaakuna, I noticed that the driver had evidently missed the fact of our presence on the bus and was just sitting there with the door open. I said to him, "O. K., I'm ready. Let's go!"

August 9, 1995. I've been practicing a technique for getting what I want from a documentary I was watching on WWII. It is called blitzkrying, I believe, and it works by saving up all your desire for everything and anything you want or ever wanted during the past 24 hours and expressing it all at once in a relentless torrent of anguished request for a certain thing, anything, until the enemy is so befuddled, confused and tired that you can come and take whatever you want and even have time to return for seconds. The secret is in asking for that whatever it is (the identity of which, by the way, is completely beside the point of the exercise) so many times in close succession that they have neither the time nor wits to shore up their defenses. When you sense the war is going in their favor, just add water. And when in the rare instances that the tears don't help, fall asleep and everything will be better when you wake up. Example given. Ever since we arrived in Helsinki I've been plagued with the feeling that my very presence

here deserves recompense in the form of a very expensive toy. Mommy made the catastrophic error of half-promising "tomorrow" to me.

"Tomorrow" is a very, very unsatisfactory word with me, largely due to its nebulosity, its ambiguity, and its implicit connotation of manyana, the Spanish for yes of course we have it, don't worry, just sit back and put it out of your mind ('cause you ain't never gonna see one in this life time or my name isn't....). The main problem I have with this word is that it is predicated upon a notion of time I simply refuse to recognize. For, unlike my world, which allows an immediate present (and its myriad attendant gratifications of desire) extending backwards to accommodate a sense of nostalgia for what might have happened even more to my advantage had I been luckier, the tomorrow word depends on a belief in the possibility that events can transpire after that unknown entity known as waiting. Being a kid and, therefore, necessarily a radical empiricist, I reject out of hand any system constructed around or supported upon x if $x = \text{wait}$.

Well anyway, Mom finally said to me (after 2 hours of blitzkrying for a toy), "just one more word, Daniel...one more word about anything and there'll be no toys for you at all...not today, not tomorrow..." etc., etc., etc. I responded quickly and decisively, so as not to lose momentum. "Mom?," I asked, with the carefully calculated tone of voice intended to suggest that I had understood her perfectly...or possibly had not heard her at all. "YESSSS?!", she said, gathering her wits for the final showdown while bracing herself for not buying me any toys ever. "I love you," I purred.

It worked, by the way. They both broke into laughter and all was well and I got what I wanted-excellent proof of the efficiency of blitzkrying. (Let's face it. Had I not cried at all and simply walked up to Mom and said, "I love you," the most I woulda gotten back woulda been a kiss on the forehead and an "Ahh, I love you too, sweetheart," and no toy.)

August 10, 1995. We took the Estonian cruise line Tallink from Helsinki to Tallin yesterday. The trip was only 4 or so hours and we only stayed for about 6 or so before heading back, but it was just enough to walk around the old city and go to the boring museum (of course they had one-every city has a boring museum and Dad and uncle Jack have no trouble finding it). Tallin is beautiful and is really old-older even than uncle Jack.

August 11, 1995. We boarded the Konstantin Simonov, a big, ugly, dirty, cramped ship on the Russian Baltic Line, and headed for St. Petersburg. The cabins on board were so small I was amazed Jack could fit in one. Jack and I were inspecting his and I noticed he was having trouble fitting his suitcase in while I was standing in the way. I looked at his bathroom, and when he saw my interest and commented, "that's a pretty small bathroom," I responded, "and you have a pretty big stomach." Mom was not at all pleased with our room because "it had not been cleaned correctly since it was built." Dad, Mom and Uncle Jack and I went down to the tax-free store on board and Uncle Jack bought a little box of Finnish Läkeröl candy which I was determined to try and like, dagnabbet (since they were not mine and no one even asked if I liked or wanted them). Uncle Jack said, "but I don't think you'd like these...they're so strong." Well, needless to say, this is the quickest, most efficient way to arouse interest in me, to suggest I wouldn't like something. And suddenly the world seemed quite pointless without Läkeröl. I persisted and he relented and the candy tasted more terrible than even Uncle Jack had

predicted, but I said (through a screwed-up face trying to escape the wretched, ghastly taste), "mmmmm, I like them." When I spit it out of my mouth, bleech!, and generously offered it to Dad (wet and without ceremony or return policy), Uncle Jack said "You don't like it, do you?," and I responded, "Yes I do...I just don't want it right now." When, after a couple of minutes, I asked for another and was reminded by Dad of my obvious lack of enjoyment of the last one I comforted him, "yes, but I'm getting used to them."

This ship is strange. There's no water in the swimming pool; you can't use Russian money on board (though they take U.S. and Finnish money!); you can't take anything out of the country (especially anything included in the category "leathery goods") and everyone must buy at least one bus tour of St. Petersburg-boy these Russians sure know how to make a body feel welcome! Worst of all, however, is the food-or at least what they translate in English as "food." Mom, Dad and uncle Jack agree that it's the worst "food" they've ever eaten anywhere at anytime. Every dinner is the same: a bowl of fatty, yuchhy borsch followed by a plate of something brown followed by a bowl of something green for dessert. First brown stuff, then green-except that one night we had the green first. (They keep you on your toes, these Russians.) Last night's entree included a tough little wafer of pork (apparently one of the "leathery goods" they don't want out of the country-and no wonder why!) covered in what looked, smelled like, and tasted like a thick coating of melted underarm deodorant. The green stuff that followed was the same as offered every night-green Jello™, going under the name "fruit dessert" one night, "fruit jam" the next and "fruit..." whatever, the next. The only thing I really liked about going to eat on the ship was this awesome fake marble sculpture of the Three Naked Graces-I simply love their butts and cannot walk past them without admiring them.

Everybody thought the city of St. Petersburg remarkably beautiful despite its sad decay. Mom and Dad had their honeymoon here nearly 19 years ago (when it was still Leningrad) and remarked how much better it looks now than they remember.

I made two friends on board: a 3 year old Columbian boy named Diego and a 6 year old Chinese-Finnish boy named Hao. Both belonged to that rare breed of man who can match my energy and ambition level, almost. Hao lives in Espoo with his parents and extended family and has been there for 5 years already and speaks Finnish, English and Chinese.

August 12, 1995. Today I found that song is an excellent tonic to help cope with loss. I was playing with a Finnish guy whose exact name escapes me for the moment, but let it be Pekka for argument's sake. Well, Pekka suddenly went off with Hao, leaving me somewhat on the lurch and definitely feeling rejected. So I sat there and made up a song to express this sense of abandon. The tune was that of the previously mentioned diarrhea song, but the words went like this: "Sometimes you don't know whether your friends will come back or whether they'll be dead...la la lala..."

This place [Russia] is getting to me, somehow. I started whining "I wanna go back to Finland, etc.," probably because I learned that they have no amusement park here (at least not one worth visiting, according to Dad's very thorough and brutally honest guide book to the city). Add to this the fact that you can't drink the water or rent bikes and you begin to wonder why anyone would want to stay here. The only guy I met here I really liked beside Hao and Diego was our waiter Vladimir (Dad calls him "Our Waiter of Vladimir" to lend him an aura of religiousness appropriate to the mysteries he conveys and the length of time we wait to receive them). Vladimir gave me considerable

attention. He pretended to make his thumb disappear. The trouble was he appeared to have thought he actually pulled it off! When I explained to him how he quite obviously faked this he seemed as surprised as he was disappointed that he hadn't gone to more trouble over it. He asked me how old I was while showing me six fingers, his eyebrows raised to indicate a question (just like in English) about the correctness of the number of digits proffered, followed by a show of four, then eight. I enlightened him and showed him the same eyebrow movement accompanied by the same question concerning his age, and I illustrated my question with the same movement of the fingers but using both hands, blinking a decade of fingers at a time at least seven or eight times in rapid succession. He found this considerably more amusing I had found his purportedly lost thumb.

Today we also went to "Peter's Great House" [Peter the Great's House (Pieterhof, formerly Pieterdvoets)]. We got there by hydrofoil from in front of the Hermitage. We were all very impressed with it, especially the gilt figural fountains in front (we arrived too late to get inside the house itself but we saw the grounds) and the restaurant which did have hot dogs for me and the only clean bathroom in at least a 100 mile radius.

But speaking of the Hermitage, Wow! We only walked through a few dozen of its 400 rooms, and I slept through at least a dozen and a half of the ones we walked through (as we had the stroller back down in the bus, Dad had to carry me for a couple of hours while I napped), but what we saw was extraordinary-room after huge room in completely different styles, decorated to the teeth in miraculous detail (saying nothing of the great artworks housed there). What I liked best, of course, were the white marble statues of scantily clad women lining the hallways, each with one breast exposed and the other one not far behind (and neither being very modest or inconspicuous or anything). I noticed Dad examining them too (we have pretty much the same taste) although he was pretending to merely glance at them (in the way you might recognize the existence of an object so as not to bump into it or something).

It's now pretty late. I've just brushed my teeth after having played on deck real late because we pushed off for Finland at 11:30 pm. Uncle Jack was holding me and I addressed the country as a friend for my parting remarks: "Bye bye Russia, bye bye...have a good time without me, see 'ya...bye!"

August 14, 1995. We arrived in Finland, finally, and Hao and I got a chance to give each other a goodbye pretend-fight-to-the-death. We spent the day in Helsinki before boarding the ship for Stockholm. We went to Kappeli for lunch and I started right in on the only five things I wanted and wanted right now and in the proper order: "ice cream, amusement park, bicycle, pool and call Hao;" ice cream, amusement park, bicycle, pool and call Hao," etc. This was to be my mantra for the next few days and I was merely memorizing it for easy use at this point.

We stopped after lunch along the Esplenadi and watched a group of girls (ages 13-15 probably) dancing in black tights to American show tunes on a ghetto blaster. I watched like a hawk watches prey. Several times during the performance it was suggested to me that we move on, but I objected with stubborn vigorosity (I doubt that's really a word, but I don't have a dictionary along). After all, what, I ask, could possibly be more educational than watching girls dance?

We boarded the ship a little later and couldn't believe our eyes. It was simply the most beautiful ship in the world, as far as we were concerned-especially after riding submarine Konstantyunclean Siminov! It was the Silja Line Serenade, 203 meters long

with 13 decks serviced by countless glass elevators riding up over the 6 or 7 story central promenade with glass roof. Spectacular! Everything was beautifully designed, crafted and clean, a real feast for the eyes. And you could even drink the water! And the bathroom was large, nice and very clean! And the buffets! How does one describe those buffets? Endless tables of beautiful, delicious foods (including lots of fresh and interesting seafood, great bread, and lots of stuff I've never seen before) elegantly set out. Best of all, they thought to put in kids buffet tables that stood at just the right height for me to serve myself and carried special kids desserts like cakes in the shapes of cars and stuff. Wow! But better than any of this was the kid's playroom they had on the main deck the size of a whole house but far more interesting, with its ballrooms, chutes, nets, ladders and stuff. I met in there a great looking Finnish gal my age, an adorable blue-eyed blonde bombshell with not a word of English on her-she didn't know how to say no!-and a lust for hard play that would make you just giddy with delight. I fell in love with her like a boulder falls off a cliff and, noticing from her lack of wedding bands that she was free, I ran out to Dad (who was sitting on a bench on the promenade, talking to some Finnish guy, a food photographer named Karri who was a steady customer of the restaurant Kasvisravintola where Dad worked 19 years ago, and who actually remembered Dad from there) while watching me through the glass walls and asked if I could have some candy to take to my girlfriend. I figured after all, candy is international.

Unlike the Russian boat, whereupon I was allowed to roam free with my friends, the folks thought this boat too big to allow me to do this, even though I impressed them with my ability to find uncle Jack's cabin by reading the numbers.

In spite of all the amenities here, I have been frustrated by not having more and not having that more precisely when I want it, damn it! I remembered to practice that blitzkry technique I so recently learned, but I decided it would be more effective pared down to essentials: ice cream and amusement park. I asked when we'd be at the amusement park at least twice per minute from the moment I woke up till we arrived there. I loved it [Grunelund, founded in 1883 but now looking pretty much like 1963 and not too much more exotic than you'd find in New Jersey save the scenic ferry ride around Stockholm you need to take to get there] but was almost immediately disappointed that I couldn't have ice cream and hot dogs the very moment I ordered them.

Back at the hotel I threw another "temperature tantrum" in the lobby in front of the restaurant they wanted to eat at because I wanted ice cream rather than dinner and because nothing at all was right for me (whenever I had the slightest clue that such was what they wanted). Mom threatened to take me to the room and I didn't believe her until she did just that and I had a good cry and agreed to come back down and behave myself. I did just that but still insisted on the freedom of getting my own food, even though most of it was largely or entirely out of reach. When all was said and done I told Dad I wanted to go outside and play and he told me rather to "stick around" and I said I wanted to "stick around out there."

Back in the hotel room I watched TV while Mom and Dad were unpacking and getting things ready for bed. Mom took the remote control and began channel surfing (which was fine with me, as I had only been looking at some dumb documentary but was too pooped to complain) when, lo and behold, she landed some dumb old Hollywood film with one great-looking gal wearing tight and revealingly tattered clothes (having been stranded somewhere far from Marimekko, evidently) and when

Mom surfed on I objected vigorously, "No, I wanna see the girl!" (Am I Dad's son or what? I could tell Dad was relieved and that he had wanted to watch that movie too.) The next morning before leaving I turned on the TV again and stopped at anything showing women in tight clothes, bathing suits, etc.

I keep asking about when we're going back to Ukki's because I have in my mind a causal relationship set up between staying there and the rental of a certain ideal bike.

August 16, 1995. We visited an antique store in Gamla Stan (old town) that Jack liked and spent about 2 hours there. I was an absolute angel: I didn't break a thing, I admired everything to death (to the point that Mom, Dad and Uncle Jack had trouble discussing their purchases (a pair of 18th century Spanish carved, gilt and polychromed wood pillars for Jack and a 19th century German stained glass window in 16th century style showing St. George and the dragon for Mom and Dad; zip for me). I stayed right there until I couldn't take it any more and had to wait outside in the street (no cars there, being one of those tiny cobblestone pedestrian streets of which the old city has so many). Dad was so impressed with my behavior (but aren't I always an angel?) that I thought his appreciation a bit condescending. Dad explained to me how to discern a male Chinese [Buddhist] lion from a female, and when I explained it to Jack later at dinner (without mention of the operative words Buddhist, porcelain, figures, etc.), everyone laughed.

August 17, 1995. Finally, we arrived back in Finland at 8:30 a.m. Wednesday, and I was tired after swimming with a bevy of Japanese beauties in the 12th floor Jacuzzi/pool/sauna deck between 8:00 and 10:30. The girls (ages 7-11) were quite taken by my good looks, swimming ability and good ole' American bon vivant. We got along fine, whatever it was they were jabbering.

After departing from the ship we got a cab to the train station to drop off uncle Jack (to his bus to the airport...poor thing couldn't stay long enough to go to Ukki's and rent bikes, swim and play with Hao!) and then continued to Ukki's to rent bikes, swim and play with Hao. During the course of the entire trip there I inquired in various wordings about bike rentals, swimming and playing with Hao. (I purposely didn't bring up the amusement park-ice cream-hot dog business, which was tomorrow's game plan.)

After settling in with Ukki I got my way and we went to Linnenmäki, Helsinki's amusement park, where there was plenty of hot dogs, ice cream, and wonderful rides to make you dizzy and nauseous (though never too much for me).

