

The Incredible Life of Joey Coletta

By

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EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD, LOS ANGELES AREA, 1957 - MORNING

The sun is out, but autumnal melancholy is in the air. At the front door of their house, CHARLES COLETTA (age 44) is saying good-bye to his son JOEY (age 9) as he departs for his first day of school after summer. Charles is of average height, dark-haired and slightly balding. Joey is a small but compact boy with short golden-brown hair. He is carrying a SATCHEL. Parked along the sidewalk is a turquoise 1950s CONVERTIBLE.

During this sequence, a 1950s-style male ANNOUNCER is heard in voice-over.

ANNOUNCER

When we were children, there was one day of the year whose very mention could create the sensation of a lead ingot in the pit of our stomach - the first day of school.

CHARLES

Don't worry, Joey, everything will be all right. See you tonight!

JOEY

Goodbye, Pop.

CHARLES

(as Joey leaves, yelling after him)

I'll say hello to James Arness for you. Don't forget, we're making lasagna for dinner!

Joey trudges slowly down the sidewalk.

ANNOUNCER

The enchanted bliss of summer - melted away like an Igloo bar in the mid-day sun. Back to the trenches. Back to the salt mines. It's a cruel jolt! But for Joey Coletta of Parkview, California, the trial is harsher than for most. For Joey is a boy of sorrows facing an uncomprehending world...while his father hobnobs with Hollywood stars.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Joey walks down the hall of William Howard Taft Elementary School with his BOOKS, heading to homeroom with his friend HARRY HASKINS. Harry is a heavy-set kid with freckles and thick glasses. Being with his best friend has made Joey a bit more cheerful.

JOEY

...So that's what we did in Laguna Beach. Hey Harry, how was your summer trip to Acapulco?

HARRY

Oh, we didn't end up goin' there. We went away to see my aunt in Rancho Cucamonga instead. She has this big swimming pool and makes neat cupcakes...Don't look, Joey. Here comes that no-good Frankie Ferrara and his goony friends.

FRANKIE FERRARA, age 12, is a lean, arrogant tough with slicked-back hair. He is accompanied by several other KIDS of his age. Joey and Harry try to turn away, but it's too late; Frankie has spotted them.

FRANKIE

Well, if it isn't Joey Shmoey Coletta! How was your summer, squirt?

JOEY

Lay off, Frankie. I need to get to class.

FRANKIE

Funny, you don't look any bigger than you did when school let out. I think the kid's stopped growing altogether!

Frankie and his friends snicker.

JOEY

I said leave me alone, Frankie.

FRANKIE

Joey Coletta, the midget of Taft Elementary! Are you going to try out for the girls' softball team this year?

HARRY

Leave him alone, Frankie!

FRANKIE

And just where do you come in, fat boy? Listen, Shmoey, you know where to turn if you need remedial help in any of your subjects - like Homeroom, for instance. Ha ha ha!

Frankie and his friends exit.

HARRY

That Frankie is a no-good creep, isn't he, Joey?

JOEY

You can say that again. I wish I had a big brother to fix people like that.

HARRY

Me too. All I've got is a sister, and all she's interested in fixing is her hair.

JOEY

Maybe someday we'll figure out a way to give him the business. Let's go to class.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

MRS. LYDIA PURSGLOVE's homeroom is in session. The classroom is drab and utilitarian, as are all the classrooms at Taft Elementary. Mrs. Pursglove is middle-aged, frumpy and bespectacled.

MRS. PURSGLOVE

(flat, *pro forma* voice)

Good morning, children. It's so nice to see all of you and I hope you had a wonderful summer.

Mrs. Pursglove continues to talk under the following dialogue.

HARRY

(sottovoce, to Joey)

Oh no, Joey. I can see it now: She's gonna make us write a composition about what we did over the summer.

JOEY

What's wrong with that? I had a good summer.

HARRY

That's not the point, Joey. I had a good summer, too. But why ruin it by turning it into a smelly old school assignment?

JOEY

I don't know, Harry. I kind of *like* writing...

Unfortunately, Joey spoke during a lull in Mrs. Pursglove's discourse.

MRS. PURSGLOVE

Joey Coletta, do you have something to share with the class?

JOEY

Uh, no, Mrs. Pursglove...uh...I was just saying that I like to write.

MRS. PURSGLOVE

(sarcastically)

Hmm, I'm sure you were. Look, class, let's not get off on the wrong foot. I know we're still in summer mode, but it's time to get serious and hit the books...

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Joey and Harry walk to class.

JOEY

Gee, Harry, how come you let me get in trouble like that? How come you didn't say you were the one who talked first?

HARRY

Well, I would've, 'cept I already got hollered at for tracking mud into the school. I'll make it up to you, Joey. I'll lend you my baseball glove all this weekend.

JOEY

But Harry, you know I don't play baseball. I don't play anything.

HARRY

That's too bad, Joey. If you want to learn, my uncle gives 20-minute lessons for five dollars. Well, I gotta go get some junk from my locker. See you in math.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

Reedy MR. ARNOLD YAX's arithmetic class is in session.

MR. YAX

(flat monotone)

Class, I know you've just returned from your vacation and are probably not quite in gear yet. But let's try to get you back into the swing of things with a quick arithmetic drill. I'll go right down each row. Andrew, how much is ten plus fifteen?

ANDREW

Twenty-five

MR. YAX

Clarisse, ten plus seventeen?

CLARISSE

Twenty-seven.

MR. YAX

Doris, forty-two plus seven?

DORIS

Forty-nine.

MR. YAX

Eddie, twenty-two plus eight?

EDDIE

Thirty.

MR. YAX

Joey, twenty-four plus seventeen?

Joey hesitates, strains for the answer, wracks his brain.

JOEY

Uh...thirty-six? No. Thirty-eight?

The class titters.

JOEY (cont'd)

Gee, I'm sorry, Mr. Yax. Those numbers are too big for me.

The class erupts in laughter.

MR. YAX

Now, class, that'll be enough of that. As I said, we're all getting back from summer mode and it's understandable if we're a little rusty. The correct answer is forty-one. Katie...

EXT. PLAYGROUND - LATER

The children are standing in their gym uniforms around beefy MR. ED STEELBERG, the gym teacher.

MR. STEELBERG

Now, kids, I know you've been vegetating all summer, so let's start with something nice and easy. Sort of ease you back into real life. I want you all to come up in turn and do five pull-ups on this monkey bar. Are ya game?

KIDS

Yeah! Yeah!

MR. STEELBERG

OK, let's go.

Three of the children perform the pull-ups with reasonable success. Then comes Joey's turn, and he strains to pull himself above the bar. The children titter.

JOEY

Sorry, Mr. Steelberg.

MR. STEELBERG

(platitudinous)

Now stop that, you kids. We all have different abilities. We all do the best we can. That's why we're here, to build ourselves up...not tear each other down.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

Mrs. Pursglove's English class is in session. The children are silently writing. On the BLACKBOARD is the assignment: "What I did over the summer." Joey is absorbed in his writing.

JOEY

(voice-over)

Over the summer I went to Laguna Beach with my father. The weather was beautiful. We went down by the pier and stuck our feet in the water...

Joey pauses to recall the pleasant memories.

MRS. PURSGLOVE

Mr. Coletta. You don't appear to be very busy there.

JOEY

I'm sorry, Mrs. Pursglove. I was thinking about what I just wrote.

MRS. PURSGLOVE

Let's have less thinking and more writing, please.

EXT. OUTSIDE SCHOOL - LATER

Joey is walking out of the building.

FRANKIE

(from a distance)

Hey, squirt. I heard you humiliated yourself in gym class today. Come see me after school tomorrow. I'll toughen ya up a little.

INT. COLETTA KITCHEN - LATER

CLOSEUP

Joey's hands washing in a basin full of water. Sloshing sounds.

PULL OUT

Joey at the sink. Joey dries his hands on a WHITE TOWEL. Nearby is Charles, who has on an APRON and is preparing the

ingredients for dinner including a large crusty LOAF OF BREAD and a BOTTLE OF RED WINE. The kitchen is a bit messy and dirty and appears not to have been under the care of the lady of the house for some time. One the wall is a CALENDAR reading "September 1957." Joey is taciturn.

CHARLES

Come on, Joey, aren't you going to tell me how school went?

Charles in turn goes to the sink and washes up as the dialogue continues. By and by, Charles and Joey start to prepare the lasagna together.

JOEY

Not great, Pop. But what do you expect when you're the Charlie Brown of Taft Elementary?

CHARLES

Oh come now, Joey, it can't have been as bad as all that. You had your best friend Harry Haskins by your side, didn't you?

JOEY

Yeah, Harry was there. But I think he's part of the problem.

CHARLES

Oh?

JOEY

Yeah, Pop. He got me in trouble right off the bat. He was talking to me in homeroom and I answered him, and the teacher hollered at me but not him. She said I made the class start on the wrong foot and everything. What a way to start off the day. And the school year.

CHARLES

I'm sorry about that, Joey. You know, the best thing to do in situations like that is just don't answer.

JOEY

Yeah, I know that now, Pop. But that's not the only thing. There's this big kid, Frankie. He's always bullying me and Harry. Me because

JOEY

I'm small and Harry because he's fat.

CHARLES

I know about him. The teachers have been after him several times. If he keeps making trouble for you and Harry I'll call Harry's father and we'll speak to the principal. Anything else go wrong today?

JOEY

Well, in gym class Mr. Steelberg had us all line up and do pull-ups and I couldn't do a single one. And then I stumbled in math class when Mr. Yax gave us a 'rithmetic drill.

CHARLES

Well, I'll be happy to help you this weekend with your pull-ups. And I can quiz you in arithmetic every night.

JOEY

Thanks, Pop, but...well, that's not what I *really* want.

CHARLES

What is it, then?

JOEY

I want to do something real good, Pop. I go through school every day and I feel like I'm nothing special. I'd like to do real well at something for a change. Something only I can do. You understand what I mean, Pop?

CHARLES

I think I do. When I was your age, we lived in a poor neighborhood in L.A. and I thought I was a pretty undistinguished kid. But your Nonno told me something, may he rest in peace! He used to say, you don't have to be Michelangelo painting the Sistine Chapel. You can be an artist sweeping floors -- or laying down asphalt in L.A. It's all how you look at things.

Charles and Joey are now sprinkling cheese on the lasagna.

CHARLES

Take me. I work as an office clerk in a Hollywood studio. Big deal! I know I'll never be up there on the silver screen like Humphrey Bogart - may he rest in peace! But I know that in some small part I contributed to what you see up there. So there's no reason to feel down. Remember, you've got a network of family protecting you. I've always tried to do everything I could to make sure you had it better than I did, better than your Nonno did.

JOEY

Sure, I see, Pop. But what network of family? I don't have Ma.

CHARLES

We see her every Sunday...

JOEY

That's not the same, Pop. Your lasagna is OK, but Ma's is better. And she doesn't serve it on paper plates. I'm sorry, Pop.

CHARLES

No, that's all right. Well, Joey, I don't know what to say. Things just didn't work out between your mother and me, so we had to separate. But you and I have a solid relationship, don't we?

JOEY

Sure, Pop.

CHARLES

Well, it's time to put the lasagna in the oven. We'll talk some more later.

JOEY

OK. Pop, I'm sorry. I forgot to ask how *your* day was.

CHARLES

Oh, the usual. I keep trying to schedule a meeting between my boss and this lazy screenwriter in Burbank, and he keeps evading me. Old Mr. Skanderbeg is blaming me for it. And this girl I work with keeps messing up the accounts and I've got to cover for her.

JOEY

Gee, Pop, that almost sounds like my day. Well, at least we'll always have lasagna.

INT. CHARLES' DEN - THAT EVENING

Charles is dialing the phone.

CHARLES

Hello, Jim? It's Charles. Say, you know that audition you were talking to me about today? The one for the situation show? Do you know what the requirements are?...Uh huh...It's a cattle call, huh? Completely open? And they're looking for a boy between ages seven and ten? Oh, no reason...I was just curious. I'll see you tomorrow, Jim-boy.

INT. COLETTA KITCHEN - THE NEXT MORNING

Sunlight streams through the kitchen as Charles sets the table.

CHARLES

Breakfast is on, Joey!

Joey comes to the table, as glum as ever.

CHARLES

Look, I got some peach marmalade for your toast. And I got Frosted O's, your favorite - breakfast of athletes!

JOEY

(sullen)

That's nice, Pop. At least I'll have plenty of energy when Frankie beats me up.

CHARLES

Don't talk that way, Joey! Listen, I got an idea last night. They're auditioning for a new TV show at the studio. It's a story about a family - a mother and father and their two boys. They're looking for a boy your age to play the younger kid.

He produces a NEWSLETTER and proceeds to read from it.

CHARLES (cont'd)

"Wanted: Youngster between the ages of 7 and 10 for the part of an ordinary all-American boy in new situation comedy, *Small World*." I think I can pull a few strings and get you in the audition. Would you like to do it?

JOEY

Hey, that'd be real neat, Pop! Just think, I could be a TV star!

CHARLES

Now hold your horses, Joey, this is just an audition. You'll be competing against two dozen-odd other boys, there's no guarantee you'll get the part. But I thought it would be a fun experience for you - a chance to have a challenge and strut your stuff a little!