August 18, 1995. Today we spent the day in Helsinki, starting with the public pool, followed by a shopping spree in town. I asked when we were going to swim all the way to the pool and when we were going to bike ride, play with Hao and go back to the Amusement park. Dad called Hao's mom and found out that he's in school all day every week day and wouldn't, therefore, be free until the weekend. I was pissed and figured that this heroic sacrifice on my part entitled me to much self-indulgence and parent-torture. I barked out the orders for the evening, including, primary among them, shopping for Frosted Flakes™. But as the supermarkets were already closed, we ended up at a kiosk where Dad had to pay 22FM (\$5.50) for a box of the stuff. On the way back to Ukki's I sang a newly composed song called, not unexpectedly, Frosted Flakes™. It was a trenchant rendition, sung to the same stirring tune as employed in my two previous blockbusters, Diarrhea, Diarrhea and Some Times You Don't Know if Your

Friends Will Come Back or Whether They'll Be Dead.... Back at Ukki's I drowned my now evaporated sorrows in two big bowls of Frosted Flakes™.

But the real news about today, regardless of the flakes, is that after days of consternation and "temperature tantrums" about it, I've finally learned to tie my shoes all by my self! Dad's a frustrating teacher; he expects you to watch him as he's showing you (though he can see I want to learn by doing it myself with him just standing by to cheer lead). So excited was I about this new and greatest of all achievements (at least since the diving board somersault) that I insisted on lacing them up and unlacing them again for long, loud, and proud sessions that began to exasperate Dad (although he kept his grumbling to himself).

The only other important item of the last few days has been my growing well, addiction, to Dad's on-going saga of the adventures of Ratman. Ratman's ribald adventures in his tireless pursuit of criminals, justice, peace on earth, and sex and violence go down like mother's milk to me. (They'd be a hell of a lot more enjoyable if he'd only leave out all that party-line justice and peace-on-earth business; it lacks edge.) Since we left the U. S. my appetite for Ratman installments has turned ravenous; they have bounded up the popularity charts to be included in the pantheon of the Sacred Six (hot dogs, ice cream, bike riding, swimming, amusement parks and playing with Hao). Lately I've been given to ask for installments at the most inauspicious times and, flattered as he appears to be each time, he inevitably thinks of some contrived-sounding reason he can't give me my fix. The best one is that he can only properly hand down to me this sacred knowledge in private, for the very existence of Douglas Bunting (Ratman's real name) and his girl friend Christine (Christina for long and Chris for short) is known by no one in the entire world save Dad and myself, the former having gotten it straight (and in the most secret of circumstances) from a very wise old man who died many years ago having told not a soul but my Dad. Dad told me that he promised this old man (a certain Professor Olli Nuutinen with whom Dad says he studied at the University of Helsinki back when he met Mom) he would never write any of it down, lest it fall into the hands of the criminal element or some publisher. He said I should pay close attention so I can remember the story and tell it all to my son some day. He said that as of this moment only six people in the entire world know of the existence of Ratman: Ratman himself, of course; Christine, again of course; Batman; Robin; Dad...and now me. I asked Dad why everyone has heard of Batman but no one of Ratman, and he said it's because they went and made comic books, movies and T-shirts of the former but not yet, thank heavens, of the latter-largely (though I sense not entirely) due to the superhuman efforts of Dad to keep this thing quiet.

Ratman and his girlfriend (who, by the way, is very pretty, I'm glad to learn) seem to be always one city behind us in our travels. I must say that beyond the remarkably coincidental flavor of this fact, it keeps the interest up because it makes you imagine that the next time Dad loses the thread Ratman's going to catch up and bump into us from behind.

Ratman and his friends and enemies are not real characters like we are. They live in Disney World because they are Disney characters. This I have figured out on my own in spite of Dad's protestations to the contrary. (He claims that if this were true you would have seen Ratman on TV, film, T-shirts, mugs, or even "in person" in Disney World. But while this is logical, I just know deep down I'm right.) Every time I tell Dad my theory he paints himself further and further into the corner. For example, when I asked him how, if it's really such a big secret an' all, he knows about Ratman, he told me the above

business about this Professor Nuutinen. But when I asked him what exactly it was he studied with this guy he hesitated, trying to think up something impressive, no doubt. Feeling a little embarrassed for him (having helped paint him into that corner), I suggested a way out and asked, "did he teach you to make Jello™?"

August 18, 1995. We went swimming again today and I went down the water slide about fifty-nine eighty times, and when I was finished with that I went off the diving board at least that many times, if not more.

Later, back at Ukki's, my cousins Satu and Tommi came to visit, and we went with them. We went, among other places, back to Linnenmäki with them and had a ball. Tommi took me on the roller coaster (not the real big one for adults only, but a good one nonetheless) about sixty-four times. I'm crazy about that guy, in spite of his silly name (pronounced like "doammie" though he's certainly no dummy). Tommi has proved himself worthy of inclusion in my pantheon of Temporary Sacreds.

Dad was telling me a segment of Ratman involving Manbat (perhaps the only super hero more elusive than even Ratman) wherein the latter had the opportunity to go straight and help the good guys fight crime but instead chose to only pretend doing so while working as a spy for the Joker. I wouldn't stand for it. Dad defended himself, saying, "but that's the way it is in this story...it's the truth; you want me to tell you the truth, don't you?" I pondered this philosophical quagmire a moment before answering with confidence. "Yes," I said with appropriate caution, "but make it up and have Manbat work with the good guys."

August 19, 1995. Dad fed me another installment of Ratman, this one dealing with Christine's urging that Ratman give up crime fighting and make a career in selling the paintings he paints in his precious little spare time. Douglas told her that nobody would buy pictures of cheese (which is, naturally enough, his favorite subject), and so she asked why he couldn't then paint more salable subjects like fruit, cylinders and cones, or, perhaps, even naked ladies. He explained to her without the least bit of condescension that they would all look like cheese anyway because that's what is most meaningful in his life, excepting her, of course. He said he would take her suggestion, doomed to failure as it was, and paint a naked lady-Christine in particular. And when I asked if he painted her peppu Dad answered in the affirmative but added that it looked to anybody else just like a pair of wheels of Gouda cheese. Then I said, "how 'bout her pajamba?" He said, "her what?" "Did he paint her pajamba?," I repeated. He asked the what word again and I was quite taken back to learn that he didn't know what a pajamba was! I explained: "a man has a pippili but a lady doesn't; she has a pajamba. It's what she makes pissi with!"

We drove with Irja today to a farm about 1 1/2 hours outside the city. They had real cows there-cows that gave unpasteurized, unhomogenized milk, in bottles, not cartons. Later, Dad and I went in town to the movies to see Caspar the Friendly Ghost at the Maxima 3 movie theater next to Fazer's (what a magnificent movie theater-like being at the opera, and only slightly more expensive). We bought seats right in the middle of the theater and were among only about 8 people there. (They make their real money not on the seats but on the snack concession.) The noise level was at a minimum because of the paucity of people and because the other people who were there were Finns and Finns don't talk (even when they're spoken to, most of the time). I loved the film and the theater and asked Dad if he'd like to live there forever (not in Helsinki, but in the

Maxima 3 movie theater. He pushed me in the stroller all the way back to Itä Pasila (over an hour's journey).

August 22, 1995. We went swimming again today. I hate my red jacket. It makes me look stupid and doesn't match. I've avoided wearing it all throughout the trip and have complained about it several times, but who listens?

August 23, 1995. Dad was telling me another episode of Ratman, concentrating on human issues to the exclusion of violence, so I just had to interrupt him and ask "when are we going to get to an interesting part?" Then he told me one of the funniest and interesting of all Ratman's adventures, the camping trip. (I know I shouldn't be writing this down, but I can't imagine that a few lines would really jeopardize world peace an' all.) It turns out that Douglas and Christine went with Manbat and Cindy on a camping trip with a tent and while they were snug in their sleeping bags zipped up to their chinny-chin-chins, a big bear came into the tent looking for food and sat himself down on Douglas's right leg, the latter holding his breath so as not to alert the former as to his precise whereabouts (which the latter would have known had he been less groggy and more hungry). When we got to the subject of cheese Dad told an untruth: that bears don't like Limburger cheese. I did not let him get away with this, correcting him sternly, though lovingly. Dad disagreed and we argued about it until I informed him that I saw a movie about bears eating just this same cheese on television. Dad asked where and when I saw this, being clearly surprised, and I answered, "at the movie theater with Mom." (Since he was not there, Charlie, there was nothing he could do but accept this truth.)

August 29, 1995. We're back and home in Wyncote and I'm glad to be back even though I had a great time and miss Tommi terribly. Last night after Dad and I went to bed Mom forgot the alarm had been set and opened the laundry room door, setting the alarm off. After it had been turned off Dad looked at me to see if I had been wakened, but what he saw he just couldn't believe: there I was, fast asleep with my hands over my ears, a faint smile on my face.

September 5, 1995. Uncle Jack and Peter Steliga came over for dinner last night. Harriet Snyder was invited too and I was glad to see she was wearing her bathing suit. She sat down on the chesterfield just as I had hoped, as this gave me the opportunity of crawling along the crestrail and obtaining an inconspicuous eyeful of cleavage from behind and above her. I don't think anyone saw me do this, so nonchalantly did I work.

Peter, having been filled in by uncle Jack about our trip, asked me how I liked the food in Russia. Not quite understanding the question-I care as much about food in Russia as that one would find in Wyncote or Madagascar-I said "fine." Peter evidently did not accept this answer, so he fine-tuned the question, asking, "did you like the 'green stuff' served for dessert on the ship?" I explained in all seriousness and with obvious impatience at his lack of appropriate nomenclature, "It's called Jello™, Peter!"

September 17, 1995. I went with Dad to play miniature golf again last night. Same place, same fun. Dad's says its the tackiest course he's ever seen and I'm sure he's right (although it doesn't look that great to me!) This time I happened to notice the revolving

figure of the Hawaiian girl in bikini and grass skirt (why haven't I noticed her before?) and I couldn't take my eyes off her. After watching her, head to toe, go round and round a few times, I turned to Dad and asked, "Hey Dad, isn't she beautiful?"

October 1, 1995. Last night Dad and I played chess again (we've been playing a game or two of it, interspersed with one or two of checkers, with music I select and put on in the background, every night now for weeks) and this time I got a little disgruntled about losing. In spite of having won a few games recently, I just couldn't stomach the idea, somehow, of losing this particular one.

Well, anyhow, I got my bishop painted into a corner and just as Dad was about to capture him (there being not much else left in my color on the board) I protested, pleading that he exercise the decency to move somewhere else and leave my poor bishop alone, there being numerous other locals in which a piece might hang around and make a nuisance of itself. For this I got a lot of hot air about gentleman's agreements and deals being extraneous to the whole point of chess, which is about strategy and not about sharpening one's negotiating skills, blaah, blaah, blaah. (Did you ever?). I pretended to be listening to all this, but repeated my plea, word for word, as if I hadn't. Realizing that I was getting no where, I then grabbed my bishop, put him under my arm and crawled up in the corner of the chesterfield so Dad couldn't get it for capturing. He thought this was funny, somehow. When this didn't work, I ran from the room with it, seeking safe harbor in Mom's study, behind her chair.

October 4, 1995. Dad taught me how to play Backgammon, and I love it when I win.

October 25, 1995. Just got back from Disney World with Mom and Noah and Jessie and their Mom. We were there between the 18th and yesterday (while Dad was away visiting Uncle David) and we stayed in a trailer at Fort Wilderness and had great fun. (For some strange reason, whenever Dad's not along I have trouble remembering enough details to enter here.)

November 30, 1995. My teacher asked for my help in cleaning up toys, and when I did so and she thanked me I said, "My pleasure!," a phrase which she and Mom and Dad found very amusing.

December 18, 1995. Just got back from Disney World again, this time with with Mom and Dad and my cousin Phillip (who I really like, by the way). We stayed (from 9th till yesterday) with Uncle David (whose birthday on the 13th was one of the reasons for going down) in a house at Disney Village Resorts. The whole trip centered around my getting to go on the Splash Mountain ride that I've never been able to go on due to small size. The first day we tried (this trip) I was wearing aquasocks and, hence, did not measure up to minimum standards for this ride. The second try was with my sandals which gave me another 1/2" to 3/4" of height and, poof, they let me. It was great, though I wasn't at all scared. Nope, not one bit. When I was refused the first time, however, I was so upset that Dad could not console me, no matter how he tried. Perhaps out of desperation, he suggested-unthinkingly in my opinion-that we go watch for Mom and Phillip and take a picture of them coming down the finishing flume ride. I screwed up my face at this suggestion and said in dead seriousness, "That's disgusting!" He might just have well asked if I'd wanted to go to a health food restaurant with him or something.

December 25, 1995. Santa has been very good to me, as have Mom and Dad (I believe in Santa Claus only in so far as I have to gain from so believing). But all this receiving always plunges me into a bad mood (like every trip to the toy store), sort of like a low after a sugar high.

December 29, 1995. Mom took me on a shopping trip to the Willow Grove Mall and on our way through the Lady's underwear department I made her stop the carriage and let me study the pictures of half-naked women (e.g. "The Maidenform™ Woman") shown on the tags.

January 8, 1996. Wow, are we buried in snow! Up to my.... It started yesterday morning and didn't finish until this morning when it measured 30" not including drifts. Both today and yesterday we went over to the Collings' to sled down their front hill. Wow. Walking over there today was funny because it was to my waist and was difficult to walk in, except that some of the way I didn't sink in all the way, as did Dad.

January 9, 1996. Been watching a lot of Shakespeare plays on video with Dad. Started with a taste for the inherent sex and violence in his work (and in the movie adaptations, like Peter Hall's 1968 *Midsummer Night's Dream* that has the woman playing Tatiana running around with nothing more than a couple of leaves on her here and there, or Zefferele's *Taming of the Shrew* with Elizabeth Taylor in a low-cut dress, or Olivier's *Richard III* with its battle scene) but then progressed to a love of, well, whosknowswhat, as in Zefferele's 1990 *Hamlet* with Mel Gibson and Glenn Close, etc., which is just downright interesting in its own right.

While watching these films, we often play Memory, a game [wherein each player gets a turn to turn over any two cards in search of a match] I'm unbelievably good at. I always beat Dad, so much so that I've taken to giving him tips, and even giving him some of my wins so it at least appears that I have some competition.

February 1, 1996. My new favorite Shakespeare is *Much Ado About Nothing*, the film adaptation of which by Kenneth Branagh is my favorite movie, bar none. I have watched it, with or without Dad, a couple dozen times at the very least, and now go around the house muttering lines from it, like "She speaks poniards, and every word stabs" [Benedic re: Beatrice].

Now that I know how to fully operate the TV and video in the family room I simply help myself to Shakespeare tapes even before Dad comes home to watch with me. For the last week I've watched *Much Ado* each day before he'd even gotten home.

February 15, 1996. Dad has been writing a dragon-friendly epic poem for me because I like both dragons and picaresque adventures. It's called *The Cad from Capadoccia*, which I have renamed *The Cab of Capadoccia*, as this makes far more sense. (It's about St. George and the Dragon, so why doesn't he just call it *St. George and the Dragon*, for crying out loud?) Anyway, he's really impressed with my memory, because I can recite most of the first six or seven stanzas (six lines each, all filled with difficult words)-even better than he can!

March 15, 1996. This always happens! Whenever Dad gets involved with a literary project, I get writer's block. Now that he's been spending his odd few leftover minutes here and there working on *The Cad*, I've been spending my even scarcer free time tending to my wardrobe or cutting my nails (which I can do all by myself now, and very neatly too!), or watching *Ren and Stimpy* (which is even more satisfying to me now than *The Simpsons!*).

March 16, 1996. A couple days ago Dad said something that upset me, though I didn't tell him. When I asked if he'd bring me some more chocolates while we were watching a film together, he said he'd rather I didn't have any more so late in the evening for fear of getting me too "charged up" just when I'm in need of getting "wound down" for bed. So far so innocent. But then he elaborated (always Dad's failing; it is here he always gets himself in trouble), saying that he's observed that chocolate speeds me up and gets me hyper, high-strung, and crazy 'n all [my emphasis]. Crazy! That's a hot button word if you ask me. Your own son, crazy? Well. This hurt. (He now claims that he was so engrossed in the film we were watching that he didn't know what he was saying and that he had no idea he had upset me, and that he's awfully sorry and all and that if he had it all to do over again he'd choose any word but crazy, etc., but as far as I'm concerned this is too little too late.) Even though I did not tell him how this affected me at the time, he should have known and certainly should not have been surprised to find the subject on my mind a couple days later when he asked me what the mark was on my arm [a circle of pinprick marks left by Dr. Serota's TB test re: my entrance to school next autumn] and I answered "they took a test."