JOEY

Hey, yeah! Now I can really stand out! But Pop, what do I gotta learn?

CHARLES

You don't have to recite anything. In fact, there no preparation whatever. You just go to the audition, they give you a scenario, and you act how you would in real life. With a fellow your age they're more interested in how well you think on your feet than how you read a script.

JOEY

Gee, that sounds real neat. But Pop, am I an "all-American boy?"

CHARLES

I should say you are! You're just as American as me, and I was born and raised in L.A.

JOEY

OK. I just wanted to make sure, because Frankie Ferrara sometimes calls me a "wop."

CHARLES

Well, he should talk! If you're a wop, then he's a bigger wop!

JOEY

Oh yeah, I forgot about that.

CHARLES

Which leads to believe he's a wop who wishes he *wasn't*. But you'll always be proud of who you are. And you're going to march into that audition and knock 'em dead...uh...I mean, do the best you can.

JOEY

Boy, this is exciting! Me an actor!

CHARLES

The audition is this Friday. If I play my cards right, I can arrange for you to be in it.

JOEY

Oh, just one thing, Pop - Friday is the day of my philately club meeting.

CHARLES

Your *what* club meeting?

JOEY

You know, Pop - stamp collecting. Our history teacher is getting some of the kids together over at the civic center to talk to us about how to start a collection.

CHARLES
Oh, well, I'm sure we'll be able to
get there in time.

INT. CAR - FRIDAY AFTERNOON

Joey and Charles are driving to Everyman Studios after school.

CHARLES
You're not nervous, are you, Joey?

JOEY
Oh, I'm not nervous about the
audition, Pop. I figure if I can
recite chunks of poem in English
class, I can do an audition for a
TV show. But I am nervous about
missing my philately club meeting.

CHARLES
Joey, stop obsessing over that. I
said I would get you there in time.

INT. WAITING ROOM IN EVERYMAN STUDIOS - LATER

A SECRETARY is holding forth at her DESK.

CHARLES
Good afternoon. I'm Charles Coletta
and this is my boy Joey.

SECRETARY
(checking a LIST)
Coletta...yes, here he is. Your
audition is in fifteen minutes. You
may both sit down over there. I'll
call you when the casting director
is ready.

CHARLES
Thank you.

Joey sits next to a bespectacled, studious-looking BOY his age.

JOEY
Hi kid, what's your name?

BOY

My name is Todd R. Huntley III.

JOEY

My name's Joseph G. Coletta...the First. The G is for George, but I don't hardly never use that name. I named after my Nonno. That means grandpa. He was named Giorgio Coletta. He laid down the streets in L.A.

TODD

(uninterested)

That's nice.

JOEY

My Pop works for the studio, but I've never been on an audition before. How 'bout you?

TODD

(jaded)

I'm a model for school supplies ads.

JOEY

Wow!

Charles looks slightly embarrassed at his son's talkativeness.

CHARLES

Joey, there's a copy of *Highlights* magazine over there in the corner.

JOEY

Thanks, Pop, but I think I'll read *Variety* instead.

He picks up a MAGAZINE.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Joey enters the soundstage area. Present are the CASTING DIRECTOR and two ASSISTANTS.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Joey Coletta. Hello there, son.

JOEY

Hello, Mister. There's a philately club meeting back home in an hour. Can we do the audition real fast?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Just a minute - what kind of meeting?

JOEY

Philately. It means collecting stamps.

The three adults exchange glances, their meaning ambiguous; it could be anything from "what an unusual kid" to "this one's a non-starter."

CASTING DIRECTOR

Don't worry, we'll have you out in plenty of time.

JOEY

Thanks, Mister. I wouldn't want to come late and get yelled at.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Now, Joey, have you ever acted before?

JOEY

No, not really. I was in a school pageant once where I was a rabbit. I didn't talk, though. My Pop, he works at this studio. I don't know if you've ever noticed him before. He just answers the phones and stuff.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Well Joey, as you know, this show we're producing is all about a young American boy like you. His last name is Travers. We don't know what his first name is yet; that's what this audition will determine. Here's how we're going to conduct this audition: we give you a situation, and you improvise a scene around it.

FIRST ASSISTANT

Joey, I want you to imagine that you're in school. Your best friend

FIRST ASSISTANT
 is a kid named Pete. He's just let
 you get in trouble for something
 that was partially his fault. You
 see, the two of you were playing
 with a bow and arrow set at recess,
 which belonged to the school, and
 it broke, and he let you take all
 the blame. You're going to tell him
 how you feel. I'll be Pete.

Joey launches immediately into the improvisation.

JOEY
 Gee, Pete, why did you do it? I was
 counting on you, and you just
 walked away and left me holding the
 bag. I always stood by you when you
 were in trouble. Remember when I
 lent you my notes from English
 class so you could finish your book
 report on time? And remember all
 the times I covered for you when
 you forgot your notebooks and your
 math supplies and your gym clothes?

FIRST ASSISTANT
 (as Pete)
 I'm sorry, Joey. I was scared.

JOEY
 But Pete, how do you think I felt?
 The teacher hollered all over me
 and you ran away. I thought friends
 were friends always, not just when
 they're goofing off together.

The three adults smile.

CASTING DIRECTOR
 That was very good, Joey. How did
 you come up with all those lines on
 your own?

JOEY
 Easy. I've got a friend named
 Harry, and he's let me down lotsa
 times. I just said what I would
 have said to him if here were here.

CASTING DIRECTOR
 Well, Joey, we want to hear a few
 more boys before we make our

CASTING DIRECTOR
 decision, but you'll be hearing
 from us regardless.

SECOND ASSISTANT
 (businesslike, shaking Joey's
 hand)
 Thanks, Joey.

JOEY
 Ah, that's all right. I'll be
 waiting for you to call. Good bye!

INT. WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CHARLES
 Joey, how did it go?

JOEY
 Real neat, Pop. It was just like
 you said. They put me in a scene
 and I made up stuff around it. But
 I think we oughtta get going to my
 philately club meeting. It's in
 less than a half hour and I don't
 want to be late.

CHARLES
 (half joking)
 You didn't tell that to the casting
 man, did you?

JOEY
 Sure, Pop. Why not?

CHARLES
 Joey, of all the things not to do!

JOEY
 But gee, Pop, you're always saying
 I should be honest.

CHARLES
 Honest, yes. Shoot yourself in the
 foot, no. You've got to learn not
 to blurt out the first thing that
 comes into your head, Joey.

JOEY
 (forlorn)
 Gee, Pop, I'm sorry.

CHARLES

(sighing)

Oh well, you gave it your best try.
Come on, let's go.

They exit.

EXT OUTSIDE A STONE CHURCH - SUNDAY MORNING

It is an overcast day. A wooden sign reads "Holy Family Church." Mass is letting out. Church bells are ringing. Charles and Joey are coming out of the church. Both are in their Sunday best: Charles in a dark suit and fedora and Joey in a colorful madras sports jacket. Charles is in a sober mood.

UNDERSCORING: Norman Dello Joio, *Variations, Chaconne and Finale*, opening.

JOEY

H-hey Pop, are you still sore at me for crumbing up the audition?

CHARLES

No, Joey. I don't expect you to be a Hollywood star. You had a good experience, and let's just leave it at that. And I'm sorry for getting you to your meeting late. I thought we had enough time, but I was wrong.

JOEY

You didn't take communion with me today. How come?

CHARLES

I've been thinking about some things, Joey. About the fact that I'm living apart from your mother. I'd just thought I'd abstain from communion this time. A man needs to examine his conscience from time to time.

JOEY

Will I have a conscience too, when I'm a man?

CHARLES

You have a conscience now, Joey. Everybody does. It's what tells you right from wrong.

JOEY

Is it wrong for you to be separated from Ma?

CHARLES

I'd say it's not in the right order of things.

JOEY

Then how come you're doin' it? I thought grownups were supposed to be perfect.

CHARLES

I wish that were true, Joey. Adults make mistakes too. And they pay the penalty for it.

JOEY

Are you lonely without Ma?

CHARLES

I often am. But cheer up, because we're going to visit her now!

JOEY

Pop, are we going to tell her about the audition?

CHARLES

I think we'd better.

EXT. WALKWAY TO A HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Charles and Joey are approaching the house of Mrs. Betty Coletta's mother, where Betty now lives.

CHARLES

Now don't be brash about it, Joey. We're going to have to break this to her gently. Your mother means well, but she can be...well, a little over-protective at times.

JOEY

You mean she doesn't want me to have any fun, Pop?

CHARLES

She likes for you to have fun, it's just that she'd rather you do it at a garden party than at a movie

CHARLES
 audition. Just let me do the
 talking. Better straighten your
 tie.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Through the screen door, a gauzy distorted image of Charles and Joey proceeding up the walkway.

EXT. OUTSIDE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Charles and Joey approach the front door. Charles knocks on the door. BETTY COLETTA opens it. She is a tall, chic, red-headed woman of 42.

CHARLES
 Betty.

BETTY
 Charles.

JOEY
 Hi, Ma!

BETTY
 My baby! Come here! I've been
 waiting all week. How was your
 first week of school?

JOEY
 Mostly OK, I guess. We've been
 learning some neat poetry in
 English class. Where's Nana?

BETTY
 Out shopping.

CHARLES
 Say Joey, would you run along and
 watch television for a while? I'd
 like to discuss something with your
 mother.

JOEY
 Sure, Pop, I'll get lost.

BETTY
 (gesturing to the other room)
 Let's have some coffee.

EXT. BACK PORCH - LATER

Charles and Betty are drinking COFFEE.

CHARLES

Betty, the other day, I, uh...we went to a little audition.

BETTY

Audition? In Hollywood?!

CHARLES

Now don't fly off the handle, Betty. One of the studios is producing a new situation comedy and I thought it would be a good idea for Joey to try out for it.

BETTY

Charles, are you serious? A movie audition?

CHARLES

Television, Betty.

BETTY

Even worse. Television is movies for the fat, lazy and stupid. Charles, I thought we were agreed that Joey wouldn't be exposed to your Hollywood circles.

CHARLES

Betty, it was a ten-minute audition. And believe me, this is a perfectly nice group of people. The show is called *Small World*. Clean, all-American family stuff.

BETTY

Ha, likely story. Behind every clean American film is a bunch of anti-American subversives. Remember the Hollywood Ten?

CHARLES

Well, be that as it may, and just between us, I don't think you have anything to worry about. I have a feeling he shot himself in the foot by bringing up his philately meeting.

BETTY

His *what* meeting?

CHARLES

(slightly exasperated)

You know, Betty, stamp collecting. They had a meeting at the civic center to introduce the hobby to the kids. Joey decided to mention that fact to the casting director. Talk about a way to make a bad impression.

BETTY

So you don't think he got the part?

CHARLES

I'd be very surprised if he did. And don't forget, he's competing against at least twenty other kids.

BETTY

Then maybe things will turn out all right after all.

CHARLES

The important thing is what the experience will do for him. Get him out of his shell, instill confidence. A little competitive spirit.

BETTY

Oh no, Charles. I don't want that. Competition complicates a child's life. Win and you become a swellhead; lose and you become a jealous jerk. I hope he doesn't develop envy for the sap that got the part.

Joey enters.

JOEY

Oh there you are, Joey. Anything good on television?

JOEY

Yeah, Pop, the new season of *Don't Forget Father* is starting up. That's the one where the kids are all real smart and the father always messes things up.

CHARLES

Yes, well, I guess we'll get going now...

BETTY

(to Joey, fingering his madras jacket)

Honey, one of these days I'm going to take you shopping for a new suit to wear to that garden party at the Hutchison's in the spring.

JOEY

Gee, Mom, do I hafta gotta go to that party?

BETTY

Yes, you have to go. It'll be a chance to meet some nice people and improve your social graces. And your grammar. Here, I made some nice cinnamon rolls for you. Charles, make sure he keeps clean behind his ears. Good bye, dear!

JOEY

Bye, Ma.

Charles and Joey walk outside.

CHARLES

You know, sometimes I get the impression your mother thinks of actors as just a step up from dope peddlers.

JOEY

A step up from what, Dad?

CHARLES

(snapping back to reality)

Never mind, Joey. Grown-up stuff. Shall we go to the park?

INT. COLETTA KITCHEN - MONDAY MORNING

Joey and Charles are about to eat breakfast.

CHARLES

Well, I guess it's back to normal life after the excitement of Friday, huh? How's your poem coming for Mrs. Pursglove's class?

JOEY

Pretty good. I memorized my chunk last night.

CHARLES

What is it this time, *The Village Blacksmith*?

JOEY

No, we finished that one. We're on *The Boy Who Never Told a Lie*.

CHARLES

Sounds as if there's some solid morality in that one. Let's hear it.

JOEY

(in a stilted "reading" voice)

"And everybody loved him so
Because he always told the truth,
That every day, as he grew up,
'Twas said, 'there goes the honest youth."

That's my chunk. Katie Dickinson has the chunk before me.

The phone rings; Charles answers it.

PHONE CALL - INTERCUT

CHARLES

Hello? Yes, this is he...I don't believe it. Yes, he's right here. Joey - it's the movie studio. They - they - well here, let them tell you!