"What kind of test, sweetpea?," he said, cautiously.

"They just wanted to see what's making me crazy."

Dad nearly cried when I said this, and he gave me this long explanation about how what he said about the chocolate was not meant literally and that he was thoughtless to even use such a powerful word when he could have left it go with hyper, high-strung, , etc., etc., etc.

March 18, 1996. Dad and I have been playing cards a lot these days (*I Doubt It* and *War*, mostly) and I've been asking him to teach me *Poker* and *Pinnochle* and *Gin Rummy*. He's been refusing on grounds of not remembering himself how they're played (though he remembers playing them all when he was a teenager). I have been suspicious of his supposedly bad memory and have continued to bring the issue up until I got another excuse: "They're not really interesting games, anyway, unless you're gambling; people don't play them for the intrinsic fun of the games as much as for a vehicle for gambling he said." (Don't you just love it! Anyone knows you don't need to gamble in a vehicle!) I said, "But I want to gamble!" To this he answered, "No gambling is not for little boys-it's something some adults do, but usually adults who...well, who are...well, who uh.... I could see this was not going anywhere and so I finished the thought for him, "...who smoke?" Dad broke into laughter for some strange reason. He simply wouldn't tell me why.

March 20, 1996. Uncle Jack bought us a used piano from a friend of his who was moving and needed to find a new owner for it. It was very nice of him and I'm glad we have it. But when Dad suggested I take lessons on it, I told him, "Well, I don't know if I'll have

the time; I already have two things to do with school and sports, and now I'll have three."

April 2, 1996. I LOVE POETRY! A poem is anything that rhymes, like bat and cat or rat and cat or even at and cat or, better yet, cat and cat. Dad and I read a lot of poems every night before going to bed-his poems as well as other people's too (poetry-writer people's poetry, that is). Dad's poems rhyme real well. There are some poetry-writers, however, who are not nearly as good as my Dad, though. Dad has read me some of their poems, and some of them don't even rhyme at all. (But that's not even a poem when it doesn't rhyme!, I tell him. Technically, anyway.) But Dad says something can still be a poem though, even if it doesn't have a single rhyme in it! (Sure, it can be a poem; just not a very good one!)

April 4, 1996. Last night was one of the best of nights and one of the worst of nights. It started out great because Dad got home early and we all went to Ariel Finegold's house for a Pesak Sedar. Ariel is one of my favorite girlfriends. We have chemistry. When I show off, she laughs-sincerely, too. What more can a man desire? Luckily, Mom and Dad really like Ariel's parents (their names are Ariel's Mom and Ariel's Dad, of course), which means that they're usually so deep in "conversation" (it always sounds like arguing) that Ariel and I can do what we want where we want when we want and still have time to slip back to the dinner table as if we'd been there all along, listening to their engrossing tempestuous agreements on politics and child-rearing.

It was one of the worst nights in recent memory only because I couldn't stop throwing up. It all started at Ariel's. I sent her in to the folks (still at the table in furious accord about something or other) to inform them that I would be retiring for the night for a quick nap upon the sofa. Although it was by that time near 11:00 p.m., it wasn't tiredness that came over me so suddenly, but nausea, and I figured the best way to deal with it would be to curl up on the sofa and wait for it to pass. By the time they all came in to check on me I had already "tossed my cookies," as they say, along with my chicken soup, gefilte fish, matzos, and bitter herbs. Needless to say, we didn't stick around too much longer, but went home as soon as possible so I could finish being sick in the privacy of my own home. I don't know about Mom or Dad, but I hardly slept a wink last night, so many times did I wake up to throw up on them. I feel much better today, however, and even got a chance for a nice long nap on the sofa in the family room. I'm all better now.

April 6, 1996. I do not have chicken pox! Stop saying I do! These red spots all over my body are just spots. Haven't you ever seen spots before? Boy, I hate it when everybody says I have chicken pox when I don't have chicken pox!

April 8, 1996. Mom and I went into town today to visit Dad at his work and have lunch with him and Uncle Jack an' all. I was rather enthused, even though our most memorable attempts to accomplish this resulted in my having to be rushed to the hospital with innerreaction, interruption, interception, intussusception-one of the least fun things I've done in all my years.

It was fun to get another look at Dad's secret life, the place he goes when he's invisible. It was also interesting to see that nothing's changed at work. Dad still has the same water cooler and all. (I simply do not tire of helping myself to a cup of water from

that wonderful gadget, thirsty or not.) Another nice thing about his office is the silver bowl they have brimming with candy. The company policy is that you may take as much candy as you can fit in your fists and/or your pockets, as long as you promise to hire my Dad to write on his computer something for you so you can pay him a lot of money and he can bring it home for us to buy toys 'n stuff.

Mom was telling Uncle Jack about how much I like girls and kissing them and all, and about my girlfriend at school, etc., and he asked me if I really kiss her. I couldn't quite glean from the way the question was framed whether an affirmative answer was the most desirable choice on my part, or whether I might then be confessing some questionable ethical behavior that would need to be explored in greater detail before a Senate sub-committee on live television, prime time. So, figuring it would be best to nip this one in the bud, I told him, "yes, but only when I bump into her."

April 9, 1996. Can you believe it: snow again? There must be three inches out there already.

April 20, 1996. Dad approached me today about obtaining the manuscript to this, my journal. (This is so weird! I could swear we had this same conversation a few years ago!) So I asked him, "What is it you want this for, anyway?" And he told me he was hoping to have it bound as a book to present to Mom on her 43th birthday. (Give my diary to Mom? Again?)

"What would you title it, if I may ask?" I asked.

"Oh, Cranky Buddha or something," he answered.

"Cranky what?" I asked, now convinced we had had this very conversation before.

"Buddha...," he said. "That's what Mom and I called you when you were this big," he said, gesturing to me a measurement of a very small size, about like so.

"Uh uh!" says I to him. I like that title not.

"O.K.," he said. "Just let me have the manuscript and I'll leave it pretty much as is."

"Whataya mean pretty much?"

"I mean I'll leave whatever title you have on it and only add a word or two."

"Well, all right," I said. "You promise?"

"Promise."

"O.K."

April 11, 1996. Everytime I sneeze Dad says the same thing: Gezoondhite! (Dad spells it *gesundheit* or something). I have no idea why he needs to say this to me every time; surely it's obvious by now. So when he asked me point-blank if I knew what it was, of course I wasn't going to say, "no, please tell me!" I said, "yes, Dad, I know what it means." But this was just not good enough for him. "Oh do you?," he asked. "Tell me," he continued, as if he himself was suddenly at a loss to know. "You sneezed," I said. "It means, you sneezed."

April 12, 1996. My enthusiasm for the music of Leos Janáček has fueled Dad's interest, and he went out and got a whole bunch more CDs of his music for me. Videos too. In fact, just last night we watched *Kát'a Kabanová*, which, like most operas in my experience, is about falling in love with someone other than your spouse at the least advantageous moment (just when everybody both on and off stage is watching you and the music's playing and all). Well, anyway, after a while you get a sixth sense about

these things and how they resolve-in noisy death, usually-and when Kát'a and Boris were making their way back from the beach, straightening out their rather conspicuously upset clothes and hair and all, pretending to passerbys that they had been ruffled by a sudden breeze or something (though it was rather obvious that two moments before you woulda been hard pressed to get a credit card between 'em), I turned to Dad and said, "they gonna go to bed now?" Dad seemed taken back by this rather straightfoward approach of mine and muttered, "yeh, if they're tired, I guess..." but I wasn't born yesterday, you know.

April 13, 1996. Mikey Collings slept over last night again. This is his third or fourth time-who's counting?-and it kinda makes me want to try again myself, even though deep down I know it's gonna be a long time till I do it the right way (i.e., stay at his place the whole night and not just till 11:00, when Dad's gotta get up, get dressed, and come fetch me).

I discussed the Santa issue with Dad again last night. Last time I tried sounding him out on my conspiracy theory (a couple of months ago), he threw me a real curve ball. I asked point blank "do you believe in Santa Claus," and he said "sometimes I do, sometimes I don't." What kinda answer is that?, I thought to myself. So I said, "when do you?" (A reasonable question I think.) And he said simply, "when it gets near Christmas time." Well, I thought that was cute an' all then, but something deep inside told me it was nonetheless an unsatisfactory answer, as it failed to take care of that proverbial last coffin nail in the subject.

So this time I used a different approach-telling him instead of asking him. I said, "you know Dad, there is no Santa Claus...everybody knows that." He seemed lost for words but raised his eyebrows in that indescribable near-Christmas-time look of his, and I probed further and said, "and I know it's not Santa who left me the gifts but you and Mom!"

"Oh, you know that do you?," he said in a tone that suggested one of four things to me: a.) he realized it was pointless to persist in this wicked conspiracy and it was time to come clean, if only he knew how without implicating a host more conspirators; b.) he realized I knew something, but that there might still be plenty of the lie to salvage, if only he could glean precisely where my knowledge ended and speculation began; c.) sarcastically, like "oh, you know that do you?" (i.e., you may think you know that but you really don't); or d.) he wasn't paying attention at all, and was just doing what parents do when they're not paying attention and just attempt, feebly, to make you think they're listening to you by reframing your last statement as a question. (Any ass can do that! This doesn't prove you're listening!)

So I got down to the real business at hand. "AND YOU LEFT ME THE WRONG THINGS! I DIDN'T WANT THE BATMAN THINGMAJIG WITH THE DOHICKEY ON IT BUT THE OTHER ONE THAT'S BIGGER [AND MORE EXPENSIVE] AND HAS TWO OF THE TORPEDO-HATCHRECEPTORLAUNCHERPLATFORMTHINGS!"

When I got to the exclamation mark I noticed there were tears in Dad's eyes, but I think these are what are referred to by professionals as "crocodile tears," because he seemed to me to be holding back laughter rather than remorse for his crime. ("Crime" might be a strong word-failing is better.)

April 14, 1996. Yesterday was great. Dad took me to the "woods" at "Valley Green" in Chestnut Hill. (I pointed out to him that these weren't really woods because there were

no animals, at least none that I could make out. He didn't understand the connection-pure Dad!-and said that since trees are made of wood you can call a whole bunch 'a trees a "wood." No way!) Anyway, we went there to feed the ducks with Ariel and her parents. (I don't mean by this that we fed them to the ducks but that we fed the ducks while they fed the ducks, right next to 'em an' all.) Anyway, after we used up all the bread they bought, we went for a hike up one of the paths up the hill. It was great. It was just me and my girlfriend and a beautiful big blue sky above us! And Dad and Stan and Leslie and their dog, Lolipop. (Mom wasn't feeling well and thought she might be coming down with something, so she stayed home and took a nap.)

Today I played all day with Noah Burd, who lives around the corner on Rice's Mill Rd. I'm getting to like him pretty well. Not that he's beyond improvement-nobody's unimprovable!-he still gives me trouble sometimes when he doesn't follow orders well or follow them at all. (I hate it when I complain about this to Dad and he says in that smarmy parental tone, "he doesn't have to follow your orders, Daniel, we live in a deomocracy and, besides, he's your guest." Don'tcha just wanna throw up?) Still, Noah's pretty O.K.

Before calling Noah, Dad went down the list of my friends and called a few who happened to have plans already. When he suggested Joshua, I rolled my eyes and said, "naaaahhh." Of course, that wasn't good enough for Dad, and he had to ask the Y word.

"Y," he asked.

"CAUSE HE MAKES ME FART!," I told him.

April 15, 1996. I forgot yesterday to write that Dad and I listened to a recording of Janáček's animal opera *Príhody Lisky Bystrousky* ("The Cunning Little Vixen") and made Dad laugh with one of my genuine insights into animal behavior. After learning that the vixen fooled the chickens into a false sense of confidence in order to eat them, when Dad told me the woodpecker had agree to officiate as priest for her wedding to what's his name the male fox, I asked, in full sincerity, "is she going to eat the woodpecker when he's finished?"

April 27, 1996. Dad and I went to ToysRUs and bought a Big Wheelie™ trike. It made Dad mad when he tried to put it together because the directions were so badly written and the parts didn't match up to those shown in the directions. Dad muttered things he didn't mean for me to hear, such things I know not but that they sounded pretty much like the terror of the earth. We took two trips back to the store to have them help assemble it. Finally, after four of the longest hours I can remember, it was ready for me to show off to my dearest friends, that they may eat their dear little hearts out. Mikey was my first victim. I told Dad I wanted Mikey over immediately so we could go to the schoolyard and watch me ride my Big Wheelie™. Dad said, "fine, but only on the condition that you share it with him." God, I hate that word. Share. Big people are under the delusion that it means enjoy something together. It doesn't. It means watch someone with whom you are in direct competition eat your lunch while you hungrily look on and pretend to savor their enjoyment. I would almost rather not have the lunch sometimes. Well, anyway, I said "Yes, of course I'll share it with him! But tell him to bring his bike too for him to ride if he wants."

May 15, 1996. Dad and I have been taking piano lessons for a few weeks now and I really like the idea, especially because we have Olga, our teacher, come to us rather than

us go to her. She's real nice and appreciative of my charm and talent, but she does want me to practise, which I find just a bit pushy. But I forgive her, because I like her. She's very affectionate and loud. I like to practise best while Dad is practising. Dad says this makes for complications because we have only one piano. But I figure that during any one session he uses such a relatively limited number of the keys that it's a plain shame to let the other ones just sit there gathering dust.

June 1, 1996. We're in Finland again, but this time we're not staying at Ukki's but at the Sokos Hotel Hesperia on Mannerheimintie opposite the park at Töölönlahti where the bike rental place is that doesn't open until 10:00! I've been getting up at about 4:00 or so every morning since we've been here and getting Dad out of the hotel by 5:00 to take me on his back for a tour of Helsinki until the bike place opens. That's only 4 hours of walking for him, so I don't know what all the fuss is; I like being on his back, even though I have to hold on. I have managed to get a fire under him by making a lot of noise in the hotel room while Mom and a few hundred others are trying to sleep.

Last night we went to the amusement park with Satu. I like Satu. She's very pretty and she's, well, a girl. I was hoping to see Tommi and was disappointed when I heard he wasn't coming, but not that I spent an evening with Satu I tolk Mom I really like Satu.

Today we're going to Satu's graduation party at aunt Heljä's. I am excited to see Pyry and Tommi.

June 2, 1996. Yesterday we went to Pyry's house and saw Tommi and Satu and all and a lot of other people I didn't know. I was itchy to get out of there and get back to Helsinki to rent bikes. Bikes were much on my mind, and it frustrated me that they were so difficult to obtain. The only place in the entire city, perhaps the entire country, to rent them didn't open until it was almost too late and then closed before you could say *pölkäpyrä* [?]. So, everywhere we went, on foot, on bus, you name it, we saw at least one bike that wasn't for me. I said to Dad each time, "he [/she] has a bike!" And Dad would say, "but, sweetheart, that's his [/her] bike, I'm sure, not a rental bike. You too have your own bike back home; these people live here, so they drive their own bikes." What kind of comfort was that to me, I ask you? "Well, I want my own bike here, too," I demanded.

They have this great poster on display in the streets, advertising I have no idea what, but showing this little girl, younger than me, walking naked on the beach with her back turned and her butt right out there bigger than life for you to admire and all. It's great. I always ask Dad to stop so I can spend a good long time admiring it. It's great.

June 3, 1996. We went to visit Ukki and Irja's son Jussi today at that house where he and some other people with his problem live all together and eat ice cream. Just like last year, when we visited, Jussi dove into Irja's handbag first thing, looking for *Tupla*TM bars, those nutty, chewy, chocolate bars he likes so much. Irja planted two there for him like always, and as soon as as he saw that there were no more in there for him, he took the two and fled the room for the dining room, where he sat at the table and methodically ate them with the concentration of a man confronting his first meal in a week. He picked up each empty wrapper and examined it for possible escapees and did not look up until all contents were safely transferred to his stomach. Toward the end of this display I happened to step towards the table for a closer look-such focus I had never

seen before-and Jussi pushed me back out to a safe, arm's-length distance with the hand which wasn't guarding the bars, giving me the evil eye as if I had just entered Russian air space or something. When Irja saw this and tried to make amends for his lack of politeness by giving me another (a third) of these candy bars (she must have hid it in her shoe) I quick slid it into my pants pocket as quick as greased lightning. I saw that Dad saw how smooth I had made this transfer without Jussi getting wind of it and I muttered to Dad quietly out of one side of my mouth, "I'm not gonna let him see this thing!"

June 4, 1996. Dad took me to McDonalds a couple of times to get the real cool bicycle accessories they sell. They include a flask I can keep a drink in. I like to stop often for a drink, even when I'm not technically thirsty.

Satu came over with her mother to meet us at the hotel and she brought me a bag of gummy candies that had real cool cartoons all over the bag. They were cool because even though they were supposed to be animals, these cartoons, you just knew that some of them were jst naked ladies underneath it all. Two in particular caught my attention: a cow holding up her namnams for every one to see; and a pig holding up her skirt in back so you could see her butt. Well, anyway, soon after I finished the contents of this bag, I found it in the trash! I was upset and I asked Dad (Mom was out), "what is this doing in the trash?!" He looked suprized that I was so concerned, apologized and said, "it looked empty." "It is empty, but did you have to throw it away? I wanted to save it." In answer to his question why I said "cause I like the pictures, that's why!" I showed him and asked him why the pig was lifting her skirt and Dad muttered something incoherent about her not being particularly shy about such things or something, and I suggested that maybe it had something to do with the boxer dog shown in the immediately preceding vignette: "maybe she's showing her butt to him so he'll fall in love with her." Honestly, I didn't say this for laughs; I was dead serious, and I still think this was a legitimate reading of the cartoon, but Dad went hysterical about it.

June 5, 1996. We're going back home today. Dad found it curious that I chose not to swim in the hotel pool the whole time we were here. I don't. I just didn't want to; that's all.

Like last year's visit to Finland, this year I've also become addicted to Dad's neverending saga of Ratman. However, I noticed during one session a rather unsettling fact: the same episode can differ in different retellings. I had always assumed that truth is truth and there is only one version, but yesterday when we were interrupted during an episode and returned to it later in the evening, Dad revealed a couple of substantive discrepancies between what he had told me earlier and later concerning the same events, and I turned to him and said, "Hey, you're just makin' this thing up as you go along!"

I have really improved my memorizational skills. Dad recited Emily Dickinson's "I'm nobody" poem to me only a few times before I learned it perfectly, word for word, with the proper intonation and delivery. Even more impressive than mastering these two short stanzas was my ability to memorize the four stanzas of Poe's "Eldorado" poem after the same few listenings. And even more impressive to Dad was my ability to recite the whole of "The Sweetest Fig," the story (some 15 pages totaling probably a couple hundred words) he read to me the week before our trip. I probably got a half a dozen words wrong or out of place, but that I got so many right and properly expressed blew Dad's mind. Dad told Ukki about this and asked me to recite some of it for Ukki but I don't know how to recite some of something, so I recited all of it for him. Ukki didn't

quite know what the heck I was talking about, so after about 5 minutes I could see he wasn't even trying to pay attention. I figured he would start paying attention if I kept on going, because only then, after I'd been at it for a while, would he get the idea of how much I'd accomplished, but I was wrong.

I've also been drawing a lot this trip. As of a month or so ago I've really taken to drawing. I can sit by myself and draw Street Sharks™ for hours. I don't come out of my trance till nearly the bottom of the pad, and I get real upset if one of the more successful examples gets damaged. In fact, I threw quite a tantrum because of a page I accidentally poked through with my pen, this drawing having been my best yest. In fact, I threw a few tantrums while in Finland. I don't know why. They're just unavoidable.

On the plane back to New York I took a fancy to a pair of Indian girls seated behind us. They were cute as buttons and looked identical to boot. When I found out they were twins my interest was fuelled even further. I stood on my seat, looking over the back at them while they were sleeping, side by side in mirror image, it seemed, and I exclaimed out loud for everyone nearby to hear, "they really are twins: they're even wearing the same watches!"

June 9, 1996. We arrived back from Finland on Wednesday so that Dad could put my McDonalds bicycle equipment on my bike. Uncle David stayed on for a few days (he's leaving tomorrow) and came with us to the schoolyard for me to show off my bike to Mike. On the way back, Mike and I agreed that we'd bake cookies back at my house, but Dad said that it would be better, since Mike had to go home, if we (Dad and I only) baked them at our house and then took them over. I burst into tears and hid under my bed amid my only friends, my stuffed ones. Dad eventually cheered me up by acting stupid (which he's very, very good at, by the way).

Later in the day Mike invited me to dinner at his house to have hot dogs. He did this without first consulting his parents, who, alas, informed me that though I'd be welcome otherwise, they're "larder was nearly bare" (whatever that's supposed to mean-if the larder's undecorated, let's eat in the dining room or outside or somewhere they like better, but don't send me home on account of it, for gripe's sake!). Well, Dad came for me and explained that we had dinner waiting at home and I burst into tears at the thought of having had a hot dog removed right from under my expectation and I was pissed. Back home, Mom tried to cheer me up but I was giving her a run for her money and about the time she thought she was winning I warned her that if she didn't stop I'd have the same tantrum I had in Finland.

June 22, 1996. Dad was shocked by a bit of good, solid thinking on my part today in a discussion we had touching nature v. man-made, etc. In answer to something or other I said, Dad pointed out that there are "no plastic spiders in nature," pointing out toward the trees, as if that's where nature lived. I responded straight from the hip, "but plastic spiders are made by nature too." "No, sweetheart, they are made by man," blaaah, blaaah, he said. I chirped in, "but man is made by nature, so the plastic spiders he makes are part of nature too...." He was amazed, and he conceded he was wrong and I was right, etc. I then ran in to tell Mom of my victory, and she too was impressed. Damn, I'm good!

July 1, 1996: Satu's been staying with us since last Wednesday and we all (with Uncle Jack) went to Washington D.C. for the weekend. On the way back in the train I was

sitting with Dad, who was reading R. L. Stine's *Thing from Under the Sink* (no. I don't remember which from the *Goosebumps* series I'm addicted to) and I spilled some Sprite™ on me and wiped it off, saying to Dad, "don't worry, Sprite doesn't stain...and Gingerale doesn't either. Boy, the people who make Sprite and Gingerale are real smart!"

July 11, 1996: We're all in New York with Uncle David, staying again at the St. Outrageous (Patron Saint of rich travellers) at 5th and 55th. I ordered myself a crab sandwich, having never had one before. It was superb except for the fact that everybody else was taking the liberty of eating it too. (Oh, Daniel, may I have a bite too?, etc.) Out of near-desperation, I made a public protestation as nicely as possible: "Does anybody mind if I have a bite of my crab sandwich?!"

July 12, 1996: We went to the Disney Store yesterday (it's right across the street from the St. Egregious hotel we're staying at and it's hard not to go in there, especially when you're in my company). I brought back with me to our suite a catalogue of the complete works stuff of Disney and saw in it a real heart-stopper: a Buzz Lightyear costume that would make Buzz himself envious, let alone Mikie, Evan and the bunch. I pointed it out (in the context of my present lack of such a thing in my wardrobe) to any adult I could find (adults are the ones with the money in this world-that I have learned) with a deep, heart-felt sigh. No one took the bait so I decided to be less subtle. I was fondling a candybar I found in the hotel snack safe. Dad asked me with a very serious look on his face not to open it, as it probably costs more than he earns in a week, and I realized at once I had a useful tool between my thumb and forefinger. So I looked at it wistfully and muttered, "ahh...it would take my mind off the Buzz Lightyear costume."

July 28, 1996: Dad and I were playing soccer and he wanted to know just how I knew so much about the game. Not wanting to let it be known that I was merely making it up as I went along (which would have made painfully clear how pitifully little he knew about it), I confessed, "ah, I used to play it when I was in college thirty years ago." He was impressed by this mightily and grilled me further on the subject. "I didn't even know you'd been to college, though I shouldn't have doubted it a minute from your general erudition, but, pray tell, which "college" did you attend?" I knew from the sound of those quotation marks, let alone the pray tell, that whichever institution I chose for my alma mater, it would be received with suspicion. So, I decided not to answer. He pressed on, "Temple? Swarthmore? Haverford? University of Pennsylvania?..." I stopped him before he picked any longer names and said, "Yes, Unibercity of Transylvania...yep." And to his next question, "and what degree did you receive there?" I answered, "thirty degrees." Now, I thought this pretty much answered all his questions, once and for all, and put the last nail in the coffin lid on the matter, but no: his interest was just getting piqued! "Thirty degrees Farenheit or Centigrade,?" he inquired. "Centigrade of course,!" I snapped in fast-mounting exasperation. But did he stop here? No! He had to have the last word. "Oh, I should have guessed, I guess. Unibercity of Transylvania's in Europe where they use only metric!"

August 2, 1996: Some men came and laid a blacktop walkway from the fence by the garage all the way to the back of the property in a figure-8 pattern (behind). It's great.

The hill is so steep that I just can't get enough tricycle runs out of it! (I haven't dared use it for bicycling, because it looks too scary.)

August 3, 1996: Today Dad asked if I'd like to see our old house and I said yes. (It's not the first time he asked, but for some reason it's the first time since we moved I showed any interest.) The main reason I wanted to go had little to do with nostalgia and everything to do with Teabag, Kathy's Dalmation. I love that dog.

Dad did his best to hide his disappointment that I didn't really remember having lived there. (Whenever he'd say, "do you remember this," I'd say yes in a tone of voice that suggested I didn't but didn't want to hear more about it either.) I clearly didn't recognize my bedroom, probably because the only thing about it that looked the same was the carpet and the hanging lantern. The house was fine, but Teabag stole the show.

August 4, 1996: I had Dad tell me the installment of Ratman (Douglas Bunting) and Bobbin (Mel Greenburg) concerning Douglas and Christina in the hammock together (she takes the battery out of the cellular phone to avoid him getting calls from Police Commissioner Gordon about going off and finding escaped criminals while he watches, feigning sleep, through partially opened eye lids, and questions her about this and then, when he sees how important the matter is, promises her to take two months off to spend with her, etc.) again (for the twelfth or thirteenth time) yesterday. Certain deviations in the retelling got me to thinking, and today I confronted Dad about it. He was remarkably approachable about it, but equally remarkably remorseless. (In fact, he seemed downright pleased with himself as well as with me.) I said, "Dad, I know Ratman isn't real and you're just making it up."

"How do you know?," he asked (in that voice that said "you're right, but I'm doing a survey of people who've been bamboozled by me in this regard and I'd like to be able to put down the precise manner of your epiphany").

"Because," I countered, "I noticed that each time you told me the part about the hammock it was different: once you said that Douglass said "Christina?????" [with rising voice]; another time "Christina!!!" [with falling voice].

Dad said, "you're very clever and very observant and very right in what you deduced, but remember that even an event that you remembered observing might be retold slightly differently each time you attempt it because of cracks in one's memory. Also, remember that all your superheros, not just Ratman, is 'just a story,' as you put it. None of them are recollections from 'real life,' except they seem real because they're dressed up in outfits and filmed with actors or drawn in books," etc. "I take it you don't want me to tell you about Ratman anymore?"

"Yes," I said quickly, lest he get the wrong idea. "Yes, tell me, sure, but I want you to know I know it's not true."

"It has truth in it, though," he said, a bit defensively.

"Which part?," I inquired, naïvely.

"No specific 'part.' I mean it tells a kind of truth about people and events and situations and the way we think and react and....

He went on and on about the fine points of truth in language I wouldn't repeat even if I could. All I can say is that it sounds pretty unlikely any of it could be true: if Ratman and the rest aren't real, how could anything they do be real, afterall?

August 5, 1996: I forgot to mention yesterday how I tickled Dad's funny bone just as he was getting heated up about my refusing to take the time to eat something before heading over to Mikey's. He said, "Daniel, you haven't eaten a thing all day, and I just know that the minute you get over there you're going to inform Susan of this fact (my not having eaten all day), and she's going to think we won't feed you here and feel obliged to prepare a lunch for you..., blaah, blaah, blaah, into which I interjected like a knife, pointing to myself with index finger to breastbone, "HEY, I'M NOT HUNGRY...CAPISCHE!?"

August 26, 1996: Dad and I have a new sport in which to compete: Roller Blades. It all happened when I found out that Will had something I didn't. Mom tried to console me that I too had skates, but I thought, Skates! Who needs skates?! Skates are not roller blades, for crying out loud...and beside, they're Fisher-Price™, which is kids' stuff!

Anyway, Mom and Dad discussed the matter of my being in desperate need of roller blades (this was beyond a matter of want at this point), and Dad said he had always wanted to learn to roller blade and do this with me, and that now sounded like a fairly reasonable time to stop thinking about it and just do it, and I said "alright!"

We went yesterday to Toys R Us and bought ourselves roller blades and by last night I was already pretty good on them. We went up to the school yard, because our new blacktop path through the back yard is too steep for Dad (though not for me). Dad's not nearly as good on the roller blades as am I. Therefore, I've taken on the responsibility of teaching him. I find it quite rewarding. There's no end to the advice, lectures, adages, aphorisms, and platitudes one can employ in teaching one's father how to roller blade. He's not exactly a star pupil, but I love him 'cause he's my Dad.

Before going to sleep, Mom suggested to me that perhaps I was getting old enough to sleep in my own bed. I agreed, cautiously, but with the proviso that Mom slept with me. Mom then suggested that if I still wanted to be in the same room, we could bring my bed in and put it at the foot of theirs. I agreed again, but with the same proviso. When Mom and Dad laughed I put the matter rather plainly: "I want to go everywhere you go...except to church."

10/1/96: The movie *Amadeus*; general interest in Mozart, especially that music played in the film, like the "little" g-minor (25th) symphony, the finale of *Don Giovanni*, and the *Requiem* (especially the *Confutatis* section). When Suvi got her new mini-van and asked if we'd bring a CD along to test out its player, Daniel chose the *Mozart Requiem*. Before coming with us on a drive somewhere else he asked if I brought *Don Giovanni*. The *Magic Flute*, especially picking out Papageno's second aria on the piano; and especially my love of the first number, Tamino's "Save me, save me."

11/6/96: My first tooth came out last night and even though I lost it before the day was out, Dad put \$2 under my pillow for it in an effort to make me think there was such a thing as a "good tooth fairy." (The things parents believe in!)

11/14/96: I found out today some horrible, horrible news: after a one-month count-down to blast off toward Disneyworld, Mom told me today the launch has to be scrapped for the time being because Uncle Jack has to have an operation. Within less than a second my eyes gave way to curving arcs of tears projecting out to wash everyone concerned in my disappointment. Later on when it was safe to brooch the question

again, Mom said that after uncle Jack's operation he would come to live with us for some time. I told her "that's better than Disneyworld!"

11/16/96: My second tooth came out and I was most excited, not so much in anticipation of a hard-earned \$2 in the ole' piggy, but rather because I believe it makes me look "just like Will!" (who, by the way, has three teeth out, all in the top, and looks real cool).

11/17/96: Dad and I went to visit Uncle Jack after his operation. I like going to see him because we get to go downstairs and eat hot dogs at the Atrium cafeteria (where I know where everything is and where I insist on serving myself, beginning to end).