Joey marches nonchalantly up to the phone.

JOEY

Hello, movie studio? Gee, that's real neat! Sure, I'd like to do the show. I was wondering when you'd call. Yeah, you can talk to my father again if you want. Here he is.

CHARLES

Hello.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Well, Mr. Coletta, you sound more surprised than your son.

CHARLES

Yes, I am a little surprised! What made you choose Joey?

CASTING DIRECTOR

Your son's honesty and candor were exactly what we were looking for. Some kids come over-prepared, too eager to please. They're practically pushed onstage by their stage mothers. But Joey was totally without pretense. That improvisation he did...Mr. Coletta, you have a budding Marlon Brando. There was one thing in particular that clinched it for us: when he mentioned that he needed to get to that - what was it? - "philately club meeting."

CHARLES

(slightly embarrassed, looking over at Joey)

Oh, is that so? You liked that, eh?

CASTING DIRECTOR

It was charming - completely real and spontaneous. And so innocent. That's the kind of show we're going to make. Now, our first task will be to film the pilot. If the show sells, we'll sign Joey on as the star. Of course, you understand that the filming of the first season would be a full-time commitment for Joey, and that he would have to go to school on-set.

CHARLES

Yes, I understand.

CASTING DIRECTOR

But we'll cross that bridge when we come to it. The first thing I'll do is send you the script for the

CASTING DIRECTOR

pilot. Have Joey read it over and see what he thinks. In a week or so I'll call you with information about the read-through.

CHARLES

All right, sir. We'll be looking for it.

Charles hangs up the phone and sits down, looking thoughtful and a bit perturbed.

JOEY

Hey Pop, I won the part! I won!

CHARLES

I know.

JOEY

Gee, Pop, aren't you happy?

CHARLES

I'm ecstatic. But Joey, do you think you can handle memorizing whole scripts?

JOEY

Oh sure Pop, I can memorize chunks of poetry real good.

CHARLES

Yes, but this is a much bigger "chunk" than you've ever bitten off. We're talking about a half hour teleplay. We'll go over the script together and get you into shape.

JOEY

Gee Pop, first you're gung-ho about me going out for the audition, and now...you're doubting me before I even get started.

CHARLES

(coming to his senses)

I'm sorry, Joey. You take the challenge and do the best you can. I have confidence in you.

(bemused)

I can't get over it. They liked it when you brought up the philately.

JOEY

Gee, Pop, I told you honesty was the best policy, but you wouldn't listen!

INT. SCHOOLROOM - DAY

Joey and Harry enter along with the rest of the class and sit down.

HARRY

Oh boy, Joey, I can't wait til Mrs. Pursglove makes the announcement.

JOEY

Me neither!

MRS. PURSGLOVE

Class, be quiet, please. I've an announcement to make. A great honor has been bestowed on Taft Elementary. Your classmate, Mr. Joseph Coletta, is very possibly going to be on television.

The children make a great stir.

KID 1

What happened, Joey, did the TV news catch you stealing bubble gum from the drug store?

MRS. PURSGLOVE

Enough of that, Freddie. Joey auditioned for a part in a new television program last week, and he was chosen for the starring role among the twenty-odd boys who participated.

KID 2

What kind of show is it going to be?

JOEY

(stilted, as if reading ad copy)

It's a situation comedy about an average American family with two growing boys.

KID 3

Are you going to let me have your autograph when you get famous, Joey?

KID 4

Does this mean Joey isn't gonna go to school with us anymore?

MRS. PURSGLOVE

If the series goes into production as hoped, Joey will drop out of Taft School and will receive his schooling on the moving picture set.

KID 1

Boy, you lucky stiff! Goofing off all day on a TV set.

JOEY

Well, it isn't gonna be goofin' off. It's gonna be work.

MRS. PURSGLOVE

Yes. Joey is going to be a paid professional, pursuing an artistic craft. And we should all respect him for his talent and for the honor he has brought to our school. All right, now that that's over with, let's proceed with our lesson.

Rustle of pages as the children turn to their assignment.

KID 2

Gee, I wish I could be in a comedy show on TV and have all those people laugh at me...

KID 3

Ah, that's just a recording! Didn't you know that?

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - A MOMENT LATER

Joey is walking to his locker with Harry. Kids are crowding around Joey.

KID 1

Hey, Joey! Did you really win a part in a TV show? Or are you just puttin' us on?

JOEY

I'm not puttin' you on. It really happened. I'm gonna be in a TV episode. And if it sells, then I'll get to make a whole series and be on television all over America.

KID 2

Wow, Joey! You're just about the neatest kid in this school!

KID 3

Congratulations, Joey!

The commotion and congratulations continue.

JOEY

(to Harry)

You know, Harry, nobody ever paid hardly any attention to me before. Now all of a sudden, I'm famous.

Frankie enters.

FRANKIE

Hey, what's all the noise?

KID 1

Joey Coletta's going to be on television!

FRANKIE

The hell he is! What a crock.

KID 2

It's true, Frankie. He auditioned for a part on a TV show and he got it.

FRANKIE

Did your daddy-waddy get you the part? Everybody knows he works at the studio. I'll bet he rigged the whole thing.

JOEY

He did not! My father had nothing to do with it. I did the audition

JOEY
and they liked me, and they gave me
the part.

FRANKIE
It's not gonna last, kid. You'll
mess up and they'll send ya home
cryin' to your daddy. And that'll
be the end of that.

He roughs up Joey's hair and walks away.

HARRY
Don't pay any attention to him,
Joey. He's just jealous. You've got
a talent. And he knows he doesn't.

INT. CAR - MORNING

Charles and Joey are riding to Everyman Studios for the
read-through. Joey is sporting SUNGLASSES and has assumed
the air of a movie star.

JOEY
This is the day, Pop!

CHARLES
Now, don't be nervous. You don't
have to have anything memorized
yet. You're just to read the script
out loud in a clear voice. Do you
have any questions for me?

JOEY
I don't think so, Pop. You went
over all the big words with me.

CHARLES
Just think: you're a professional
actor!

LONG SHOT

The car (the turquoise 1950s convertible seen in the first
scene) makes its way through the Los Angeles-area traffic.

UNDERSCORING: *Finale* from Norman Dello Joio, *Variations,
Chaconne and Finale*.

Charles pulls up to a checkpoint where GUS, a guard, is on
duty.

CHARLES (cont'd)
 Good morning, Gus. I'm just
 transporting my son, the television
 star, to work!

GUS
 He already looks the part! OK, Mr.
 Coletta, you may proceed.

Joey gets out of the car. We hear Charles say, "*In bocca al lupo!*" Joey walks into the studio entrance carrying his bound SCRIPT.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

A long TABLE. Actors are milling about. TWO WRITERS (male and female) are sitting to one side. Spindly, nervous-looking TIMOTHY LACKEY, the assistant director, comes to greet Joey. They exchange pleasantries. Joey wanders around a bit. Suddenly we hear the voice of a teenage BOY.

BOY
 Hey, kid.

Joey turns around. We see a tall, slender boy of fifteen leaning against a post. He has red hair and is wearing SUNGLASSES, just like Joey. Joey takes his off. The boys face each other.

JOEY
 Who, me?

BOY
 Yeah. You're Joey, right?

JOEY
 Yeah, that's me...Hey, are you the
 kid who's playing my brother?

BOY
 That's right. I'm Toby Mullins.

They shake hands.

TOBY
 Is this your first time acting?

JOEY
 Yeah, my first time. How 'bout you?

TOBY

Oh, I've acted on lots of jobs. Started when I was about your age. I did commercials at first, then bit parts in TV shows. I had a recurring role on *Timmy Fairwell*, *Boy Soprano*.

JOEY

My Pop works here at the studio. He helped learn me the script.

TOBY

You've got nothing to worry about today. The read-through is very low key. You'd better watch out for that Mr. Hepburn, though.

JOEY

Howard Hepburn? The director guy?

TOBY

Yeah. He's a little...well, I wouldn't say he's mean, but he knows what he wants and he's sure how to get it. Just make sure you're on your toes.

Suddenly we hear the gruff voice of HOWARD HEPBURN, fiftyish, a burly bear of a man with a panama hat and the air of a somewhat dissipated bohemian.

HEPBURN

All right, ladies and gentlemen and kids. Take your places.

(He sees Joey)

Hi there, Tiger!

(He slaps Joey playfully but a bit roughly on the back.)

I'm Howard Hepburn, your friendly television director. How's it going?

(They exchange pleasantries.

Then Hepburn addresses the actors.)

Folks, I'd like you to meet Mr. Scrivener and Miss Finchley, the writers of our pilot. They'll be taking notes today. All right, let's get cracking.

The actors take their places around the table. They include TOM WORDSWORTH as MR. TRAVERS and MAY POPKINS as MRS. TRAVERS as well as Toby as TOBY TRAVERS. Wordsworth and Popkins are appealing in a generic all-American way. Mr. Lackey shows Joey to his seat. Hepburn stands at the head of the table.

HEPBURN

I'm sure you folks have all seen what passes for family television these days. Pat, formulaic stories where the adults dispense dime-store wisdom to their kids. *Small World* will be different. Don't get me wrong, we're going to teach morals. But our show will be fresh and honest - real human relationships reflected on the screen. We've got to give our all to this pilot in order to sell the show. I need one hundred percent conviction from all of you.

(He sits down.)

Now, as the pilot opens it's Monday in the Travers household. Sunny morning in Middle America, pancake and waffle breakfast. Let's hit it.

MRS. TRAVERS

Boys, breakfast is on!

MR. TRAVERS

Am I included under the "boys" rubric?

MRS. TRAVERS

(playfully jesting)

I suppose so. Your tie is sloppy enough.

MR. TRAVERS

Oh! I dressed in a hurry.

TOBY

Morning, Mom. Morning, Dad.

JOEY

Hi, Mom. Hi, Dad. Oh boy, a fancy breakfast!

MRS. TRAVERS

Would you like pancakes or waffles, Joey?

JOEY

Well, I'm not used to having pancakes'n' stuff. But I guess I'll have one with peach marmalade on it because that's what I usually have on my toast.

HEPBURN

Cut! Joey, kiddo, that's not in the script.

JOEY

Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Hepburn, I was just acting like I would in real life.

HEPBURN

That was fine for the audition, Tiger, but now it's time to stick to what's written.

JOEY

Yes, sir.

HEPBURN

Let's take it back from the previous line.

MRS. TRAVERS

Would you like pancakes or waffles, Joey?

JOEY

(wooden delivery)

Pancakes-would-be-real-neat-o, Mom.

TOBY

I'll have pancakes with syrup and a hunk of butter on top, Mom.

MR. TRAVERS

Ah, there's nothing like a hearty old-fashioned American breakfast to start off the day! Well, Toby, today's the day you try out for the track team, isn't it?

TOBY

Yeah, Dad. I'm a little nervous, though. There's some real good kids this year. I just hope I make the grade.

MR. TRAVERS

Well, you got top honors last year, and you've been training all summer. I have no doubt you'll make a good show of yourself.

TOBY

I hope so, Dad.

MRS. TRAVERS

Joey, I heard you reciting something last night.

JOEY

Oh yeah, Mom. We're learning this poem in English class, *The Boy Who Never Told a Lie*. I've got one chunk to read, and Katie Dickinson, she's got another chunk.

HEPBURN

Cut! Joey, you're departing from the script again.

JOEY

Sorry, Mr. Hepburn

HEPBURN

Back up one line.

MRS. TRAVERS

Joey, I heard you reciting something last night.

JOEY

(wooden delivery)

Yeah, Mom. We're-learning-the-presidents-in-history-class-and-I've-got-to-memorize-them-in-my-head. Wish-me-luck.

INT. SIDE AREA OF SOUNDSTAGE - LATER

The actors are on break. Lackey is dialing the PHONE.

LACKEY

Hello, Grace? Lackey. We're having some trouble with the Coletta kid. It's pretty bad. He keeps ad-libbing, and then when he does adhere to the lines he sounds like he's reading *See Spot Run* in the first grade. We'll need you to come

LACKEY

in and do a script coaching. Bring the elocution book. I'm not sure this kid can tell elocution from electrocution, but you bring it anyway.

INT. SIDE AREA OF SOUNDSTAGE - LATER

GRACE BAUMGARTEN is having a coaching session with Joey. She is a slender, pretty woman of 25.

GRACE

Joey, I'm Grace. I'm here to help you. I understand you're having a little trouble with your lines.

JOEY

Hello, Miss. I guess I keep wanting to make stuff up. The show reminds me of me so much that I can't help it! But then when I try to read the script for real...well, it doesn't come out so good.

GRACE

We'll do some exercises...

SAME SCENE - LATER

GRACE

Now, let's try one of the lines you were having difficulty with. "We're learning the presidents in history class and I've got to memorize them in my head." Say it for me.

JOEY

"We're...learning...the presidents..."

GRACE

"In history class..."

JOEY

"In history class..."

GRACE

"We're learning the presidents in history class..."

JOEY

"We're learning the presidents in history class..."

GRACE

"And I've got to memorize them in my head."

JOEY

"And I've got to memorize them. In my head."

GRACE

"We're learning the presidents in history class, and I've got to memorize them in my head."

JOEY

"We're learning the presidents in history class, and I've..." You know, Miss, it's easier for me to learn stuff when it's poems instead of just talking.

GRACE

Because of the meter and rhyme. Try to apply that poetic feel to these lines of prose. Try to hear the rhythm and melody in them. "We're learning the *presidents in history class*, and I've got to *memorize them in my head*."

SAME SCENE - LATER

GRACE

So, Joey, speaking lines intelligently is like singing. First you form a good strong sound in your diaphragm, which will power your voice like an engine. Then you speak the lines with a melody and a rhythm. That will help you commit them to memory too. And always listen to what the actor you're playing opposite is saying, instead of just standing there waiting to say your next line. That's being a gracious actor, not one who hogs the spotlight.

JOEY

Gee, I never knew there was so much to acting. You've given me lots to think about. You're a real nice lady, Miss.

GRACE

Thank you. Please, call me Grace.

JOEY

OK. You know, you're a lot nicer than the teachers they have at my school. They always treat me like I'm just another kid. But you treat me like...well, like I'm somebody.

GRACE

Everybody likes to receive individual attention instead of just being a face in the crowd.

JOEY

Yeah, that's what I was tryin' to say. I wish I could put it pretty like you did.

GRACE

(laughing)

We'll see each other next rehearsal.

JOEY

OK, Miss. I mean, Grace.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - LATER

The read-through is over. The actors and crew are departing and/or milling around. Hepburn approaches Joey.

HEPBURN

Joey-boy, I want to talk to you.

JOEY

Yes, Mr. Hepburn?

HEPBURN

Did your session with Miss Baumgarten go OK? Did she straighten you out?

JOEY

Oh yes, sir. She told me all about recitin' lines.

HEPBURN

Well, I hope so. Because I don't want any more Actors Studio improvisations like we had earlier. You'll say your lines as written, understand?

JOEY

Oh yes, sir.

HEPBURN

Good. For a while there I was starting to wonder whether the casting people had made a mistake. Stick to the script, Tiger.

JOEY

Yes, Mr. Hepburn, sir.

HEPBURN

(departing)

Acting isn't just emoting, kid. It's discipline.

Toby enters the set.

TOBY

So, what do you think of all this Hollywood stuff, Joey?

JOEY

It's pretty nifty. But it's a little scary too.

TOBY

Oh? How do you mean?

Nearby Hepburn berates a female ASSISTANT, the latter with her head bowed in embarrassment.

HEPBURN

What do you mean, you don't have the budget ready yet? Haven't you been keeping track of how much we're spending on this damn project?!

This continues at a distance.

JOEY

That's kinda what I mean.

TOBY

Oh, I told you about Mr. Hepburn. He's a little difficult. Part of his problem is that he drinks.

JOEY

Drinks what?

TOBY

Alcohol, of course. He's...well, sort of an alcoholic. I've seen him guzzling whiskey before rehearsals - in the middle of the morning, even.

JOEY

What makes him do that?

TOBY

A whole bunch of things. Stress. Unhappiness at home. They say his marriage is on the rocks.

JOEY

That means it's not going so good?

TOBY

Right. Then he drinks to make himself feel better, but that only gives him a temper. Then he drinks some more, and the whole thing goes around in a circle. My mom says he's not a very good person to direct a show with kids. She thinks he's trying to capture something he never had.

The boys lounge on the Travers furniture.

JOEY

What about you, Toby? Do your parents get along?

TOBY

Most of the time. Of course, both of them work outside the home, and they have long hours. So they don't see much of each other, except on weekends. I'm by myself a lot of the time, seeing as I don't have any brothers or sisters.

JOEY

Oh, really? I'm an only kid too. But my parents are separated. I live with my Pop and he takes good care of me. But it's not the same without Ma.

TOBY

I know kids whose parents are divorced and remarried. It can be pretty rough...How do you like aviation?

JOEY

Aviation? You mean, like planes and stuff?

TOBY

That's right. It's one of the things I like to read about.

He produces a MAGAZINE.

TOBY (cont'd)

Someday I want to fly. My Dad was a bomber pilot in the war. Here, this is a Grumman Hellcat...

INT. SMALL STUDIO - LATER

The studio is dusky and mysterious. A middle-aged MAN is seated at a large typewriter-like MACHINE. Lackey and Joey enter.

LACKEY

Joey, you are entering a privileged inner sanctum. Few people know the secrets behind the Laff Box. But we're showing you because you're such a special kid, and we know you won't tell. Meet Charles MacDougall.

MACDOUGALL

Pleased to meet you, Joey. I manufacture mirth.

JOEY

(wide-eyed)
With this machine?

MACDOUGALL

Yes. Inside this box are exactly 320 laughs. I use them to create the audience laughter you hear in comedy programs.

(He presses a button on the machine, and laughter is heard.)

Chuckles, snickers, giggles, guffaws, belly laughs, you name it and I've got it.

(He presses a button; more laughter.)

That was a light chuckle.

(correcting himself)

Sorry, that was a mild *titter*. Now here's something for the really big laugh lines.

(He presses another button; louder and longer laughter)

That was recorded during a live broadcast of *The Jack Benny Program*. I can even combine different laughs to achieve the perfect mix - men and women and children, young and old.

(He presses several different combinations of buttons and yields different mixtures of laughs.)

I can hold the laughter for as long or as short a time as I want. Oh - and here's applause.

(Applause sound effect)

LACKEY

It's all done through magnetic tape, Joey. See, the tape loops inside the box are controlled by the keys. Great, isn't it?

JOEY

(to MacDougall)

Gee, Mister - if the show's funny, won't people laugh anyway?

Dead silence.

MACDOUGALL

Well sure, Joey, but it doesn't hurt to add a little encouragement.

(He presses another button; more laughter)

LACKEY

Charley MacDougall, one of the most powerful men in America. At the push of a button, he makes the nation laugh. Thanks, Charley-pal.

MACDOUGALL

Don't mention it.

Joey and Lackey start to leave.

JOEY

Say, Mr. Lackey, how would it be if we show the episode to an audience, then record their reactions? Then the laughter'll be genuine.

LACKEY

You may have something there.

As they exit, the sound of applause emanates from MacDougall's machine.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE STUDIO - LATER

Charles is picking up Joey, who is just getting off from work. Joey is licking a large LOLLIPOP.

CHARLES

Hi, Joey! How'd it go?

JOEY

No worse than school, Pop. I've got people to help me.

CHARLES

Come on, let's go home and we'll talk about it. What's that you've got?

JOEY

It's a lollipop that Mr. Wordsworth gave me. He plays my dad. He's real nice. Pop, do I hafta go suit shopping with Ma this Sunday?

CHARLES

I think it would make your mother happy.

EXT. SUBURBAN LANE - SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Betty and Joey are walking together.

BETTY

Are you looking forward to shopping for your new suit, dear?

JOEY

Well, I don't think much about clothes and stuff, but I guess if I have to go shopping I'd like to do it with you, Ma.

BETTY

What kind of suit do you want to get?

JOEY

Oh, I don't much mind, just as long as it has deep pockets to keep candy and stuff.

BETTY

Let's look for something in navy - maybe a pinstripe - I want my boy to look extra sharp.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - LATER

Joey stands in front of a large MIRROR decked out in a suit, shirt, tie and pocket square. A FLOORWALKER stands by along with Betty.

BETTY

Doesn't he look splendid?

FLOORWALKER

Like a million dollars...For only 27.99, of course, with a Veterans' Discount.

JOEY

Gee, Mister, if I wear my pocket square squared off, does it make me a square?

Betty and the floorwalker laugh.

FLOORWALKER

It makes you a fashionable young man.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE DEPARTMENT STORE - SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Betty and Joey are walking together, the former carrying the suit.

JOEY

Gee Mom, I never realized there was so much to tryin' on clothes. I always just thought a suit was a suit.

BETTY

There's an art to shopping, Joey. There's a craft to dressing yourself well. The way you present yourself to the world means a whole lot. You develop taste, discernment, discipline.

JOEY

Right now I think I've got a taste for some ice cream.

BETTY

Right!

INT. ICE CREAM PARLOR - LATER

Red-and-white striped walls and other design features of an old-fashioned ice cream parlor. Betty and Joey sit at a TABLE in the corner.

BETTY

How's your rainbow sherbet, honey?

JOEY

Real yummy, Ma. I'm glad this ice cream parlor went beyond chocolate, strawberry and vanilla.

BETTY

Joey, you're not thinking of going ahead with this TV production, are you?

JOEY

Sure I am, Ma. It's goin' real good. I had some bumps at first with learning my lines, but this Grace lady, she's helping me. And Toby, he's the kid who plays my brother, he's a real nice big kid

JOEY

and we're friends. And then there's Mr. Wordsworth and Mrs. Popkins. They're real neat parents.

BETTY

Joey, they're not really your parents.

JOEY

But gee, Ma, they're my parents on the show. And they're real nice to me off the set.

BETTY

Oh dear...you've completely disappeared into this world of make-believe. How can we bring you out of it?

JOEY

Gee, Ma...I don't want to come out of it. I kind of like it.

BETTY

Joey, do you know what happens to child actors? Most of them end up very badly because they weren't allowed to have a normal childhood. Now, you like your friends at school and your subjects, right?

JOEY

Well, I like Harry Haskins...most of the time. And I like the neat poetry in Mrs. Pursglove's class. The rest I could do without, 'special gym.

BETTY

Well, if you accept to do this show, then you'll be out of school for a year. That means you won't see your friends. You won't have a benefit of a normal school. You'll be alone.

JOEY

Gee, Ma, I won't be alone. I'll have my family 'round me on the set.

BETTY

I'm not sure that kind of "family" is desirable. This Hepburn character who directs the show. Do you know anything about him?

JOEY

Mr. Hepburn? Well, he's tough but he's OK. Toby says he drinks a little. I didn't know what that meant until Toby 'splained it to me.

BETTY

So I've read too. Joey, if this show goes into production you'll have to sign a contract. It will bind you to a year of service to those taskmasters. Then suppose the show is successful? It will probably drag on for two, three, who knows how many years. They'll try to milk all the money out of it they can. That's all they're interested in anyway. And poof, your whole childhood is shot. You wake up, and you're ready for high school. And you know how hard it will be to adjust back to normal school then?

Joey shakes his head.

BETTY

You know what it's like getting back into the swing of things after summer vacation? This will be a hundred times worse.

Joey is dismayed.

BETTY

Joey, honey, I want you to have a healthy childhood, grow up, meet a nice girl, get married, and have a peaceful, normal life. Let's not ruin matters by pursuing this acting thing. It's fun to try for a spell, but you shouldn't take it seriously. If the pilot sells, and they ask you whether you want to do the show, just politely say no. They can find another boy.

EXT. WALKWAY TO BETTY'S HOUSE - LATER

Charles is waiting to pick Joey up.

CHARLES

How did the shopping go?

BETTY

We picked out a lovely blue suit. Joey's going to be a hit at the party this spring. Joey, would you go inside and watch television? I want to speak with your father.

Joey goes inside.

CHARLES

(suspiciously)

What is it, Betty?

BETTY

When those Hollywood people ask Joey to sign a contract for the show, I suspect he'll decline.

CHARLES

Betty, what have you been telling him?

BETTY

I simply pointed out to him the disadvantages of a showbiz life. He eventually came around.

CHARLES

(with rising anger)

How dare you. Interfering with my raising of Joey. Using an innocent shopping spree as an opportunity to turn him against the show.

BETTY

Do you know anything about this Howard Hepburn? I've been reading up on him. The man's a lush. Is that the sort of influence you want on our son?

CHARLES

I know Hepburn is a little rough around the edges, but he keeps his habits under control. Joey has finally found something that he

CHARLES

enjoys, that he's good at, and you want to destroy it.

BETTY

I'm trying to steer him to safe port. Do you know the statistics on child actors? Most of them end up drug addicts and anti-social weirdos. I'm trying to protect our son and his future. I don't want him exposed to what goes on in that Hollywood studio.

CHARLES

What goes on in that studio is the production of a wholesome, entertaining show. Joey and Toby Mullins have become fast friends.

BETTY

I'm sure they have. Before long this Toby will no doubt be introducing Joey to smoking and even, God forbid, wearing leather jackets. When Joey comes out of this he'll be looking and acting like James Dean.

CHARLES

Toby is a fine boy with nice parents. What right have you to comment? You've never even set foot in Hollywood. I've been working there for fifteen years.

BETTY

A good way to become desensitized. You're all snowed by the make-believe, aren't you? Well, somebody has to restore reality here, and that someone is me.

CHARLES

You know what this is all about? You resent the fact that you didn't get Joey. You're trying to stage-manage his childhood from the wings. Well, he's mine to take care of. And I say he does the show.

Joey sticks his head out the front door.

JOEY

Hey, are you guys all through yelling at each other, or can I finish watching *Don't Forget Father*?

CHARLES

Just a minute, Joey.

JOEY

OK, I'll finish watching it. They're on commercial break.

Joey goes back inside.

CHARLES

Stop interfering, Betty. I mean it. If you try this again, there'll be hell to pay.