12/9/96: Finally, after dashed hopes to ride Splash Mountain when our trip to Disney World was postponed (because Uncle Jack had to get a bypass operation), finally we're back here in the land of me, me, me. I've been difficult down here and it's been good. (Not difficult beyond anyone my age who is faced with the prospect of total self-indulgence but normal or not, Mom and Dad don't like it.) Whenever I see that without which my life is meaningless I throw a tantrum till I have it or forget I don't. This trip the idee-fixe is largely confined to Silver Buzz™, a Buzz Lightyear™ toy just like mine but that it's the finish of a hubcap. My life will not be the same without it. Every other word out of my mouth has been at least a veiled allusion to it if not the very thing itself by name.

12/11/96: They have a lot of weddings down here and Mickey and Minney are always there with the man and the woman getting married. One of these I am sure was Mickey himself getting married. I made an announcement to many people I passed while driving my electric cart (another just like Uncle David uses-one of my favorite things I did on this trip), saying "Mickey's getting married to a woman who's not Minney!"

12/15/96: At the Orlando airport yesterday waiting for the plane home I befriended some boys my age with whom I shared beautifully, their things and mine. When I noticed a little girl crying not far away, I went to Mom and asked for some of my Mickey chocolates and then asked her parents if she could have some and then offered them to take her out of her misery. Everyone was impressed with my compassion.

On the plane they came around handing out these small box lunches that all looked the same. When I finished mine I stood up and turned around and saw that the folks behind me had the very same lunch in front of them. I remarked, "what a coincidence!"

12/27/96: Christmas was almost as much fun as I thought it would be; my cousins (all of them belonging to Dad's brother!) came over to open gifts on Christmas Eve and it was great: so much noise and activity and commotion. I had every gift under the tree opened within a couple of minutes-mine, Dad's, Mom's, anybody's. As I was saying, it was almost as much fun as anticipated; I didn't get Silver Buzz™. I did not get Silver Buzz™. No Silver Buzz™. Not even a drawing of one or a corner of a box from one. Nothing. Nada. Mom said I shouldn't have been surprised not to get it; she only told me I wasn't getting it 6 times (due, evidently, to my rather unsavory behavior back in Florida when the lust for it first insinuated itself and I would have sold my sole to the devil for it. (What does that mean, to sell your shoe bottom to the devil? What's that to

him?) Anyhow, the next day was great because Ariel came over (with her parents and my Aunt Clara and Uncle Cody) for dinner. She's habit-forming. She's got a boy's lust for adventure and yet she still looks like a girl. What could be better?

Anyway, yesterday was the best day of all; Mom got up out of a sick-bed to take me to a pet shop (Plymouth Meeting Mall) and buy a pet rat. Ever since I saw the two that Jessie and Noah have I no longer thought a whit about Silver Buzz™. I love my rat. I call him Golden. (He's black and white with not a spot of gold or anything that would pass for gold on him.) Dad pointed out that the goldfish I got (early in the autumn at the Fair with Ariel in Bethlehem) I also called Golden. I corrected him without a moment's hesitation, saying, "no he's Goldie."

We now call him Rattie.

1/17/97: At my piano lesson last night, Olga asked me if I practiced any last week and I told her, "I played just one time...but I thought about it every day."

2/11/97: Yesterday, after snow-tubing with Mikey in the morning and Noah Bird in the afternoon, Noah's Mom came to pick him up and asked if I could come with them to the movies to see the new improved Star Wars. And, of course, it was the least I could do, and I went. When I came home and Dad asked me to tell him about it, I said "it was very sophisticated." He appreciated that.

3/?/97: We now have another rat, a white (supposedly hairless) one with bright red eyes, smaller and less gregarious than Rattie. They get along beautifully, and even sleep together. They never fight. I call him Snowie.

3/18/97: I suggested to Mom that we find ways for me to augment my measly allowance (which Dad had just raised from \$2.50 per week to \$3.00, but which I still find impractical when you're trying to buy toys that cost \$40 and \$50) and she consented, asking me in turn what I thought I might do that would be helpful enough to earn 50 cents or so. I said wiping my own butt, to start.

3/22-29/97: Spring Break trip to the Cloister, Sea Island, GA: Great time, especially as they had a day camp 10:00-2:00 with a ratio of only 4 kids to each aide. Got sick the night before leaving, throwing up all night (though reassuring Mom in between, "but I still want to go to Georgia"), and then again on the plane, but all so neatly: at home walking into the bathroom to throw up in the toilet; on the plane using the bag so efficiently. Desirous of talking about "barfing" to everyone, especially as war stories to Matt back home. When Dad came down with an intestinal virus I kept asking him how he was feeling and how soon we could swim, play ping-pong, etc.

I'm having such a good time I could fart!

Wanted more than anything else to play one of the arcade video machines, one Dad did not approve of (is there one he does?) because of the violence and the expense. Dad said it cost 75 cents and I said no only 1 quarter, not three. Dad repeated his observation, as did I. He said, O.K., here's a quarter: if it works, have a good time, if not, don't come asking for another two. Fine, I said. Damn! It didn't work! What a time for the machine to go acting up. O wait a minute; I put it in at the wrong time. Please, just this

time, another quarter. Hm. still not working? Oh, luckily I have this quarter in my pocket; I'll just put this in...Bingo! See, Dad, it does work with just one quarter! Lost my patience with Mom on this trip when she tried to curb my unalienable rights to watch Nickelodeon cable on TV. I simply wanted it on all the time that I wasn't at camp, playing ping-pong, or on the toilet. And when I got rather aggressive in pursuit of protecting which ever amendment covers TV rights, Mom threatened to take away my so called "TV privileges," what ever that means-she makes it sound like a luxury and not a necessity. Any way, she got to me with this threat and I got mad and corrected what I thought to be a mistake in her wording: "You can't even speak it right, you different-language-speaker, you!" And then I explained why I got mad: "I was just so excited...I just wanted to see everything in Georgia! I'll do anything to get my TV privileges back... I'll even give one of my toys to someone! I just can't give up TV. TV is just like smoking cigarettes; once you start, it's so hard to stop."

4/10/97: Dad quite upset me with his answer to a difficult but necessary question: "Who do you love more, me or Rattie?" Without the slightest hesitation he answered: "Oh, that's easy! Of course, my sweet...YOU!" I couldn't believe my ears, so I pursued the matter with this heartless barbarian who obviously could not love a rat: "If you could only save one of us, who would it be?" Dad just picked up where he left off and said "YOU, OF COURSE!" I felt dejected. Did he have a heart of stone that he could love a mere person more than a rat? What kind of monster have I created in my father? I was ashamed to be his son? I said, "you don't love Rattie?" He answered, "Of course I do...I think he's a most wonderful rat and I love him very much, but you are a human being and my son and I love you more than the sun, the moon, the stars [etc., etc., etc.]" I interrupted his platitude, "But I love Rattie just the same as you and Mom." Dad's face looked as long as a late breakfast but he answered, "Well, I'm sorry to learn that and hope you don't mean it but you are certainly entitled to express your true feelings [etc., etc., etc.]."

-add foot of snow 3/31 and light snow on 4/18.

-5/3/97: Daniel talked Evan into helping him sell the rocks he and I painted. They set up tables out front and tried hawking them to passersby but, perhaps at prices a trifle too high to elicit much interest: prices from \$10 (for a 1 1/2" rock) up to \$89 (for a 7 1/2"). I suggested lowering the prices say 90% and Daniel was horrified and scandalized. He decided to offer lemonade too. Daniel and Mikie did the same the next day, offering rocks at greatly reduced prices, lemonade, and mud-a nickel a dollop.

5/16/97: Last night I played a duet with Olga, apparently not as well as I might have, because she suggested we wait on doing it just that way until I've done something or other first (grown older?) and I objected saying, "no, I like the challenge."

6/17/97: A week or so ago Dad told me how Douglass Bunting won a poetry contest when he was a kid with the following poem: There were once two cats of Kilkenny, / Each thought there was once cat too many, / So they fought and they fit, / And they scratched and they bit, / Till, excepting their nails / And the tips of their tails, / Instead of two cats, there weren't any. He was quite surprised to find that I had memorized it perfectly in one evening and when I

recited it to him again yesterday he was particularly impressed, because he himself couldn't quite remember it correctly.

6/18/97: Satu's been staying with us again (for more than a week already) and it's good to have someone less than 7 times my age around to communicate with and kick around. Dad took us to play miniature golf and jr. whopper™ last night and I was pissed to learn I lost even though I had the highest score (the most strokes). On the way back I overheard Dad asking Satu about her career plans after she graduates from her technical school three years from now and she replied she didn't have any. He pressed a bit further, asking if there wasn't something she wanted to be, even something she didn't think possible or likely or something, discounting for starters an astronaut, for example, etc., and I asked "how about a seal?" When they both laughed and realized that my nonsense made some kind of sense, I pushed it as far as wits would allow: "How 'bout if we start you off as an anchovy and take it from there."

6/24/97: Last night Dad came home with another Mother's Day gift for Mom. (The first one, a watch given her on Mother's Day, didn't go over very well at all, as Mom already bought herself a watch for that particular purpose and saw this one as an example of Dad's being out of touch with her needs and wants and all.) Anyway, remembering the less than cosy atmosphere surrounding the first attempt and full confident in the quality of my diplomacy skills, I immediately seized the package from his hands and presented it to Mom with my imprimature, so to speak, saying, "here, Mom." When Mom asked, rhetorically, in the process of opening it, what was in the box, I deftly turned to Dad, one nervous eye on the still unopened box, and declared with rolled eyes, "I hope it's not a watch!"

7/12/97: I had my first sleepover at someone else's house last night! It's one thing to have friends sleep over my place-I can then sleep with Mom and Dad and the friends can go fend for themselves-but over some other's house is quite another matter. I have yet to stay the night until last night at Will's birthday party. No sweat, a piece of cake, even though I heard Liz tell Mom that I had that "uh, oh, I wonder what I got myself into" kinda look in my eye at bedtime. But I slept through the night just fine. (Dad cracked me up in the morning when he called from his office to ask if I was feeling any better than the night before-I had had a fever-and I figured I'm not going to take any chance missing this upcoming party or my own to follow today, and I said to him "I feel like a million bucks!")

7/28/97: Last night Dad tried to teach me about manners again. It was allowance time, and I merely walked past him while grabbing my three dollars from his outstretched hand, and he did not like it, not one little bit. He asked me to come back and return the money and change rolls so I could see what it feels like. We reenacted the whole scene (which, by the way, I found so unexceptional as to be wholly unworthy of repeating)-except that I was him and he was me, and when he grabbed the money from my outstretched hand (which, by the way, was not quite as outstretched as had his been), he turned around and asked, "so how does that feel?" I looked at him blankly, as one would, having been asked an pointless and irrelevant question. So he reworded it more precisely, saying, "what was the first feeling you were aware of when you felt me snatch the money from your hands and continue walking past without acknowledging your

giving of it?" I cocked my head, smiled with ever the slightest roll of the eyes, and answered without hesitation, "I felt you were copying me."

8/5/97: I asked Dad, "what's your best composer?," and he answered, "you mean my favorite?" "No, your best." "Mozart," he said. (Why is it I was not surprised by this?) So, I asked the invetible, "Why?" "'Cause he thrills me...makes me want to sing and dance and jump for joy." "So," asks I in return, "what's your best piece of his, the Requiem?"

Trip to Belgium, August 13-27:

8/17: Bruges, waiting to take a boat tour of the town, having been told by Suvi that we'd need to wait for the next one because this one's going to be a French-speaking tour group: "No, let's take this one; I heard her: She has just a little bit of an accent."

8/16: at the Bistro at the hotel: I want a bananna split, but tell them to hold the whipped cream and the banana."

8/26: in Brussels at the Arctia hotel, re: why the fruit salad was particularly good: nothing strange in it... "yea, no mayonaise."

At the Royal Museum, looking at a painting depicting Lucretia, Jack commenting that in Mexico the virgin is shown stabbing herself just like Lucretia, eliciting the comment: "small world!" from Daniel.

Chanell-surfing at night past the preview to the porno movie, "back up, please!, I want to see that other chanell we passed." After Suvi refused, saying it was nothing for him, he said, "I want to see the one right after the wiener."

9/21: I had my second sleep-over last night (at Evan's) and it went very smoothly. Evan and I stayed up till 11:00 (after his parents went to bed) and I got myself to sleep just fine and Mom and Dad are real proud of me.

9/22: Dad's been reading to me each night from an illustrated Children's Bible and I really enjoy it, except sometimes when I sense Dad takes these stories a little too personally. Often, when he's reading a story involving the typical Biblical patriarchal, misogynistic, bigoted, authoritarian, judgmental, insensitive, moralizing tone, he turns to me and invites me to be critical, but for some reason I'm hard pressed to do it (out of a feeling of respect for such an old book or what I don't know). And after Dad took exception to "God sitting back and giving passive authorization to Essau for planning to kill his brother merely for stealing his birthright" (which sounded like damned good enough grounds to me!) and asked whether I thought it was appropriate, and I said, "ehh...so so...not too bad." Dad pressed me for more detail (did I not make myself plain?) and I said, "well, if it's really not true (i.e., we know these stories didn't really happen, right?) then it doesn't seem too bad!" Dad first laughed but then thanked me (quite sincerely) for teaching him something. (Seems he temporarily forgot about the temporary suspension of disbelief necessary to the enjoyment of literature.)

9/25: Mom and Dad went to my school last night for "Back to School Night" and were really impressed with my journal I left on my desk there for them to see. Each day I make a dated entry with a titled drawing. They both particularly liked my portrait of Dad at the wheel because it showed suspended from an invisible windshield a rear-view mirror with Dad's eyes and nose, just like I know him from the back seat.

10/14: Last night we went in town to have dinner with Jack at a Belgian restaurant [Curvee di Notre Dame] to celebrate Mom and Dad's 21st anniversary and I had duck in a sweet sauce which I liked pretty much even though I woulda rather had a hot dog. Anyway, Dad ordered snails in an unusual dark brown gravy and after several attempts to get me to try I put my caution on the back burner (figuring he's going to eat them, so why shouldn't I) and, by golly, I liked it. He asked me to eat as many as I wanted (which I immediately interpreted as his way of confessing he didn't like 'em, but I didn't say this of course) and when I went for my third I speared a slice of mushroom instead of a snail (in such a dark sauce it was hard to see just what was what) and when Dad said, "that's not snail, it's a mushroom," I froze in fear, dropping the fork, raising my shoulders, stiffening my arms before me, screwing up my face, and shuddering to the full extent of the chill that had instantly taken hold of me and said, "mushroom!, ughhhh!" Somehow they all found this funny. Go figure!

10/22/97: I'm becoming an opera buff, I'm afraid. Dad showed me this video of Hänsel und Gretel sung in English so you could understand it and I thought to myself, "hey, this is good...probably 'cause you can understand it!," etc. Well, now I've been getting in the mood to watch it regularly with Dad...except, that is, for the orchestral portions when nothing's happening except music. I ask Dad to fast-forward those parts but he doesn't like to "because they're part of the opera." Can you believe that? (Part of the opera! The curtains are part of the opera and you don't go studying them!)

10/23/97: Dad and I were studying my terrestrial globe so I could get a feel for exactly where my beloved Transylvania is (Dad says its right next to Pennsylvania, but I know he's just making that up because it rhymes, sort of). He said, "here's were we were in Belgium this summer and here's where we were in Finland before that and here's..." and I interrupted and asked, "so where's Burger King?"

10/24/97: Dad was busy practising piano last night because Olga was coming and I knew he didn't want to be disturbed for anything silly, so I cut him a deal he couldn't refuse in order to get him to wipe my butt-I said, "if you wipe my butt for me I'll watch Hänsel und Gretel with you without asking to fast-forward through the orchestral parts!" For some reason he thought this was funny; I saw it merely as practical.