EXT. OUTSIDE CHURCH - SUNDAY MORNING

Charles and Joey are exiting the church as Mass lets out.

JOEY

Gee, Pop, you didn't go to communion with me again.

CHARLES

(oblivious)

Well, Joey, you know what time it is. Time to go down to Schmidt's Bakery and get some jelly doughnuts.

JOEY

Gee, Pop, aren't we going to see Ma?

CHARLES

Nope.

JOEY

But why?

CHARLES

She's meddling too much, so we'll do without her. It's just you and me, *amico*. And you're going to accept the role if they offer it to you. Nobody's going to stand in the way of my son's career.

As they walk on, Charles gets a slightly avaricious look in his eye.

CHARLES (cont'd)

Just think, Joey. You're the last link in the chain. Your grandfather laid down asphalt, I answer phones, and now you're a television star. Talk about progress!

INT. COLETTA LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Joey is studying. Charles enters with a package.

CHARLES

Two good things in the mail, Joey. Number one, the new Sinatra record I ordered. Number two...a package from the studio. Could be good news!

JOEY

You read it, Pop. I'm too nervous.

Charles opens the package and produces a LETTER.

CHARLES

"Dear Joey: We are happy to announce that the American Broadcast Network has bought a season of episodes of *Small World*. The show will go into production immediately. A rehearsal and shooting schedule will follow." And here's your contract. So how do you like the sweet smell of success?

EXT. OUTSIDE SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

The school day is over and Joey is lingering thoughtfully outside. In the distance we hear the sounds of the children.

JOEY

(voice-over)

This is it. I'm free. No more bullies and gym class. No more people who don't understand me. Good-bye, Taft Elementary. I'm going to live in Hollywood.

Harry is running out of school after Joey, panting. He is perturbed.

HARRY
Hey Joey, wait up! We'll still see each other on weekends, right?

JOEY
Oh, sure, Harry. Just like old times.

Harry still looks perturbed.

HARRY
Why'd you have to go and leave me?

JOEY
What do you mean?

HARRY
I mean goin' off to be a famous TV star while I have to stay in this crummy school and face Frankie alone.

JOEY
Ah, don't worry, Harry. You'll find other friends at school.

HARRY
Fat chance.

With empathy, Joey puts his arm around Harry's shoulders as they walk off together.

INT. CHARLES' DEN - LATER

Charles is talking on the phone. Joey stands nearby.

CHARLES
Betty, the decision has been made. Joey's going to sign the contract and he's going to do the show. There's nothing you can do about it. Yes, here he is.

He hands the phone to Joey.

JOEY
Hello, Ma.

BETTY (PHONE)

(almost in tears)

Joey, I'm going to ask you one more time. Give up this show. It's not worth it. You're signing yourself over to a year of slavery. You're going to be a pawn, do you understand? A pawn in the hand of Hollywood. They're going to steal your childhood away and never give it back.

JOEY

(sincerely and deliberately)

I'm sorry, Ma, but I've made up my mind. This is where I belong. Besides, they want me for the part. They don't want anybody else.

Charles stands behind Joey, putting his hands on his shoulder.

JOEY (cont'd)

Cheer up, Ma. Someday I'm going to have you meet the people I work with and you'll see how nice they are. And you'll see how good the show is.

BETTY

(still tearful but resigned)

All right, Joey. Let me speak with your father again.

Joey hands the phone back to Charles.

BETTY (cont'd)

Charles, I want you to understand that this is it. I'm having no more contact with you.

CHARLES

The feeling is mutual. Goodbye, Betty. And one more thing. Don't forget about those tinsel fantasies. Some day you'll find them a pleasant escape.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE, EVERYMAN STUDIOS - MORNING

A rehearsal for Small World is about to begin.

Hepburn is addressing the actors.

HEPBURN

Folks, our first episode is going to be no holds barred. No sweet frosting to get the public used to the show. No, we're going to jump right in the middle of a crisis: Mr. and Mrs. Travers are having a quarrel. Toby and Joey are drawn into it. Let's hear what happens...

SAME SCENE - A WEEK LATER

Set of the Travers living room. The filming of the episode is now in progress, in costume. Mr. Travers, Mrs. Travers, Joey, Toby.

MR. TRAVERS

Joey, I see what you're trying to tell us. I see how a quarrel between a mother and a father can hurt a child deeply. And I understand that sometimes we adults forget about how our actions may affect our children.

TOBY

Hey, if you guys talked through whatever it was that got you in the argument in the first place, maybe that would help you patch things up. It's just an idea.

MRS. TRAVERS

You know, come to think of it, I don't rightly remember what it was that started the argument.

MR. TRAVERS

Neither do I. Isn't that silly?

Both laugh mildly.

MR. TRAVERS (cont'd)

Wait a minute. I remember. It was that hat of yours. You bought it with the money we had set aside for

MR. TRAVERS
 dental work, and I said that was foolish and asked you to bring the hat back.

MRS. TRAVERS
 Oh, yes that's right, dear. What a foolish thing to argue about!

MR. TRAVERS
 Agreed. So all you need to do is return the hat, and everything will be hunky dory. All right, honey?

MRS. TRAVERS
 Except I'm not going to return the hat, darling. The hat is staying put.

MR. TRAVERS
 Are you defying me, sweetheart?

MRS. TRAVERS
 I am, dearest.

A heated argument commences again.

JOEY
 (to Toby)
 Boy, that's some idea you had there, Toby.

INT. CLASSROOM ON SET - MID-MORNING

Joey is having his schooling with Grace.

GRACE
 Well, that's enough arithmetic for today. You know, you really are improving with your addition.

JOEY
 Thanks. I'm not using my fingers so much. Hey Grace, were you always a teacher?

GRACE
 No. I worked as a sales girl in a department store for a while after school, then I progressed to being a buyer.

JOEY

A buyer? You mean you got paid to buy stuff?

GRACE

(laughing)

No. A buyer is a woman who goes around trying to obtain merchandise for the store and observing trends in fashion. Sort of like a traveling salesman, except with buying.

JOEY

No foolin'? What made you want to be a teacher?

GRACE

I guess I enjoyed helping people more than buying things.

JOEY

Yeah, I guess it is better to give stuff than get stuff. At least, it makes you feel better inside. Like, when I do an episode of *Small World*, and I think about all the families that are gonna enjoy it...well, it makes me feel happy!

GRACE

You just hold onto that feeling, Joey.

Hepburn blusters in. He is mildly intoxicated.

HEPBURN

Finished with your lesson, kids?

GRACE

Yes, Mr. Hepburn.

HEPBURN

(with slurred speech)

Good, because we got a lot of work to do. Joey, I want you to take more time over your lines. This isn't a blurting contest. I want clarity. Understand? Clarity!

JOEY

Yes, Mr. Hepburn, sir.

HEPBURN

And another thing, you don't need to add "gee" and all those filler words at the start of every sentence.

JOEY

Gee, Mr. Hepburn, I...I mean, sure, Mr. Hepburn, sir.

HEPBURN

And look at the person you're talking to. Don't look at the camera. This isn't an Ed Wynn vaudeville act from 1924. This is slice of life realism! *Capisce?*

JOEY

Si, capisco.

HEPBURN

(confused)

...Yes, well...Let's finish the episode.

He walks away, not exactly in a straight line.

HEPBURN (cont'd)

Clarity and discipline! That's the name of the game!

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - LATER

Set representing Joey and Toby's bedroom. An episode of *Small World* is being filmed. Off to the side, Hepburn seated with the CAMERA MEN and CREW. Joey and Toby are conversing. But now Joey's speech is slower and more meaningful and he is engaging with Toby more closely than before.

JOEY

That was pretty neat how we got Mom and Dad to start speaking to each other, huh, Toby?

TOBY

Yeah, that was a nifty trick. How'd you think it up?

JOEY

I figured that if we made it so Dad had to rescue Mom from some trouble, they might stop hatin' each other...Toby, why do grownups act like Mom and Dad did?

TOBY

I don't know, Joey. I guess sometimes grownups get self-absorbed. They forget that us kids are there paying attention to everything they do.

Through the DRESSER MIRROR, Toby facing the mirror with Joey slightly behind him as the dialogue continues.

JOEY

When I'm grown up and I've got a wife and kids, I'm gonna treat them fair and never yell at them or double cross them or anything like that.

TOBY

Aw, come on, Joey. Don't kid yourself. You know you'll do the same stuff when you're a grownup that Mom and Dad are doing now.

JOEY

Then how can we get better, Toby?

TOBY

I guess we just need to listen to people who are wiser than us and get back on track when we mess up.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - LATER

After rehearsal, Joey and Toby are milling around the set and conversing.

JOEY

Y'know, I'm starting to understand this acting game better now, Toby.

TOBY

What do you mean?

JOEY

Well, there's more to it than just spittin' out your lines. It's a real conversation. Like what we're havin' right now, fr'instance...Hey Toby, do you think it's OK for a kid to have just one parent?

TOBY

Ha! Sometimes I feel like I have no parents. I pretty much only see them on weekends, and sometimes even then I don't see them on account of they've got social activities.

JOEY

I live with my Pop. I used to see my Ma on Sunday afternoons, but now she and my Pop aren't speaking' to each other so I don't see her at all. My Pop's okay, but he doesn't keep as clean a house as Ma used to. Sometimes he forgets to do things on time. He cooks some, but his lasagna is lumpy.

TOBY

Yeah, I know how it is. There are certain things a dad isn't as good at as a mom.

JOEY

I feel bad, Toby. Getting on this show was the best thing that ever happened to me, but it's splitting my Ma and Pop apart even worse than before. My Pop says I'm a success, but it's hard to feel happy about it.

TOBY

Gee, that's rough, Joey.

JOEY

Do you think they'd ever...get back together?

TOBY

I wouldn't bank on it. I've heard of married couples that stayed separated for so long that they eventually just got a divorce.

JOEY
Really, Toby?

TOBY
Yeah. Life isn't like TV.

INT. CAR - MORNING

Charles is driving Joey to rehearsal. Joey is sullen.

CHARLES
You haven't said much this morning,
Joey. How is the show coming?

JOEY
Okay, Pop.

CHARLES
How about your lessons with Miss
Grace?

JOEY
Okay, Pop.

CHARLES
Now come on, Joey. There's
something bothering you. What is
it?

JOEY
I wish my family could be like the
one in *Small World*.

CHARLES
How's that?

JOEY
Yeah, Pop. My parents in *Small
World* are real neat parents.
Sometimes they fight, but they
always make up at the end of the
episode. And Toby, he's always
there for me to talk to and tell my
problems. We have dinner together
every night and do neat things like
go on picnics and fishing and
stuff.

CHARLES
Joey, you realize *Small World* is
just make-believe. It's not real
life.

JOEY

But Pop, it's real to me. Mr. Hepburn always says I should pretend like the scene is really happening to me, so the emotions will come out.

CHARLES

But Joey, you can't expect real life to be just like a TV episode. These shows are idealized - I mean to say they put things in the best possible light. Real life is a lot messier. Problems don't get ironed out in a half hour. Look, let's focus on the positive. The network loves you, and you're going to get to do a whole season of episodes. And *TV Monthly* is already interested in featuring you on their cover. You may become the idol of the nation's youngsters!

JOEY

But golly, Pop, how will it look when they interview me and they find out I don't have a real family?

For once Charles doesn't have an answer. They drive on in silence.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - LATER

Hepburn, Lackey, the crew and cast of *Small World*.

HEPBURN

No! That's not what I said! I did not ask you to interrupt her line, now did I?

WORDSWORTH

I'm sorry, Mr. Hepburn...

HEPBURN

You're sorry! A fat lot of good that does me. We're spending money while you screw up. I want there to be a natural flow of dialogue.

LACKEY

Take fifteen!

HEPBURN

What do you mean, take fifteen!
We're gonna get this scene right!

LACKEY

But the contract calls for a break
now, Mr. Hepburn...

HEPBURN

Damn the contract! Who's in charge
here, you or me?

LACKEY

(sottovoce)

Mr. Hepburn, there are child labor
laws...

HEPBURN

Child labor laws! Look at Pal Joey
there. Does he look like a
weakling? He's a strong, strapping
kid. Toby's practically a man. *I'm*
the law around here. Boy, you
people are making my heartburn
flare up!

(He pops a pill.)

Now let's take this thing from the
beginning...

INT. COLETTA LIVING ROOM - SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Charles and Joey are engaged in joyless leisure; Charles is
lounging on the couch reading a NEWSPAPER, Joey is sprawled
on the floor reading *Aviation Heroes* magazine.

CHARLES

Ah, this is the way to spend Sunday
afternoon. Isn't it, Joey?

JOEY

Sure, Pop.

CHARLES

You want me to help you go over the
script for you this week?

JOEY

No thanks, Pop.

CHARLES

(*pro forma*, not looking up
from his reading)

CHARLES

How's rehearsal going these days?

JOEY

Mr. Hepburn is whippin' us real hard.

CHARLES

(absentmindedly, turning a page of his newspaper)

Heh, that's Hollywood for you.

JOEY

Pop, can't we...can't we go see Ma?

CHARLES

(not looking up from his paper)

Put it out of your mind, Joey...Boy, will you look at the lineup the Dodgers have this coming spring?

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

Set representing a backyard. A dress rehearsal of *Small World* is in progress. Joey Travers is playing at baseball with his friend PETE. In back of them we see the crossbar of a JUNGLE GYM, which casts a shadow over the boys.

PETE

But why won't you let me have your math answers, Joey?

JOEY

It's not right, Pete. My dad says you should always do your own work.

PETE

Aw c'mon, Joey. Why should you listen to your dad? He forgot all about the father-son picnic, didn't he?

JOEY

Well, he did at first...but he had a lot on his mind.

PETE

And by the time you reminded him, it was too late and you had to go to the picnic all by yourself.

Joey is tearing up.

JOEY

But he was sorry and he apologized.
He promised me we'd all go on a
picnic sometime soon. My dad's not
a bad guy. Honest.

PETE

(sarcastically)
Sure he's not. He just acts the
part.

HEPBURN

Cut! That's a take!
(He approaches Joey.)
Hey, Tiger! Now that's more like
it. Now that's acting!

He slaps Joey roughly on the shoulder and walks away,
oblivious to the fact that his tears are real.

INT. HOLY FAMILY CHURCH - AFTERNOON

It is a stone and marble structure of traditional design. A
large CRUCIFIX is over the altar. Joey is praying in one of
the pews. His expression is fervent and intense.

UNDERSCORING: Paul Creston, Symphony No. 3, second movement
(*The Crucifixion: Adagio*).

JOEY'S POV

Statuary depicting the Holy Family of Mary, St. Joseph and
Jesus.

Joey's expression gradually changes to one of strength and
resolve. He rises, exits the pew, genuflects, and exits the
church via the central aisle.

INT. THE COLETTA LIVING ROOM - SATURDAY MORNING, WINTER

Charles and Joey are standing around waiting.

CHARLES

Get ready, Joey. The people from *TV
Monthly* will be here soon.

JOEY

Pop, don't you think I should wear
my blue striped suit?

CHARLES

No, they said keep it informal. Just a nice casual interview and photo shoot. Now remember everything we went over. Don't veer off script.

JOEY

No, Pop. I won't say anything you wouldn't say.

CHARLES

Remember - we're not going to bring up your mother. With any luck, they won't bring her up either...Here's their truck now!

JOEY

(looking out of the picture window)

Wow! They've got three whole cameras.

EXT. FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Several MEN dressed in coats and hats approach the house; some are carrying CAMERAS and SOUND EQUIPMENT.

INT. COLETTA HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A knock at the door. Charles answers it. A group of reporters and photographers is there. Chief among them are TED MAXHAM and FRED STAPLES. The former is a glad-handed salesman type dressed in a flashy sport coat and carrying a CLIP BOARD. The latter is an obedient second-banana with a hand-held CAMERA.

MAXHAM

Hello, I'm Ted Maxham from *TV Monthly*. This is my partner in crime, Fred Staples.

CHARLES

Won't you come in, gentlemen. I'm Charles Coletta. This is our humble abode.

Maxham eyes the decor. On a BUFFET there is a BOTTLE of RED WINE next to a DECANTER, as well as various RELIGIOUS STATUARY. There are also black-and-white FAMILY PHOTOS, including of Joey's grandfather.

MAXHAM

Charming. I sense Mediterranean sunshine.

CHARLES

Call it California Italian. We try to cultivate gracious living.

MAXHAM

And you must be the famous Joey Coletta.

JOEY

Golly, Mister, I didn't know that's what I was.

MAXHAM

After our cover story and the premiere of your show, you will be. We know the time of a busy young man like you is valuable, so we'll limit this interview to a half hour.

JOEY

That's OK, Mister. I'm used to a half-hour format.

He sits in a business-like manner on the SOFA. Maxham takes his place next to him. Charles sits nearby and the photographers stand at attendance.

MAXHAM

So, Joey, you live here with your father -

JOEY

(stilted, reciting)
Yes, Mister. I live here with my father. We enjoy it here a lot. Would you like an Italian cookie?

CHARLES

Would you like some coffee? Or tea, perhaps?

MAXHAM

Thank you, no. And what do you like to do here, when you're not busy doing homework or learning one of your *Small World* scripts?

JOEY

Well, sometimes my friend Harry Haskins comes over and we play games. Other times I go to the neighbor lady's to play with her cats. My Pop and I like to make dinner together or go to a movie. We saw *Old Yeller* last week. Or we stay in and watch *Gunsmoke* on TV.

STAPLES

"Food and fun define the 'small world' of Joey Coletta, denizen of Parkview and symbol of postwar American childhood." And I assume you let your mother in on some of this fun, too?

Joey and Charles fumble for a minute.

JOEY

Would you like some pistachio bread, Mister?

CHARLES

Uh...We were going to mention this, Mr. Maxham. But the fact is...is that...Mrs. Coletta...

MAXHAM

(suddenly very solemn)
Ah. I'm sorry. I didn't realize your wife had died.

CHARLES

Uh...No. She didn't die. The fact is she--

JOEY

She's a traveling saleswoman!

STAPLES

A traveling saleswoman?

JOEY

Yeah! She's on the road for a lot of the year. Sometimes we don't see her for a long time. I think she's doin' business in Cincinnati now. Isn't that right, Pop?

CHARLES

(befuddled)

Well, to be honest I don't know where she is at the moment...

JOEY

Yeah. She's sort of lost. We haven't heard from her for a few weeks. Pop's starting to get worried. Aren't you, Pop?

CHARLES

(mopping his brow)

I am getting pretty worried.

MAXHAM

Mr. Coletta, this is alarming indeed. Have you called the police?

CHARLES

No..no..it's nothing so serious...

JOEY

Ma's disappeared like this before. She just drives across country in her convertible. I think they call her a - buyer for a department store.

MAXHAM

And you mean to say, Mr. Coletta, that you allow your wife to travel across the country alone like this?

CHARLES

Well...lots of women are working as buyers these days...

JOEY

Ma doesn't get lonely, Mister. There's a man she meets at the hotel where she stays and he shows her a good time around the town 'n' stuff.

Charles is squirming.

MAXHAM

Well, Mr. Coletta, we're not the police, but we might be able to use our power to find your wife and rescue her.

STAPLES

Say, Ted, aren't you jumping the gun here?

MAXHAM

What do you mean?

STAPLES

I mean, you might have thought to inquire first whether Coletta *wants* to find his wife.

MAXHAM

Oh, my apologies. How gauche. Mr. Coletta, do you want to find your wife?

CHARLES

(growing ever more befuddled)

Well, of course I want to find her!

JOEY

'Course he does! A growing boy like me can't grow up without a mother!

MAXHAM

Of course. Well, I propose using our cover story as a way to broadcast your wife's disappearance and help locate her.

STAPLES

"America's childhood idol severed from his dear Mom! Can you help bring her home? Can you help reunite the Colettas?"

MAXHAM

It's sensational! America will be riveted!

SAME SCENE - LATER

MAXHAM

...But before we discuss that aspect, I'd like to get some pictures of Joey.

STAPLES

Joey, Gelatino has signed on as sponsor for your show, and they'd like a little publicity from the

STAPLES

star. So if you don't mind, we're going to take a few shots with you holding a package of grape Gelatino. Sort of be their spokesperson in pictures. OK by you?

JOEY

Sure, Mister. We don't eat Gelatino in this house. With us it's mainly *sfogliatelle* and stuff like that. But I don't mind being the spokesperson for something I'd never touch myself.

EXT. BACKYARD - LATER

A beaming Joey is posing with a package of Gelatino while photographers snap his photo.

MAXHAM

Steady there, Joey. Move to the left a little. Keep that Cub Scout innocence. Hold that smile. Yes! Just like that.

MONTAGE OF JOEY SNAPSHOTS

EXT. COLETTA FRONT PORCH - LATER

The photographers are getting into their TRUCK and Maxham and Staples are leaving.

CHARLES

Gentlemen, I need to have a word with you. I'm afraid my son's imagination was working overtime back there. My wife isn't lost. She's not a buyer for a department store.

MAXHAM

(laughing)

You don't have to tell me, Coletta. Let me guess: you're divorced, right?

CHARLES

Well, separated.

MAXHAM

That son of yours is brilliant!
Cooking up a story like that. But I
want you to know this doesn't
change a thing. We're going to run
with this story.

CHARLES

How do you mean?

MAXHAM

"Finding Mrs. Coletta: Reuniting an
American family!" Why, it's the
best gimmick I've ever heard!
Imagine the interest it will drum
up for *Small World*.

STAPLES

You see, the studio would be
squeamish about our profiling a
broken family, so it's just as well
we have this, well, cover story, as
it were.

CHARLES

You mean you'd actually...lie?

Maxham and Staples snicker good-naturedly.

MAXHAM

Coletta, you're an honorable
guy. A real straight-arrow. Not
too wise to our business,
though. You work for the
studio, right?

CHARLES

Yes, administrative.

MAXHAM

We're in the entertainment
journalism racket. Look, nobody
really believes in this "American
family" hokum. Everybody knows it's
a sham cooked up by the boys in
advertising to sell more
Gelatino. We know lots of families
these days are like yours.

STAPLES

Dear separated brethren!

MAXHAM

So why not profit by the situation a little? Look, between us...

(sottovoce)

We would have cooked up some cover-up story anyway. That your kid stepped in and did our work for us saves us a lot of trouble. Congratulations on producing such a kid! If you ask me, he should be writing the show, not acting in it.

CHARLES

Gentlemen, this doesn't sit well with me.

MAXHAM

Look at it this way. You and your wife are separated, right? So in our version, you're still separated, only it's because you don't know where she is. It's not exactly a lie. It's a...literary embellishment.

INT. COLETTA LIVING ROOM - A MOMENT LATER

Charles enters, agitated.

CHARLES

Joey!

JOEY

Yes, Pop?

CHARLES

Wha' hopen?

JOEY

Gee, Pop, I guess I just got a little carried away.

CHARLES

That's putting it mildly! How could you invent such a story?

JOEY

Holy cannoli, Pop. When I told the truth at the audition, you yelled at me. Now I tell a fib, and you yell at me. No matter what I do, you yell at me.

CHARLES

I said we would avoid the subject of your mother. I didn't say to tell an outright lie about her.

JOEY

Gee whiz Pop, what could I do? They were starting to ask about her. I said whatever popped out. And you didn't say anything.

CHARLES

Well, I tried to straighten it out with them outside, but they're going ahead with the fake story.

JOEY

Wow, Pop. So I guess we're both in this together, huh?

CHARLES

You're going to have to be punished for this. No more desserts this week.

JOEY

Not even Gelatino, if they ask me to eat it in the show?

CHARLES

Don't be smart.

JOEY

Pop, does that go for you to? I mean, not eatin' any desserts.

CHARLES

Of course...I mean, no! I mean, yes...I'll take part of the blame.

He storms off in a cloud of befuddlement.

JOEY

(with a mischievous smile)
I guess both of us broke this bow and arrow set together.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - A FEW DAYS LATER

Set of a garage filled with TOOLS. An episode of *Small World* is being filmed. Hepburn and the crew are off to the side.

JOEY

H-Hey, Dad, I need to talk to you 'bout something.

MR. TRAVERS

Can we do it while painting the porch chairs?

JOEY

Sure, Dad.

MR. TRAVERS

Grab a paintbrush.

JOEY

Dad, there's this kid in school named Buzz. He bullies me and other smaller kids around a lot.

MR. TRAVERS

Yes, I know about him. Has he been giving you trouble?

JOEY

Well, Dad, actually...I've been giving *him* trouble.

MR. TRAVERS

Oh?

JOEY

You see, Principal Wilson found some graffiti painting on the side of the school. Nobody knew who did it. But I went to the principal and told him that I saw Buzz and his buddies do it. So Buzz got sent to the principal's office.

MR. TRAVERS

Well, do you know if Buzz was the guilty party?

JOEY

No, Dad. I just wanted to get back at him for all the mean stuff he's done to me. I mean...he *could* have done it.

MR. TRAVERS

But you don't know for sure, Joey, and you know from Sunday School that it's not right to tell a lie. I think you know what you have to do.

JOEY

Yeah. Go to Principal Wilson and tell the truth. Boy, now Buzz is really gonna let me have it.

MR. TRAVERS

Those are the consequences of lying, Joey. But if Buzz bullies you again, come to me and I'll straighten things out. Remember, no matter what happens, you can always come to your parents.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - LATER

Rehearsal is wrapping up. An agitated Hepburn is addressing the cast. Lackey stands by.

HEPBURN

I don't know what I'm going to do with you people. I ask for realism and you act like a bunch of department store manikins. This show is going to be just another mediocre, cardboard sitcom.

LACKEY

Perhaps we could try some different camera moves, Mr. Hepburn? More closeups perhaps?

HEPBURN

No, it's not the camera angles, it's the actors! You're supposed to be a family and instead you act like four random people who met each other this morning. More empathy, more chemistry, more tenderness! I'll get it if I have to pound it into you!

INT. SAME SCENE - LATER

Joey and Toby and hanging out after the shooting.

JOEY

Boy, Toby, I've never seen Mr. Hepburn make a scene like that before.