12/15/97: We just got back from Disney World again (we go there every year to meet uncle David and celebrate his birthday on December 13th) and stayed at the same resort [Yacht Club] as last time (I'm not complaining). It was great—I had my own electric scooter this time (Mom wanted to walk for exercise) to ride alongside Uncle David. This made the trip worthwhile (the parks are wearing a bit thin on me by now, although I can still take it). Anyway, this time it rained most of the trip (6 days in a row, day and night, night and day, straight, without a break, continuously, rain, rain, rain—unbelievable) and we played LOTS of cards. It turns out that I am what is called a "card shark." Well,

what 'ya know? I don't mind if I am; it's much more distinguished sounding than a "card jelly fish" or a card anemone" or a "card minnow." We played Go Fish and Old Maid and War and the adults looked as if one more game of anything would have been their demise. (I think this was 'cause I was winning.)

12/26/97: I made Dad laugh today while at Noah Burd's house. I heard Dad admiring the handiwork of Noah's older brother Aaron, who had constructed a huge Rube Goldberg type construct of plastic building-block parts, sort of like Leggos, with moving parts moved by a battery-powered motor...and when I came in to see just what it was that had so impressed him, I put my own two cents in: "well, *that's* some'pon ya don't see every day!"

12/27/97: Mom asked me to clean up the mess I made in the guest bathroom with the bandaids. (She purported that I had emptied the box out on the counter and left them there, along with the wrappers of the ones I used.) I said, "I didn't do it—I have a lullaby!" "A *lullaby?*, she asked me. "You must mean an *alibi*," she said, holding back laughter not all that convincingly. I said, "no, a lullaby...I wasn't even here!"

1/4/98: On the way home from Uncle Jack's New Years [or Thereabouts] Party I asked Dad if he'd tell me about Ratman, especially the most recent installments of the Invasion of the Clementine People (truly gripping and high in Vitamin C) and he said, "since we're almost home, how 'bout we just wait till we get in?," to which I responded, "but we're going to play Chinese Checkers with Mom as soon as we get in." When Dad suggested maybe hearing Ratman after the Chinese Checkers then, I rolled my eyes, shook my head and muttered, "boy, you're tough!"

2/6/98: We went to a place where they keep greyhound dogs that are retired from racing and waiting to find a home. I was suspicious of the value of such a visit; these dogs are very big and intimidating, I thought. But I was wrong; they're as gentle as they are big, and what's more—they don't bark! Can you believe it? I remember when we walked into the SPCAs and had to hold our ears (as well as noses), but here you could hear a pin drop (and didn't have to hold your nose because they're all trained not to mess their cages). Anyway, a volunteer was walking one of them back from a long exercise walk when we were standing around outside, and it came right up to me and put its head against my waist and nuzzled, wagging his tail and studying me with his dreamy brown eyes. This was the dog for me; O.K. buddy, hop in the car, the search is over, all bets off, we're outa here! But noooooo, it wasn't that easy. There were papers to fill out—I don't get it; these dogs were going to be exterminated unless we came along and here they want to research us and see if *we're* suitable to adopt them! (What's this world coming to?) We were told it could take a month or more and Mom and Dad said that there's no way I would last that long with my heart set on this red fawn greyhound named Style (this name that would punctuate nearly every sentence out of my mouth at least twice during the next week).

2/11/98: We got him! When Mom called the greyhound adoption agency to give them some missing information they told her that we got our wish and we can pick Style up on Friday—only 52 hours, 14 minutes and 30 seconds from now!

2/12/98: All conversations lead to discussions of greyhounds and one in particular named Style. I have seen connections between this topic and just about any you can think up.

2/13/98: It happened! We picked Style up today and I love him!

2/14/98: Style slept in our room in his "crate" (cage) and he didn't cry or anything. I love him!

2/15-18/98: Style, Style, Style, Style.

2/22/98: Yesterday I saw my first opera and I loved it except that it was so long. Dad and Mom and Uncle Jack and Olga and I drove (actually, Mom drove) up to New York in the van and first stopped at the Hard Rock Cafe on 57th Street to buy Satu another hat to replace the one she lost at the amusement park. Then we drove to Lincoln Center and parked underneath it and walked about the lobbies, stopping for a bite to eat before they let us into the Metropolitan Opera where we saw (in person, not on video!) *The Magic Flute* (all of it, stopping only for a single intermission!) Wow! Dad was impressed! I made it through the whole thing—except, technically, the last 45 minutes, when I was squirming all over and under my seat, but still not disrupting the opera or anything.

I told Dad just as Pamina was pondering a sudden connubial longing for her dagger that I had to go to the bathroom. Dad said it wasn't possible, and he whispered this in a hushed urgency that sounded like he was longing for the same thing (Pamina's blade). And when I announced in a much more audible whisper that indeed it *was* possible because indeed I *did* have to go to the bathroom, even Mom jumped in to agree that I didn't have to go to the bathroom. I was exasperated at this point, and as far as I was concerned, Pamina could have killed herself and taken those three little snot-noses with her and I wouldn't have cared a hoot. I announced to both of them, whispering, technically, that I would therefore remain very uncomfortable. They were both obviously comfortable with that knowledge, and now I was really mad! It was me against them now, no, me against Mozart, no...me against God!...no, I guess really just me against Dad and Mom.

When it was over and Pamina had actually jilted the dagger and married Tamino instead (to a packed stage and considerable hoopla) and we finished clapping for everybody (and I mean everybody), Dad said I could *now* go to the bathroom. I told him in complete awareness of the power I was wielding, "I don't have to now." He looked alarmed. He asked, "what do you mean you don't have to?; you had to 45 minutes ago!" "Well, I don't anymore," I told him calmly, with a certain smugness. And can you believe it, the guy debated this with me? I mean, who knows best whether I have to go to the bathroom or not, him or me? (He actually asked me if that means I already went. "Went where?") Geeze.

3/1/98: When I got back from a sleep-over at Mikie's, I learned from a very somber and apologetic Mom and Dad that they returned Style to the kennel because of his recent behavior (growling and barking and snapping at me, my friend Catherine, and Dad). They were too afraid of him doing something worse and so took him back. But I was very forgiving and accomodating and said I understood and this made them feel much

better. (I think they took it worse than I did.) Then they took me to Toys 'R Us and said I could buy a few expensive toys (which made us *all* feel even better).

3/15/98: Dad and I got onto the subject of friends and "best friends" in particular, and when he asked me who did I feel was my best friend, I said without hesitation, "Mikie." "Ah, that's nice," he said. "Do you know why?," I asked him. "No, why?" "Cause we share germs."

5/10/98: Mom and Dad were impressed with my attitudes toward justice, at least on television. They were watching some movie about the notoriously corrupt Los Angeles police department set back in the old days, and I happened to walk in on it just near the end where the only honest guy in the entire bureau is injured on the ground but about to summon up the strength to pull the trigger on his boss, who's the most corrupt of all of them and goes around with a holier-than-you smile all the time and just when the boss attempted to talk his way out of this one, I shouted at the good guy, " don't listen to 'em; shoot 'em while ya' got the chance and get it over with before you change your mind!"

6/6/98: I've gotten so much better at baseball that Mom got a call from coach Andy asking me to take part in the all-star league. Today was our first practice and it was great; just the cream of the crop was there, like me. I think I've gotten this good, especially at catching and throwing because Dad and I practice out front so much.

6/7/98: Today I was supposed to go to church to be part of some kind of ceremony or something, but I warned my teacher I couldn't attend because I had to go to downtown Philadelphia with my Dad. She asked Mom about this and Mom said this was news to her and asked me about this, saying, "you know, Daniel, that's lying when you say something that isn't true," etc., etc., etc. and, before she could continue, I told her, "I wasn't lying – I *wanted* to go to downtown Philadelphia with Dad!

6/8/98: Snowy died yesterday, poor thing. He had been sick a long time (pneumonia, we learned from the doctor at Rau earlier in the day, as well as a collapsed lung) – which we could tell from his sneezing blood all over the place and his wheezing, but what brought his end real quick was breaking his back, at least in part, down near the bottom when he got trapped between the bars (he seemed to be trying to get out – unusual for him) and was left hanging by his haunches until I found him. He was so scared he bit me and then bit Dad when he tried to get him dislodged. (He didn't bite either of us too hard though, and we knew he didn't mean to.) The doctor said he wouldn't know until tomorrow if his back was really broken. In the mean time Mom was sitting with him in her hands to comfort him and suddenly he grabbed her finger with his paw and gave two shudders and died and Mom was crying and crying and I consoled her.

Dad on the other hand seemed only too eager to dig a hole out back and get Snowy into it. I said, "let's do it tomorrow; I'm tired now," but Dad said, "no, no, I'll dig the hole now and call you when it's ready and we can do a little ceremony for him tomorrow or the next day if you're too tired for the whole funeral today, but I do want to get him buried before he starts to stink." So Dad dug a hole near the big cherry tree out back and asked me to come watch and I did but couldn't; when I saw Dad take him out of the box and put him in the bare dirt just like that without a coffin or anything I just couldn't watch, and I ran back to the house quick as I could.

[in Finland with Mom 7/1 to 7/8; met Dad and Uncle J. in Dover on 8th and left on P. & O.'s Royal Princess (Princess Cruises) on 9th until 23rd]

7/9/98: We celebrated my birthday twice late last month since I wouldn't have friends and family near today. Dad talked the Maitre 'D on the boat into giving us a first-seating table in the DR and we got a great one near the window right in front of a table with a Swedish boy my age and we became great friends. His name is Kevin Vetter and his father, Rodney Vetter is an American from Los Angeles, though his mother is a Swede from Gothenburg and that's where they live. Kevin's parents were impressed with how much Ketchup I used at dinner and even though they didn't do more than stare I felt obliged to explain that "we use a lot of ketchup in America." (When the waiter initially put some on my hot dog for me and I said, "that's a lot of ketchup," they thought I was being sincere and said, "that doesn't look like too much," but I informed them, "I was being sarcastic.")

7/20/98: In the ship's elevator we were really packed in at one point today and when the doors opened I said, "O no, I hope no more people are getting on," and when a woman asked if I was afraid of getting squished I said, "yes, because I have a back problem."

7/23/98: on the road to the Gatwick zoo I said, "this reminds me of Belgium except it doesn't look a thing like it."

8/2/98: Dad and I were washing in Mom and Dad's bathroom and I told Dad that I thought we didn't look very similar. Dad asked what I meant and I pointed out the very obvious hair color difference for starters; but when Dad suggested that there may be more subtle similarities between us than hair color, such as, for example, a certain look in the eyes, etc., I said with confidence, "oh, yes, and we both love Mozart!"

9/9/98: Mom and Dad took me to Keswick Cycle in Easton yesterday afternoon (just after Dad came home) and bought me a six-speed mountain bike with 24" wheels! No wonder I couldn't ride my old bike; I got it when I was 4 or 5 and its wheels were half or less the size of these! And best of all, I'm going to get \$30 when I sell my old one to Tyler, the new kid on the block (he's 4 and lives where Kirsten Parrott lived).

9/13/98:

Today Jessie Horwitz was over and we were one-upping each other about karate class. I told him that we were so tough that our teacher had us killing wasps with our bare hands after doing 100 push ups, etc., etc., etc. Well, when we were at the pool and I jumped out in horror at a spider and Dad sarcastically called to me, saying, "I woulda thought they'd teach ya to kill spiders in karate too." I was not amused, so I told him, "no, the first thing they told us in karate was *"stay away from spiders!"*

9/22/98:

We got home late last night from a rock-scrambling expedition that was great except for the parts when we weren't rock scrambling. We went to Mohonk Mountain House at Lake Mohonk on the top of a mountain ridge near New Paltz, New York, and went for walks on paths between huge limestone boulders that led to narrower paths through the

same that led to eeny-teeny paths up and over and through the boulders and Dad said it was far too dangerous and Mom said at first it wasn't until we went in a ways and then she said she didn't want to (even though it still wasn't far too dangerous), etc. etc. The problem was, once I got my appetite whetted for it, there was no going back; I burst into tears on a couple of occasions when I erroneously remembered Mom *promising* me we'd go in again and was told I misheard. On the way back we stopped at Murphy and Jay Berger's house for Dad to do some appraising and Mom to video the place. I swam in their pool, but it was, well, a bit disappointing after ours. But the real reason I behaved so well was the fact that they had a couple of cats I fell in love with. One of them just wouldn't leave me and when I went to the pool, she came and sat by the pool waiting for me!

10/14/98: Yesterday was a sad day. Mom and Dad told me they'd have to take Rattie to the vet to be put asleep because he was obviously in serious discomfort and would soon die naturally in pain (he had bad pneumonia and lung tumors and wouldn't eat or drink for days). Dad did the dirty deed and came back with him and buried him in the back while Mom and I went to get a movie for us all to watch to take our minds off Rattie. I got kind of concerned about Mom's reaction, though, because she cried several times.

10/19/98: Today was a great day because we got a cat. Mom and I went to the Montgomery County SPCA and saw a beautiful male white mix named Alex (already) who's 1 1/2 years old and very nice and we brought him home and he hid immediately and it took us several hours to find him. He likes to sleep among the tools up in the shelving in the heater room. He doesn't respond to his name. Maybe we should change it. He runs away when you come near him and seems afraid of people in general.

10/22/98: Alex has a cold and is always sneezing. Mom's been giving him medicine that the vet suggested.

10/28/98: Alex is feeling better. He's still afraid of Dad, even though Dad has never hurt him or anything; as soon as he approaches, Alex runs for cover. Dad says he was probably mistreated formerly by a man and he's just not taking any chances. Alex comes near me, on the other hand, too too often; in fact, he attacks me whenever I walk past, pawing at my legs, which are usually bare and now well scratched. Dad says there may be a connection between his behaviour and my "rather intense style of play." I don't know what he's talking about. If he means my chasing Alex around the house—that's what cats like! (Dad doesn't understand this, apparently.)

11/23/98: Today Mom and I went down to South Philly to Fran's house (the breeder of ragdoll cats that mom found in the newspaper) and bought Max, an 11-week old ragdoll kitten that was my choice of the litter (when we went down for a preliminary visit last week) because he was so feisty. I love him. He is *very* playful and friendly and doesn't tire of my "rather intense style of play," as Dad has put it. What's even better, he's not afraid of Alex, even though Alex has been anything but friendly toward him—he's been downright rough with him and bites him, but Max keeps coming back for more—and even though Max eats Alex's food when he finishes his own (and sometimes even before he finishes his own).

11/25/98: Mom got a laugh today when I gave her some backseat direction in the neighborhood of Acme. Being that Dad takes me there and I remember Dad saying to me that a certain back route is not advisable because of traffic jams, etc., I relayed this information to Mom, who pooh-poohed it immediately. She said, "I am an expert at this," and I defend my Dad by informing her that my Dad's, well... "a half-expert." "What's a half-expert?!", she demanded to know. I said without a moment's hesitation, "he's an expert, but he forgets a lot." She found this funny for some reason, as did Dad when he heard her retell it.

12/4/98: Mom helped me work toward the video game memory card I wanted to buy but couldn't afford: she made up a list of household chores I could earn points for completing that would result in her buying this thing for me. Well, need I say, I did chores! I got a point for feeding the cats, another for cleaning their litter boxes, another for putting out trash, etc., etc. She figured it would take about a week to ten days to earn the appropriate number of points, but I showed her a thing or two: I had them all earned within about 24 hours; the cats looked like blimps (and had ever-fresh litter boxes), and there was not a speck of trash or recyclables within two miles of the house, etc., etc.

12/7/98: We went to New York this weekend, we this time being me, Mom, Dad, Uncle Jack and Michael Doyle. We had a great time even though we didn't get the suite we were promised and Mom had to raise, well, heck with the manager. Anyway, Dad and Uncle Jack and Michael went to two concerts [the Tallis Scholars at St. Ignatius Loyola at 83rd and Park Ave., singing their 25th anniversary and 1,000th performance concerts, with 16 singers rather than the usual 10, to a packed house] and Mom and I went off on our own and had a good time without them (it's only a bunch a people standing around in black suits singing anyway). Mom took me to Radio-City Music Hall, which is huge and crowded and it was pretty fun. Dad asked me what the highlight of it was for me and that was easy to answer: "the whole thing," I said. Anyway, the weather was fabulous and spring-like; on Sunday we all strolled (well, I was on Dad's back most of the time and on Michael's back almost the rest of the time) through Central Park and climbed rocks (well, I climbed rocks) and sculptures and stuff, and Mom and I went ice skating. It was over 75 degrees (I don't remember if it actually got much warmer than that but I do remember Dad was sweating and complaining of the heat—maybe because he was carrying me and a bag with our jackets). On the ride back Michael was telling us about a program he watched on Frank Lloyd Wright, whose angered butler set his house on fire and killed some of his family members and I listened as Michael related that Wright decided to rebuild the house rather than move and start over and I chirped in real quick before anyone would lose the thread: "I hope he didn't have a butler this time." Everyone found this particularly amusing even though I thought it was obvious and essential.

12/10/98: Last night was quite a night! Berne dropped just to give Mom back the key she used while cat-sitting and when she turned to go down the steps they discovered that her car was on fire! By the time the fire department arrived it was really on fire (the tires melted!) and it took them a half hour to put it out. It was very exciting and I was afraid Mikie might be missing it, so I interrupted Bernet on the phone (with her insurance agent), saying, "Berne, excuse me Berne, can you hang up so I can call Mikie?" For some reason, Mom and Dad were particularly touchy about this.

1/4/99: Dad and I were playing chess yesterday and he launched into his *lecture-that's-not-supposed-to-sound-like-a-lecture* mode, taking me to task, ever so gently, about being "cavalier" with my bishop (whatever that means) and losing it so early in the game. I pointed out to him that "it's alright, because I captured one of yours too," pointing to his pawn I had taken just before he took my bishop. He was not persuaded, however, and began from the egg about how many points each player's worth and how it's not too important to lose a pawn as compared with a bishop, etc., etc., etc., and I reminded him that I still had another and therefore not to worry, but even this did not appease him and he resumed the lecture about the relative power and importance of bishops in this game, for my own good, of course, and I cut him short and said, "**it's O.K., I don't use them much anyway.**" This worked. He stopped dead in his tracks and laughed like laughing was going to go out of style or something.

1/18/99: Dad came home somewhat early from work today and I asked him why and he said "so we can talk about Martin Luther King and why he's considered important enough for you to get the day off from school." And I said, "oh, don't worry, we learned all about him at school." And Dad said, "well, I'm sure there's still stuff left to discuss on that subject..." but I cut him off and said "O.K. but not now; after dinner." He agreed and after dinner I hung around upstairs in Mom's room, hovering around her desk (and bugging her, apparently), and she asked me to put something or other in my schoolbag for the next day and I suggested it could wait until morning and she said it could not. I then said, "please, Mom, don't make me go down there now." Mom was puzzled and asked why not and I said, "'cause I'll have to go past Dad [who was in the kitchen doing the dinner dishes, right outside where I needed to go] to do that." Mom was even more curious now and asked, "so...?" I then leveled with her with a somewhat desperate voice: "If he sees me, he'll stop me and tell me about Martin Luther King!" I then whispered to her, "but don't tell him I said this." However, it was too late, because I heard Dad laughing hard downstairs; apparently he had heard me.

check and see if Daniel's blister that kept him from art class is described above.

4/21/99: Dad brought Max back from the animal hospital last evening after the doctor removed his testicles. It couldn't have been a moment sooner, as far as Dad was concerned. He and Mom were arguing about it for weeks, Dad afraid Max was going to piss bad smells across his books or something and Mom saying he hasn't done anything like that yet, etc., etc. To me having Max sacrifice his balls was worth the relative peace it bought around the house. And, what's more, Max didn't seem to mind. He was back to being Max almost right away.

4/25/99: Wow! Dad took me to my first professional ice hockey game, and it was great. We drove down town and picked up Uncle Jack and his friend George and all four of us drove down to the real big new stadium, the one that doesn't seem to have an entrance until you walk all around it in a giant circle. We got there early because they were holding the tickets for us at the box office and so there was lots of time wash popcorn down with coke until the you know what hit the fan. It was great; the Philadelphia Phantoms "versing" the Cincinnati Mighty Ducks. We won 5 to 2 and I taught Dad how to read the score board. (Dad doesn't know too much about hockey and stuff.) There

were 8,500 people there at the game and the place looked only a little more than half full! (Now *that's* big!) Dad's favorite part in the whole thing didn't even happen on the ice; it was the part when a guy sitting behind us shouted angrily and impatiently down to one of the home-team player's as follows: "Dennis, do something IGNORANT!" Dad said this was the highlight of his weekend. He still laughs about it. (You just gotta love Dad, 'cause there is no understanding him.)

5/2/99: Finally, Coach Abel let me play goalie (after asking him every opportunity, such as after he would ask "any questions..." relevant to anything at any time) and boy, is he glad he did...I'm good! He said he never saw an 8-year old perform like me as goalie before, including my glove catch, for example. He said, "hey, where are you from, Mars?" and "you learned all that from going to one Phantoms game?" He said I could be goalie for the rest of the season if I wanted, and hoped I would, and even said he really wants me to be goalie for the playoffs.

5/9/99: Because of me our team (Silver Sharks) won still again; the other team's goalie wasn't a patch on me.

5/16/99: Uncle Jack and George came out (with Mom and Dad and me) to watch me play goalie, but even though I was good (I intercepted at least a dozen balls to acclaim) 6 of them got past me and we lost 5 to 6. What was worse, we didn't have to lose; the clock ran out while we were tied, and they decided to give us an additional 5 min. And even worse than that was the fact that Michael Biecher was the won who got it past me after predicting it in a very very smarmy way at church this morning.

6/6/99: We [the Cheltenham Javees Silver Sharks] won the season's tournament! We [the "greys"] actually beat them [the "blues," Michael Biecher's team]! We had two games to play under a relentless sun in sweltering heat: 1:00 and 3:00 and we whipped both the white and the blue teams. I got a special ovation for being such a great goalie all season. I was so good, I've been asked to join a team representing the township to play in Downingtown and other places.

6/19/99: I am beside myself with happiness about Criseyde—that's the name of our new dog who we got yesterday—a beautiful and oh-so-nice black lab we saw at the SPCA during the day on Friday. Mom and I alled Dad at work to get him to agree for us to take her home and he said fine and Mom said she'd go make arrangements after dropping me off at Zack's sleep-over party. But what a surprise I had when I came home Saturday morning and found that we Mom had already brought her home right after dropping me off! She's great. The name was Dad's idea, of course—who but Dad would ever think of such a strange name for a dog?!—but he suggested it in a way that suggested he'd be disappointed if I said no, and so I said, "I like it!" when Mom suggested it might be hard to remember. We're probably going to end up calling her Crissy for short anyway (except for Dad, I guess), but Dad says that my suggestion of "Good Girl" was "potentially confusing and therefore impractical," or something like that. Anyway, I lover her and she loves me and that's what counts. The cats are *not* pleased with Criseyde, no matter what we end up calling her.

6/20/99: I got Mom and Dad to laugh hard today by way of my attempt to skip church. I told Mom I had too much going on and didn't want to go. She explained that adults often do things they don't want to if it will please other people and that's what she'd like me to do, tra la la... and I warned her, "just remember what happened to Abraham Lincoln!" "Abraham Lincoln,?" she answered, "what happened to him?" (I couldn't believe she didn't know!) "He did too much and died from it," I informed her. "No, Daniel, he died because someone shot him." "I know...he did too much, so someone shot him and he died!"

6/25-7/2/99: [trip with Mom, Dad, Uncle Jack, and George to Las Vegas in order to see the Grand Canyon and neighboring sites]

6/27/99: [at the check-in at Little America Hotel, Flagstaff, AZ]: I was amazed to see that the hotel room lock was automatically tooled electronically from the front desk to fit the keys they gave us, and I said "very impressive—I guess that's why this place is so expensive."

6/28/99: [Sedona, AZ] "I have a friend who thinks that...er...what would you say if somebody thought that..."

6/29/99: [Flagstaff, AZ] When I woke up this morning, the first image I had was Mom about to bite into a muffin Dad left for her on her nightstand with the cup of coffee. Remembering that Mom complained before that she had no appetite for breakfast when Dad last did that, I said to her in as urgent a voice as possible: "Mom! What are you doing? You're filling yourself up before breakfast...DROP IT!"

— — — in the car at the Painted Desert I had to go to the bathroom bad and wasn't sure when we'd find one. Dad had explained just the day prior about mirages and I remembered and said I was starting to see mirages of portapotties.

— — — at the Grand Canyon on the trail in the car, I handed George an empty bag from the trail mix and he said I should eat it but I said I couldn't because I wasn't allowed since it was not pastuerized.

7/1/99: On learning that we were going to be heading back to Las Vegas, I said "Oh, good" as sarcastically as possible and then sang everyone a song I made up in its honor on the spot [to the tune of "it's raining, it's pouring, the old man is snoring"]: the gambling, the smoking, everybody's choking..."

7/2/99: At the Mandalay Bay hotel in Las Vegas the toilet in the room was very violent but I said aloud when Dad asked if I wanted him to come with: "no, wait, just let me face my fears."

8/7/99: Alex died yesterday. (He was about 2 1/2 years old, as he was 1 1/2 years old when we got him from the SPCA on October 1, 1998.) He started looking sick last week and Dad suggested checking him out when he discovered that one of the cats peed in the dressing room, neither of them having ever gone that far from the box before (though they sometimes miss the box in close proximity). As Max was still "running

around like an idiot," in Dad's words, we all agreed it was probably Alex who was sick—especially since he'd been even more quiet and aloof than even before. First we took him to Rau, where they thought he had a blood parasite condition, but then Mom took him down to Penn and was told it was a deadly abdominal virus that attacks the immune system. I won't forget learning that he died; Dad had taken my friend Adam Rosenthal and me to Valley Green to try out my new fishing rod (I caught two fish, about 6" each, which we threw back in) and Dad called Mom's cell phone on his own cell phone (to get a progress report on him) and caught Mom on her way back from the Penn Vet. Hosp. She broke me the news then and there and I burst into tears on the spot and cried so profusely for a couple minutes it looked like I'd nearly taken a shower.

9/26/99: My headaches have become more frequent and more uncomfortable in recent months, and Mom and Dad are really concerned. Mom took me to a headache doctor who immediately issue me a list of all the foods I shouldn't eat for 8 weeks, and these weren't okra and lima beans and things but my basic food groups: chocolate, coke, lunchmeats, peanuts, peas, onions, sharp cheeses...the list goes on ad nauseum. In fact okra and lima beans might be some of the only things left me! Anyway, I've been miserable and it's not over. And luckily I'm still getting my headaches too! (which may mean my favorite foods are not guilty and I'll be able to eat them again).

Mom bought me soy butter as a substitute for peanut butter. It's not. Dad showed me how brave he was by taking a spoon of it and pretending to like it, but I wasn't born yesterday and I told him I didn't like it. "How can you know if you haven't tried it?," he asked. "I can tell just by looking at it!," was my reply. (You can't argue with logic like that.) So he read me the contents, apparently under the presumption that if it sounded horrible enough I'd think it tasted great. Anyway, appended to this list of wholesome ingredients he added one of his own invention: "poison." Without missing a beat I exclaimed: "Poison? Is there caffeine in poison? If so, I can't have it!" Dad found this very amusing—more so than did I and I was the one who thought it might be funny to begin with.

9/27/99: We finished the first *Harry Potter* book! (*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* [1997]) and started the second one (*Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* [1998]). I say "we," but technically, it's Dad doing the lugging and hauling and I do the listening largely. But it's really interesting and I often ask for him to read it to me.

9/27/99: We got a replacement for Alex—two kittens from someone Mom learned about through the church who had a motherless litter to look after. We got first pick. They're gray, striped...regular cats and I named one Tiger (because of his stripes) and the other Bob (short for bobcat). The latter had been named Steve. (I had to act quick; who knows what Dad would have suggested, given the chance!) I love them. They keep us up all night by playing in our bed. This is natural, because they like to sleep all day when we're up. I love cats. So do Mom and Dad, except for Dad, sometimes. Meanwhile, Chrissie—that's what we largely call Criseyde anymore—still licks her chops every time she gets a glimpse of any of the cats and therefore we still have them separated by floors, though Mom is trying her best to recondition Chrissie to pay them no mind. (We watch TV together in the family room with the kittens playing in a cage and Chrissie held by the leash with a muzzle on. Chrissie doesn't look once at the screen; she's completely transfixed by the cats and sits there shivering most of the while.)

10/1/99: I actually can't remember precisely which day this happened, but since I don't have anything else to write today, I'll just insert it here—Dad would be upset if this wasn't recorded, he laughed so hard. It was sometime not too long ago that he launched into one of his superbly boring lectures about responsibility, or not leaving my skateboard in the middle of the floor for people to break their neck on, or not lying when you're asked who left the skateboard there, or some such thing, and I patiently waited for him to draw his highly rhetorical editorial to a close. There was a moment of silence that seemed to indicate to me that he was expecting a response, so I took the ball and ran with it. I shook my head gravely and confessed, **"Wow...that's far more than I need to know, Dad."**

10/3/99: Dad's been telling me installments of *Ratman* that have been lately centering on Daniel Bunting and his supposed stomach ailment. I say supposed because I'm somewhat suspicious that Dad's making ailment up just to explore my own headache problem a bit without giving away his intention. (Do I look *that* dumb?) Anyway, it turns out that his parents, and even the doctor, seem to think this is all brought on by sneaking junk food. But I can tell Dad himself doesn't see a connection at all; just the parent characters in the story. Either this is what's known as "iron-e" or Dad doesn't know didly about the digestive system. I pray it's the former, so it will remain literary and not affect my diet. Anyway, Daniel's Mom and the doctor conspire in espionage to check on Daniel's eating habits (to prove that their theory is right and that it's Daniel's "fault" that he gets his upset stomach) and then lie to cover it up. I found myself enjoying what might seem a perverse pleasure in this and was egging them on past Dad's grave reservations that Criseyde (my chosen new name for Christine) was turning into an uncaring monster this way) and finally comforted Dad, "no go ahead, I want to hear this; if it gets uncomfortable, I'll fix it, don't worry."

10/4/99: Yesterday, Dad told me the story of *Gawain and the Green Knight*, a poem in hard-to-understand kindof English, though he retold it in the modern easy-to-understand type. Anyway, Dad was pleased that I liked it so well and understood it even better than he did. I was not a bit surprised to find out that Gawain's host at the distant castle was himself the Green Knight, and Dad found this interesting (my lack of surprise). I said I figured it out on my own; the very fact that the lord of the castle was not described at all as to physical appearance, particularly color, was my clue that the author was trying to hide this fact and that the two were one and the same. Dad was astonished at my logic, and I think his astonishment might suggest a bit of a patronizing attitude toward me, whatever that is. (I think that's bad, but I'm embarrassed to ask him.) Anyway, Dad chuckled at my responses to the story, especially when, on the third morning the beautiful wife of the lord of Bertilak (the Green Knight) once again failed to entice Gawain to make love to her, she offered him her girdle as a token and (knowing that Gawain would have to give this to Bertilak when the latter came home from hunting or at least hide it and pretend he didn't get it) Gawain learned that its magic would protect him from the Green Knight's ax blow the next day, I stepped in to warn Gawain aloud, "Don't do it! Don't do it! Don't take her girdle! It's a trap!" Dad was impressed with my response, but I figure it's pretty plain for *anyone* to see. (I mean, this

wasn't a bus pass, for crying out loud, but a women's undergarment. You don't need to be a grownup to catch the relative importance....)