TOBY

Eh, I've seen him worse. Once I was working with him on this half-hour commercial about auto insurance and he yelled the whole time. The key is, don't take it personally. He's not really hollering at you, he's hollering *with* you. Or something like that. Hey, did you see what those crazy Russians went and did?

(He produces a NEWSPAPER)

They just launched a satellite into outer space. Called *Energiya*.

JOEY

So what?

TOBY

So what?! It means they're one step ahead of us in the race to space. We've got to catch up. And I'm gonna be the guy to help out.

JOEY

Gee, Toby, you mean you're going to be an astronaut now instead of an aviator?

TOBY

I'm thinking about it.

JOEY

Why do we have to keep up with the Russians, anyway?

TOBY

Because they're our enemy. They've got to be contained. It's sort of like Mr. Hepburn. If someone like that is allowed to roam free, we're all in danger. Anyway, here's a new space magazine I picked up. It explains what all the American boys are doing over at NACA and all the

TOBY
neat technology they're developing
for exploring space. Check it out.

He hands Joey the MAGAZINE.

JOEY
Thanks, Toby. I'll be seein' you.

Toby exits. Ted Maxham enters.

MAXHAM
Joey?

JOEY
Oh hi, Mr. Maxham. Gee, what are
you doing here? You want to get
more Gelatino pictures out of me?

MAXHAM
No, Joey. I wanted to tell you
about an organization I'm part of.
I think we'd better step aside so
we can talk in private.

They step aside to a dark corner of the sound stage. Maxham
produces a RED PAMPHLET and a MEMBERSHIP CARD.

MAXHAM (cont'd)
It's called the Solidarity
League. We're a voluntary
association of artists and other
workers who are devoted to getting
forward-thinking messages into
motion pictures. We like your
progressive spirit. That story
about your mother and the
convertible was brilliant. We think
American society is too repressive,
too conformist. You're just the
sort of bright young buck we need
to inculcate the next generation
into the values of the new world
order.

JOEY
Gee, Mister, I don't understand
half of the words you're usin', but
I would like to have a neat
membership card.

MAXHAM

Come by the *TV Monthly* offices
sometime after rehearsal and we'll
talk.

JOEY

Oh, gee...it says your meetings are
on Sunday evenings. That's CCD.
Sorry, Mister. Thanks anyway.

He hands the pamphlet back.

INT. CHARLES' DEN - AFTERNOON

Joey is dialing the phone.

JOEY

(with a slightly cocky air)
Hello, *TV Monthly*? This is Joey
Coletta, star of *Small World*. Oh,
you've heard of me, huh? Well, I'd
like to have a copy of this month's
issue sent to 6503 Rarebit Road,
Parkview. Thanks.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF BETTY'S HOUSE - DAY

Betty's MOTHER is bringing in the MAIL.

MOTHER

Betty, did you order a copy of *TV
Monthly*?

BETTY

Good grief, mother, why would I do
a thing like that?

MOTHER

Well, I know I didn't order it. But
here it is.

She hands a MAGAZINE to Betty.

BETTY

Oh, I knew this would happen sooner
or later. It's a cover story about
Joey. It's a pre-publication proof
- hasn't even come out yet. Why
would they send me this?

MOTHER

Oh, let me see! Oh, how exciting for Joey. And how handsome he looks.

BETTY

Don't rub it in, Mother. You know my feelings about this whole thing.

MOTHER

Betty, can you stop being stubborn for one minute? Why not see what it says. It's not going to bite you.

Betty warily opens the magazine and scans the article.

BETTY

What on earth? Mother, listen to this. "The new symbol of postwar American childhood has no mother at the moment. Mrs. Coletta, a buyer for Fitz department store, has disappeared on the road and has not been heard from in six weeks." What rubbish is this?

MOTHER

It sounds like some sort of publicity stunt. Probably their way of selling more magazines.

BETTY

I'll bet Charles approved of this. If this is his idea of a joke at my expense, then I'm really going to let him have it.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD OFFICES - DAY

Betty is walking briskly in.

INT. HOLLYWOOD RECEPTION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A SECRETARY is at work. The door reads "TV Monthly." Betty enters.

BETTY

Hello, I have an appointment with Mr. Gable.

SECRETARY

You may go right in.

INT. MR. GABLE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

MR. GABLE is a middle-aged captain of industry. He is smoking a CIGARETTE.

GABLE

Ah, Mrs. Coletta.

BETTY

I want to make this brief, Mr. Gable. This whole publicity stunt has got to stop. It's got to be blotted out. I won't stand for it.

GABLE

Won't you please sit down, Mrs. Coletta?

She does so.

GABLE (cont'd)

I know that the boys - I mean, Mr. Maxham and Mr. Staples - embellished the truth a little bit.

BETTY

Embellished? It was an outright fabrication! A lie!

GABLE

Ah, but let me tell you something about our business. Our "news" isn't the same news you read on the front page of the *New York Times*. We're in the dream industry. People want to have beautiful dreams about their favorite stars. They want excitement and drama, off the screen as well as on.

(He takes a puff on his cigarette)

Now, if you were a fan of the latest video family, what would be more interesting for you to read: the parents were divorced, or the mother was lost somewhere in the hinterlands of America?

BETTY

(huffy)

Not divorced, separated. We're Catholics, Mr. Gable.

GABLE

(bowing slightly)

I stand corrected. Of course, to middle America, divorced and separated are much the same. But think about my question for a moment. You're an average housewife from Peoria. You tune in weekly to see the ongoing adventures of the Travers family. You idolize Mrs. Travers, a domestic goddess and an icon of chic and sophistication...a bit like you, as a matter of fact.

BETTY

I beg your pardon?

GABLE

You'll forgive me. I was just noticing your exquisite sense of style. Those clothes are definitely not from Macy's.

(He suddenly jumps up.)

You know, I've got an idea. We can go even further with this campaign! Mrs. Coletta, would you like to be our mascot? We can start a whole new thing: Locate Mrs. Coletta!

BETTY

What on earth are you talking about?

GABLE

We can put out a description of you in the magazine, then invite people to write in if they spot you.

BETTY

What? How can they spot me if I'm here at home?

GABLE

They'll think they've spotted you. The power of suggestion. Then finally, after we've let this go on for some time, we'll miraculously

GABLE
 "find" you. We'll announce it in the magazine, along with a photo spread of you, and consequently have more viewers for the show than ever before...My, I didn't notice how well coordinated your earrings are with the rest of your ensemble. Mrs. Coletta, are you quite sure you weren't a model?

BETTY
 Why, no...

GABLE
 I'll arrange for you to meet with Miss Gautier, the head of the wardrobe department. You can discuss how you want to be presented for the photo shoot.

BETTY
 Mr. Gable, can we please slow down a bit? I have no intention of colluding in a...say, would there be any remuneration?

GABLE
 Why, of course. You will receive the standard fee for the subject of one of our articles, \$5,000.

BETTY
 (She pauses to reflect)
 I've been of somewhat straitened means ever since I separated from Charles - my husband. A paycheck of that magnitude would be welcome.

GABLE
 I'm already on the phone...

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - LATER

Rehearsal is in progress for an episode of *Small World*. Toby, Mr. and Mrs. Travers, and Joey. Toby is holding aloft a TROPHY.

TOBY
 That's right, Mom and Dad. I got first prize in the track and field meet.

MR. TRAVERS
That's fine, Toby! We're very proud
of you.

MRS. TRAVERS
We certainly are.

She hugs Toby.

TOBY
Gee, Mom, don't let's get sloppy
about it.

MR. TRAVERS
Say, why don't we have a victory
dinner?

MRS. TRAVERS
Yes. We'll make hot dogs and
hamburgers out on the grill. And
I'll pick up some ice cream
downtown.

JOEY
What about me?

MR. TRAVERS
What do you mean, Joey?

JOEY
I passed my last math test. Ain't
that worth something?

MRS. TRAVERS
Isn't that worth something. Of
course, Joey. We're happy for the
way you've been pulling your grades
up. But we think that what Toby
accomplished merits celebration.

MR. TRAVERS
Yes, a track trophy is nothing to
sneeze at.

JOEY
Well, you guys can celebrate if you
want. I'll go eat at the drug store
with my buddy Pete.

MR. TRAVERS
Joey, I think that's a very selfish
attitude to have.

At the entrance to the soundstage, Betty enters and confronts an ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT

I'm sorry, Ma'am. I can't let anyone in.

BETTY

I'm Joey's mother.

She shows IDENTIFICATION.

ATTENDANT

Ah, so they found you! Sure, you can go ahead, Mrs. Coletta.

As Betty walks on the soundstage, the rehearsal continues.

JOEY

You guys don't appreciate me!

MRS. TRAVERS

Honey, that's not true!

JOEY

Well, I'm gonna go where I am appreciated.

(Suddenly Joey Coletta notices his mother)

Oh, hi, Ma!

HEPBURN

Cut! Cut! What's going on here?

JOEY

Sorry, Mr. Hepburn. My mom just walked in.

HEPBURN

I don't care if Marilyn Monroe walked in. Don't ad lib. Stick to your job!

BETTY

Excuse me!

(She walks up to Hepburn.)

What right have you to talk to my son like that!

HEPBURN

Madam, I...

BETTY

Why don't you straighten up your suit? You look terrible. And why is it so hot and airless in here?

LACKEY

What are you doing here, Mrs. Coletta?

BETTY

I came to the offices of your magazine to set the record straight about my whereabouts. Then I come here and find a child abuse session going on.

JOEY

It's OK, Ma. Mr. Hepburn always acts like that.

BETTY

Not if I have anything to say about it, he won't. Just because you've got a megaphone and a chair with your name on it, you think that makes you God!

LACKEY

Mrs. Coletta, if you would please step aside...

BETTY

No, I won't step aside. I want to see *him* in his office.

INT. HEPBURN'S OFFICE - A MOMENT LATER

BETTY

I want to know how many hours you're making the kids work, how much schooling you're giving them, and what you're feeding them.

LACKEY

Mrs. Coletta, these things are all spelled out in the contract -

BETTY

At this moment I happen to be speaking to the man standing next to you.

HEPBURN

The contract specifies three hours of schooling and hour hours of filming a day, ma'am.

BETTY

And are you following the contract?

HEPBURN

We hew as close as we can -

BETTY

Close as you can? What kind of baloney is that? Speaking of that, who prepares your meals?

LACKEY

We have excellent caterers, Mrs. Coletta.

BETTY

Well, I'm going to be your caterer from now on.

LACKEY

Mrs. Coletta, we can't let you bring food on the set -

BETTY

If you don't let me take care of Joey on the set, he doesn't do the show. It's as simple as that.

LACKEY

Mrs. Coletta -

HEPBURN

(Extending his arm to silence his subordinate)

Never mind, Lackey.

BETTY

Do you know what I think of you, Mr. Hepburn? You're a big blowhard bully. You think being a so-called creative artist entitles you to run roughshod over people. Why, I don't know. Maybe your own mother didn't give you enough attention. Or maybe you've got trouble in the home and you take out your frustrations on the set.

For the first time, Hepburn looks speechless and chastened. But for that matter, so does Betty, as if her words might apply to her as well.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD SIDEWALK - SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Joey and Harry are walking together.

JOEY

It's too bad about the movie,
Harry.

HARRY

Yeah, I'd already seen it three
times. The one with the giant
octopus that takes over Santa
Barbara.

JOEY

I guess once you've seen one
octopus picture, you've seen 'em
all. But the chocolate sodas were
good, weren't they?

HARRY

'Course they were. Thanks for
giving me the lend of a dime to pay
for it, Joey.

JOEY

That's OK, Harry. You can pay me
back at school on Monday.

HARRY

OK, I will. If I can get the lend
of it from my Dad. See ya, Joey.

JOEY

See ya, Harry.

Joey turns and walks to his house.

JOEY'S POV

An eerie calm fills the neighborhood. Afternoon sunlight, a light breeze, and the sound of Joey's footsteps. Joey opens his front door.

INT. COLETTA HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Joey enters, where he finds a surprising scene: his father entertaining a strange WOMAN at tea. She is in her twenties, dark-haired and very chic. Charles jumps up, surprised.

CHARLES

Joey! I didn't expect you home so soon. I thought you were going to the movie with Harry.

JOEY

We'd already seen it. So we had chocolate sodas at Schmidt's and came home. Who's this lady?

CHARLES

(fumbling)

This is - this is Miss Renard, Joey. I work with her at the office.

MISS RENARD

Perhaps I ought to go, Charles.

CHARLES

No, Louise.

(to Joey)

Miss Renard just came over to say hello. Louise, this is...my son Joey.

MISS RENARD

Pleased to meet you, son. You look just like your father. Look at the time. I think I'd best be going. I'll see you on Monday, Charles.

Charles gets up to lead her to the door.

CHARLES

(under his breath)

Louise, I'm sorry. I didn't expect this to happen.

MISS RENARD

I did. We couldn't expect to keep this a secret forever.

She exits.

JOEY

Gee, Pop, you were feedin' her Ma's cookies! Does Ma know about this?

CHARLES

Your mother doesn't enter into this, Joey. It has nothing to do with her.

JOEY

Who is this Miss Renard lady?