10/6/99: Well, some relief seems in sight for my headaches! Mom's taken me a couple times to see an acupuncturist who's been doing accupressure messages on me for relieving stress nodes in my system, sort of like acupuncture but without the ouch. (We could hear a patient across the hall saying ouch and ooh each time one of these "painless" needle insertions was made and I thereby steeled my resolve forever to stick to the pressure end of the science and leave the pain management to those better equipped. Anyway, after seeing that this treatment (along with his application of little bandages to my earlobes centered with pellets that I press for 10 seconds every once in a while) was working far better than restricting me from eating any foods I like, I was absolved of my dietary torture and with great ceremony I gathered together all the foods I could think of that I wanted to eat over the past couple weeks of prison life and lined them up like ducks and ate them with great realish, fanfare, and smacking of lips. Mom and Dad were afraid I'd get sick but I didn't. It was good. (A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do!)

11/29/99: We took Bobcat and Tiger to the vet today and guess what?

I'm waiting!.....

Hello!.....

Well, *here's* what: Tiger is a girl! All along we thought we had two male kittens and here one of them was a girl all along. Upon learning this, Dad said "*that* explains *everything!*" (What could he have meant by that? Go figure!)

10/31/99: Finally! Just in time for halloween, Chrissie has finally learned to play with the kittens without looking like she's reaching for her bib, knife, and fork! We've actually been able to leave the barrier down this weekend, and Dad said that when the three cats came pouncing down the steps this morning, Chrissie stayed in sleeping position, her eyes open but her body relaxed at Dad's feet and that when she did get up she didn't lunge but stretched first and calmly walked over to chaperone them around the living room. Later in the day today we took Max outside on a leash and he was wonderfully unconcerned about Chrissie's attempts to get in her face. Dad thinks that maybe Chrissie's insistant nudging of the cats with her nose is some "wakened latent maternal instincts relevant to the guidance she'd give her own pups..." Sounds like bunk but it's a whole lot better than blaming it on Chrissie's "attitude" (which, sadly, is what I think it really comes down to).

11/10/99: It's a regular peaceable kingdom here (except for the people sometimes); Chriseyde doesn't even get up to greet the cats when they come down, and the kittens jump on top of her, play with her tail, and even curl up and sleep on her. Sometimes Chrissie bites them playfully but they don't seem to mind.

11/14/99: George was over today and I wanted to wrestle with Dad and him in the worst kinda way and for some reason (as sometimes happens) Dad didn't want to. I asked him why in every style I knew and asked him when he thought he might change his mind (figuring that I'd stick around and watch him till he did, just to make sure I could strike while the iron was hot). Anyway, I finally got a "maybe later" out of him (which anyone knows is worth two or more "no"s). "When's later," I asked, in my usual tact. "Maybe after I finish a couple chores around here and go food shopping..." Well, when I heard the garage door open, I ran down and met him at the car and opened the passenger door and knelt down with my hands in prayer position opposite him on the seat before he even got himself unbuckled and said, "can we please wrestle now?" "Oh, Daniel!" he said. "Dad!" I responded, with eyes the size of pingpong balls and a look on my face like I just saw the Y2K bug face to face. "George and I each ate three clementines so that you would wrestle with us!" I informed him. Dad stared at me for a while, processing this information, and asked the question I was most afraid of: "why?" I thought a moment and then screwed up my mouth like I was about to cry and said, "because we were desperate!...and look!, look at my mouth!...I have that look like I'm going to cry!"

11/16/99: Mom went to Finland yesterday and will be there for a week (from yesterday). In a cosy moment with Dad last night I confessed to him a perverse kind of enjoyment I derived from this new temporary arrangement (i.e., it having been arranged for Mom to be out of the country and my hair), despite how much I missed her. I said, "now I can live like an animal." He asked me to elaborate, either due to his not grasping what I meant or to grasping it so much he wanted more. I said, "you know...I can trash my room and it won't matter." I'm allowed to walk home now and let myself in (as of the last couple of months), and this will come in handy this week, just in case Dad gets stuck in traffic and can't be here exactly at 3:30. (I can easily get used to this.)

11/17/99 Today, Dad found Chrissie eating the remains of my snack on the coffee table and he laid down the law (again), saying, "if I find food down there (in the family room) or up in your room one more time, just one more time, you'll not be allowed to eat ANYWHERE BUT THE KITCHEN ever agin...EVER!"

"...Daniel?...." "Daniel!"

"Yes, Dad."

"Did you hear me?"

"Yes Dad."

"Repeat to me what I just said."

"That if you find food down there (in the family room) or up in your room one more time, just one more time, I'll not be allowed to eat ANYWHERE BUT THE KITCHEN ever agin...EVER!.....until I get married."

12/5/99: Mom and Dad broke up laughing about the way I stopped Mom dead in her tracks from trying to scare me into wearing my seat belts. It all started when she saw Evan's mom drive me home in their van seated on the floor with Evan and his sister because they had bikes taking up the seats. She said I am to tell anyone asking me to do such a thing again to call my parents and have them pick me up rather than take a chance like that again. O. K. fine, but then Mom's juices started flowing and she

continued: "Do you know what could have happened if she stopped quick? A bike could have hit you and you could have had your...your liver pierced or something..." to which I quickly retorted, "Aaahhhh, please, no more....It's hard enough for me to think about getting a booster shot."

Also, they thought it funny that just before returning to the court for the second half of our roller hockey tournament (which, alas, we lost to the whites by one point!) coach Lou asked if there were any questions. Since my team was tongue tied or tired, I raised my hand. "Yea, we're gonna win this game, aren't we?"

12/6/99: I was in the back seat listening to Mom tell Dad how angry she was when she saw Julie bring me back with Evan after a sleepover at their house and we two were sitting unseatbelted on the floor of Julie's van because she had bikes and stuff packed in there. She gave me a lecture, which got sterner and more graphic the angrier she worked herself, explaining that I must tell anyone asking me to do such a thing that I'm not allowed and that I must be seatbelted and that if they won't allow me to drive safely to call Mom and Dad and one of them will come for me, etc., but she got herself to the point of no return and went on to provide images for me of the dangers as well, including the possibility of a bike lunging at me and impaling my liver...and I shouted out, "ahhhhh, no, stop! I have enough trouble thinking about getting my next booster shot!"

12/22/99-1/5/00 trip to Florida:

-12/22/99-12/29/99 in Key Largo; the rest in Disney World's Coronado Springs Resort.

-before leaving: DCT got caviar which D. wanted to taste. DCT said it might not hold till he came back. DCT asked D if while he was away he could have some of his ketchup. D. responded, "when's that caviar of yours supposed to rot?"

-at hotel in Key Largo: on balcony, listening to sounds of birds and stuff, a woman singing to her toddler on the balcony next door made him ask, "what kind of animal is *that*?"

-feeding stingrays, D was scared they'd bite him, since one bit Dad. Mom made fun of his yellow belly and he said, "will you stop!... so what if I was afraid of being eaten up?"

-in room when Suvi asked him to do something and he refused and I asked, "so you won't do this for your mother?" and he responded, "no, I just won't do it," and I responded with same and he with same till in exasperation he said, "OK, I won't do it for my mother! Are you happy now?!"

-we stopped to buy Chilean cherries at a fruit stand and they were so good that Suvi ate more than D. wanted her too. He said, "Mom, you're gonna put Cherries n the endangered list!"

-Suvi threatened D. at DW that if he didn't stop being difficult, she would take him on a 6-hour shopping trip and he'd be bored like he never in his life was bored. He responded: "Fine, let the war begin!" Later in the day, however, when it was pointed out that he was indeed having fun at the very place he was dead-set about not going, he said, "Uh oh, it looks like I'm losing the war."

-New Year's Eve: Disney dropped the ball and besmirched their reputation for masters of crowd control big time; we had to wait in line for 1 1/2 hours in the morning to get in to one of the parks (Epcot in our case) just to get our hands stamped to reenter at night for the festivities. That night it took nearly 2 1/2 hours to get from Epcot back to the resort, which was only a few miles away. They had thousands of people waiting for a

few buses and a cab or two and no Disney employees in view to help give info. We didn't get home till nearly 2:45 am. The fireworks were great and were accompanied by a huge sphere that floated out on the lack

2/9/00: Mom woke me for school this morning because I didn't wake up by myself at 7:30 like usual, and I was good and angry. I told her I HATE IT WHEN SHE WAKES ME; I WOULD HAVE WOKEN EARLIER ON MY OWN IF ONLY SHE HADN'T WOKEN ME!

2/15/00: I made Dad laugh from his belly last night at chess when, after he forced me ever so unwillingly and disappointingly into checkmate and I looked at horror at the board in search of legal loopholes short of an earthquake to keep me from admitting defeat, I shook my head and muttered, "I've got to switch to decaf!"

3/11/00: I've been obsessing about the new pair of roller blades Mom ordered me, since mine are too small and not as good for turning as the ones with alternately crooked wheels made by the V-Formation company. I've been asking Mom a couple times a day for three weeks if she's gotten a call yet concerning the skates. It's become a real nuisance to me, maybe even to Mom and Dad; who knows? Anyway. Mom and Dad conspired that Dad would drive me up to the one store in the vicinity that had them in stock and we did and I got them and I'm, Wow!, happy...but before we did go up there Dad heard me mutter something ungentlemanly about one of my teammates who had recently gotten the kind I now have and Dad warned me not to let the "green-eyed monster" get to me. Without a second lost I responded, "too late, Dad; he's digested me already."

3/12/00: I got my V-Formations and WOW! Of course, they never did come to the store. Dad took me up to Igloo and they had them and...WOW!

3/19/00: Mom's been insisting I go to Finnish school on Sunday afternoons. It's down at the Swedish Museum (go figure!) and Mom teaches adults Finnish there, so I guess she wants me to be miserable too. I hate it. I told Mom too. I said, "I hate going there and learning that *MENTAL* language which I don't understand a word of!

4/9/00: Can you believe it—a blizzard! I slept over Louie's house last night and woke to a furious snowstorm. Dad told me that we got drifts of over half a foot within an hour or two and that he spent the morning brushing off the new awning (with hundreds of pounds of snow piled in a knee-tall ridge beneath the edge the whole length of the patio) and shaking the branches of the smaller trees. But even more strange—it nearly all melted by 2:00 (nothing visible in front, though some remaining for another day or so in back).

4/24/00: We just came back from Spring Break vacation with Uncle David at The Cloister, Sea Island, and Mom and Dad say they're relieved to be back if only to avoid my "complicated social schedule." By this I take it they mean the fact that the Children's Program was not on, as promised when the reservations were made. I made constant playdate appointments with everyone my age I met, just so I wouldn't be caught without a date and have to spend time with old people. This constant arranging got on

their nerves. But just when Mom and Dad thought they'd seen the last of my gregariousness, they found that I could still surprise them. On the plane back I was seated next to a woman of retirement age to whom I turned within a minute of sitting down next to her and asked: "hi, do you have any grandchildren at home?"

5/9/00: After coming home late from celebrating Mom's birthday (dinner and a movie), Dad said he'd have to leave certain chores till tomorrow since he had to get me off to bed immediately. Being too tired to move on my own, I asked, "you and which army is going to get me to bed?"

6/25/00: [to London on the Concorde; two weeks at the Ritz; two weeks in Helsinki; home to birthday at Happy Tymes.]

7/29/00: Dad was telling me an installment of Ratman of my own choice, this one pertaining to Daniel Bunting in Helsinki with his Mom (modelled somewhat on my own experience) and I had him tell of how he got 500 markkas from his grandfather, being the precise amount needed to buy an American skateboard at Mannstocks (my name for Stockmann's). But Dad attempted to screw up the story by having them all sold out by the time Daniel got there. I wouldn't have it and explained that the clerk didn't check well enough in the back and that only the floor models were sold out. But when Dad repeatedly sent him in the back coming back empty-handed I fixed my eyes on him with a serious look and said in a low steady voice, "oh, so you want to play hardball, do you!" He burst into laughter.

8/21/00: Mom and Dad took me to Hershey, PA, Saturday and on the way back from doing all sorts of things I liked (including about 45 minutes in an automated batting cage and a ride on a motorized raft with a water gun attached, all at a sports park on the way back from Hershey) I seemed to be having trouble with the concept of NO. Mom explained that sometimes NO is enough and they don't want to hear an argument, etc. etc. etc. and then I thought it was time to give them their own medicine, so I said, "MOM! What would you say if you wanted a Creme Brulé and someone said 'No!'" This made them understand.

8/22/00: I'm old enough now, finally, to walk to the schoolyard by myself (or with a friend), but best yet is my freedom when I'm at Jack Sandler's (his new home on Montgomery Ave. in Elkins Park), because we're aloud to cross several small streets and go by ourselves to the pizzeria and the icecream shop.

9/6/00: Ugh! The first day of school. I hate school; it gets in the way of kids' stuff! We did end the summer vacation with something of a bang, however; Mom and Dad and I took Mikey for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday to the Delaware Water Gap area for sightseeing where we got a chance to play lots of miniature golf and go on go-carts. This was the highlight of the trip, by the way, the go-carts. I was finally tall enough to drive one myself, so, for the first time in my history, I actually got the chance to drive something powered, something I wasn't pedalling. It was great; I went twice and caught the hang of it immediately. Unluckily for Mikey, however, he had to go as passenger with Mom, because he was shy of about a half-inch or so and they would not let him drive by himself. He took it like a man, though. Anyway, Dad says I said a couple things

that were really good: one was at the end of a several-hour hike into and around the gorge at Bushkill falls to look at the rocky cliffs covered with lichens and moss and stuff, a walk that included climbing down and up tons of stairs along a railed wooden walkway. After running up the stairs toward the end, I turned around and yelled down to everyone (out of breath): “come on...you’re...[huhhh...huhhhh] just a...[huhhh...huhhhh] a bunch o’...[huhhh...huhhhh]...wh...whhhii...[huhhh...huhhhh]...whhhiii...WHIMPS!” The second and third happened on our Delaware Water Gap Trolley Tour, which showed us all sorts of boring houses and buildings and things we had no interest in (not even Dad, I think), and so after one long lecture by our guide about one stupid building or other in which someone not very famous once lived or something, I turned to Dad and said, “this is pointless!” Then, a bit later I turned to him and said, “this is about as low as it gets!”

10/3/00: I made Dad laugh in a big way yesterday when he ended up wearing egg from yet another attempt to make me pleased for what I have, etc. etc. etc. I had just asked him if he could come home early and take me here, there, or somewhere—I forget just where for the moment, and it doesn’t matter—and he hesitated, as if afraid to commit himself, and I reacted impatiently, which often works except sometimes, and this was a sometimes, and he launched into how glad he is to do things for me and accommodate my whims and such, etc. etc. etc., and how I am accustomed to presuming on him and taking him for granted. Then he really asked for it by saying, “and, you know, I HAVE A LIFE TOO!” I responded coolly with, “YOU DO??!!,” to which he confirmed, “YES,” leaving me with no option but to say with as wry a smile as I could muster under the circumstances, “O well, *that’s* gonna put a dent in things....”

[entries in my own language about things Daniel has said]:

Dec 24, 2000-Jan 1, 2001: On trip to St. John, V.I., where we stayed at the Westin Hotel.

- “you wanna see my impression of mayonaise?”

- “George Bush ate my homework”

- after being told his mother wouldn’t approve of the two chocolate donuts he chose for himself for breakfast: “don’t worry, I can’t put them back because I purposely licked them both, just in case.”

9/11/2001

[the three of us watching with horror the news on TV of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, and Daniel noticing a banner across the bottom of the screen posting notice of schools closed in the area—not including his:]

“Why isn’t my school closed?”

[“Why should it be?” I asked]

“Why? On GENERAL PRINCIPALS!”

[later in broadcast, on learning that many European countries will be postponing or canceling major upcoming events because of this, like Germany possibly canceling this year’s Oktoberfest:]

“What? They can cancel Oktoberfest, and all I’m asking for is one tiny school?!!”

I’ve decided I’m too old to continue keeping a diary. That’s for little kids. Bye.

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