CHARLES

(impatient and embarrassed)
I told you, she's - a coworker of mine. She just came over to say hello.

JOEY

She seems awful young. At first I thought you were sponsoring her for Confirmation or somethin'.

CHARLES

(ever more flustered)
Joey, let's just forget about this whole thing, all right? I think I have a right to my own private life. Now run along and do your homework or something.

INT. CHARLES DEN - LATER

Joey is talking on the phone.

JOEY

That's right, Ma. Pop was feeding your biscotti to a strange woman... Gee, Ma, careful you don't bust the phone speaker...What're you gonna do? Uh huh...Uh huh...

(wide-eyed)

Wow!

INT. COLETTA LIVING ROOM - SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Charles and Joey are taking their leisure: the former fixing an appliance, the latter reading *Space Exploration* magazine.

Betty appears at the screen door knocking. Charles goes to answer it.

CHARLES

Betty, what are you doing here?

BETTY

Just keeping my appointment.

CHARLES

Hi, Ma! Gee, I'm so happy to see you! I'm sure you and Pop want to talk, so I'll go watch TV.

He skips away. Betty and Charles walk to the KITCHEN during the following dialogue.

BETTY

So what's this I hear, Charles? Entertaining strange women in this house, are you? Women half your age, yet?

CHARLES

Joey! What has he been telling you?

BETTY

The truth, apparently. You must be starved for companionship.

Charles sighs and sits down at the kitchen table.

CHARLES

You don't know how hard it is sometimes, Betty.

BETTY

It's no paradise on my end, either. Being around my mother all the time is a bit much. My charges have reduced from two to one. I have unused energies...Charles, how are you organizing the dishes?

CHARLES

What do you mean?

BETTY

It looks like an unholy mess! Here, let me straighten it out...what are these, paper plates?!

CHARLES

(meekly)

Yeah, they help out sometimes.

BETTY

What do you think this is, some dog wagon on the side of the road? I won't have you profaning my kitchen like this!

CHARLES

Oh, so it's "your" kitchen again all of a sudden? You didn't feel that way when you up and left six months ago.

BETTY

Help me clean up, Charles.

He does so.

BETTY (cont'd)

By the way...I'm going to be the wardrobe consultant on *Small World*.

Charles drops a PLATE on the floor and it shatters.

BETTY (cont'd)

Charles! How could you! The Dutch china my mother gave us as a wedding gift!

CHARLES

Wardrobe consultant? What do you mean?

Betty starts to sweep up.

BETTY

Those people need my help. That Hepburn is a monster. You know he was ignoring the legal working hours for the children? Treating them like galley slaves!

CHARLES

Betty, you mean you've been on the set?

BETTY

Yes, and you won't believe what a nest of depravity I've uncovered. I'm going to supervise that production closely from now on.

CHARLES

You mean they're actually letting you participate in the production of *Small World*?

BETTY

They think it's good publicity to have me involved. They're going to have some kind of contest where people write in to say if they've spotted me. I think that's silly, but I also think the clothes they have on that Popkins woman are all wrong and I want them changed. Hand me the towel, Charles.

CHARLES

Betty, I seem to remember your saying once that you would never set foot in Hollywood.

BETTY

(after some reflection)

It's not so bad as I thought. It's not beyond redemption. But it needs the Betty Coletta touch.

INSERT - COVER OF TV WEEK MAGAZINE WITH HEADLINE "A FAMILY DISUNITED."

INT. GABLE'S OFFICE - DAY

Gable and Betty are looking at the magazine.

GABLE

Looks snappy, huh, Betty?

BETTY

You know, Gabe, I'm starting to take a shine to Hollywood.

GABLE

Shall we go to the rehearsal?

BETTY

Yes, let's.

Gable helps her on with her coat.

BETTY

Have you had any response to the query?

GABLE

A lady in Missouri says she saw you on Route 66. We'll send her an Everyman Studios plaque.

They leave arm in arm.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - A MOMENT LATER

A rehearsal for Small World is in progress. Set of Toby and Joey's BEDROOM. Toby and Joey.

TOBY

Mom's birthday is next week, Joey. We should combine our savings and get her something real nice.

JOEY

I've got 75 cents in my piggy bank.

TOBY

I've got three bucks. All that'll get her is a crummy blouse at the thrift store.

JOEY

If I mow lawns this weekend, then maybe I could earn enough to get her some nice smelling stuff...

Betty and Mr. Gable enter the soundstage. They are acting a little too friendly towards each other. Joey is not amused.

TOBY

You've gotta stop talking like a little kid, Joey. It's called perfume.

JOEY

(distracted)

Yeah...perfume. I'll remember that, Toby. By the way, yesterday I knocked *your* perfume over by mistake.

TOBY

That's not perfume, that's aftershave lotion! Boy, what a

TOBY
stupid little goof I've got for a
brother.

JOEY
(angry)
Not as stupid as you! I'll tell you
what. You get Mom a present. Count
me out. What's Mom done for me
lately, anyway?

TOBY
Gee, how selfish can you get, Joey?

HEPBURN
Cut! Great job. Nice to see you
show some anger for a change, Joey.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE, SIDE AREA - LATER

The cast is on break. Betty goes to meet a sullen Joey.

BETTY
I brought you a salami sandwich and
some Ruffles potato chips, dear.

JOEY
Gee, Ma, why were you acting all
mushy 'round that magazine guy?

BETTY
Mr. Gable? He's a very nice
gentleman.

JOEY
If he's a nice gentleman, then why
does he act like a crummy creep?

BETTY
Now Joey, just eat your lunch and
don't think about it. I'm entitled
to my own private life, aren't I?

JOEY
Gee, Ma, when Pop had that
secretary lady over for tea you got
mad. Now you're practically doing
the same thing.

BETTY
(a bit uneasy and guilty)
Joey, there's nothing between
us. Mr. Gable was nice to me, and

BETTY
I returned the favor...Come on,
now, go eat your lunch.

INT. CAFETERIA - A MOMENT LATER

Joey and Toby are eating lunch together.

JOEY
Well, did you see it?

TOBY
See what?

JOEY
That Mr. Gable acting all
lovey-dovey with my Ma.

TOBY
Hey, yeah, I did notice that. What
are you gonna do about it?

JOEY
What would you do?

TOBY
Well, you could try some
sabotage. My Dad did some of that
during the war...

INT. CHARLES' DEN - DAY

A TV SET is in the corner, and in another corner a
TYPEWRITER. The TV set is on. Joey enters.

JOEY
(calling to Charles in another
room)
Hey Pop, you left the TV on. Should
I turn it off?

CHARLES
(from the other room)
If you would, please, Joey.

Before turning the TV off, Joey watches for a moment. A
commercial is in progress. We hear:

ANNOUNCER 1
Experts agree: White-O gets clothes
90 percent brighter than any other

ANNOUNCER 1
 leading brand. Let's hear what one
 housewife has to say:

WOMAN
 Breeze, I regret to inform you that
 your services are no longer
 required!

ANNOUNCER 2
 And now, back to *Roundtable*.

MODERATOR
 Let's move on to the topic of the
 proposed summit between the U.S.
 and Soviet leaders.

COMMENTATOR
 Well as a matter of fact, J.R., I
 was just discussing this with a
 friend of mine - a respected
 journalist, whom I'll not name,
 let's just call him an interested
 party - and he was of the opinion
 that the proposed summit is a
 delusion, that Khrushchev is a wolf
 in sheep's clothing who should not
 be trusted...

Joey turns the TV off. He looks thoughtful for a moment. He
 closes the door to the den, sits down at the typewriter, and
 starts typing a letter. It reads:

Dear Wolf in Sheep's Clothing:
 Stay away from my wife, or I'll fix you big time.
 Signed,

An Interested Party

Joey calmly takes the paper out of the typewriter, folds it
 up, puts it in an envelope, and seals it. He sits back down
 at the typewriter, puts a new sheet of paper in, and
 types. The new letter reads:

Dear Miss Renard:
 We regret to inform you that your services are no longer
 required.
 Signed,
 Betty Coletta

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - THE NEXT DAY

The actors are preparing for rehearsal. Joey and Toby. Joey is sporting sunglasses and a cocky air.

JOEY

You know Toby, I'm startin' to enjoy this sabotage stuff.

TOBY

Oh? How do you mean?

JOEY

That story about my Ma, for instance. What a masterpiece!

TOBY

(warily)

Well, a little sabotage is OK, but don't let it get out of control.

JOEY

Ah come on, Toby. Mr. Hepburn says I'm a member of the "creative class" now. Why do I have to play by the rules?

SAME SCENE - LATER

Set for the Travers kitchen. An especially tear-jerking episode of *Small World* is being filmed. Joey is kneeling on the floor cuddling an ORANGE TABBY CAT. Mr. and Mrs. Travers and Toby stand by.

JOEY

You see? Annabelle knew to come back. She went away for a while, but then she had to return to me.

MRS. TRAVERS

I know you like her, Joey, but don't get too attached. Annabelle's rightful owner is bound to show up, and then you'll have to let her go.

JOEY

But Annabelle's *my* cat. We had the ad in the paper for over a week now, and nobody's claimed her.

TOBY

He's right, Mom. Finders, keepers.

MR. TRAVERS

Boys, we've told you time and again that we can't keep a pet in this house. It would be just another mouth to feed.

JOEY

But gee, Mom and Dad, I don't want to give up Annabelle to the pound. They might give her to some mean family, and then I wouldn't sleep at night knowing she was unhappy!
(He hugs the cat closer)
Annabelle belongs with me!

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - LATER

Hepburn is addressing the cast and crew.

HEPBURN

Folks, there's a fly in our ointment. Gelatino is not sure whether to continue sponsoring us for another season.

General dismay.

HEPBURN

As you know, the pilot airs this weekend. Next week we shoot the season finale. I've arranged for a filming with a studio audience. This will create the heightened emotional tension we need. We have got to sell it. In particular, we've got to show growth in the characters - something to pull audiences in for another season. Joey, I'm lookin' at you, kid.

INT. CORRIDOR IN EVERYMAN STUDIOS - LATER

Hepburn and Lackey walk briskly and converse.

HEPBURN

Lackey, there's another fly in our ointment besides the one I mentioned.

LACKEY

Oh?

HEPBURN

It's Wordsworth. He's demanding that we shoot the second season around his golf schedule.

LACKEY

What?!

HEPBURN

He wants to shoot all his scenes first, then splice in all the reactions. He says if his handicap doesn't improve, then he's quitting the show.

LACKEY

But that's crazy! You're not going to let him get away with it.

HEPBURN

Not on your life. After I get through with him, he won't dare make another kooky request. Imagine breaking up a family like that?

INT. STUDY IN BETTY'S HOUSE - EVENING

The study has mahogany paneling and a cozy ambiance. A deluxe TV SET stands in the corner. A TABLE holds a BOWL OF POPCORN.

Betty's mother leads Charles, Betty, and Joey into the room.

CHARLES

It was swell of you to invite us to watch the premiere on your set, Mamma.

MOTHER

This is the occasion of Joey's life and I wanted it to be special.

Joey turns on the TV set.

BETTY

I understand we're in for a full evening's entertainment.

JOEY

That's right, Ma. They're gonna preview all of Mr. Hepburn's new shows.

CHARLES

(consulting a TV GUIDE)

We're going to see *Leather Jackets*, followed by *Howard Hepburn's Half-Hour* and finally *Small World*.

BETTY

(with sarcasm)

Of course they put Joey last.

CHARLES

It's "save the best for last," Betty!

All take their seats while Betty's mother dims the lights. Charles and Betty sit in separate chairs on either side of Joey. Joey wishes they would sit together. The showing begins. The screen flashes the title "*Leather Jackets*, produced and directed by Howard Hepburn." Electric guitar-adorned rock n' roll music accompanies scenes of city streets. (Note: All the television sequences in this scene are in black and white.)

BETTY

Oh, for heaven's sake. Do we have to sit through this nonsense before we get to Joey's show?

MOTHER

Quiet, Betty. We may learn something.

The screen shows a couple of surly-looking TEENAGERS on a city street.

TEENAGER 2

Hey Jake, what gives? You wanna mess around?

JAKE

I'm through messing around, Roscoe. I wanna break out. I wanna show these adults who's in charge once n' for all.

ROSCOE

Whaddaya have planned?

Jake flashes a SWITCH BLADE KNIFE.

JAKE

This. Tomorrow I'm staging the
Mutiny of Andrew J. McCorkle High.

ROSCOE

When are you gonna do it?

JAKE

In the library during study hall.
I'll need you for support. Ya game?

BETTY

This is terrible. Why don't they
make a show with respectable people
in it?

MOTHER

Hush, Betty.

The scene on the screen changes to Jake's apartment. His
MOTHER is cooking and his FATHER is reading a newspaper.

JAKE'S MOTHER

(saccharine voice)

Oh Jake, honey! You're home. How
did school go?

JAKE

(sarcastically)

Don't make me laugh.

(to his father)

You finished with the paper, ol'
man? I wanna see the race tracks.

JAKE'S FATHER

I'm checking how the markets are
doing.

JAKE

Middle-class squares. Man, what do
I gotta do to shake some life into
you people?

He turns the RADIO to a rock'n'roll station and starts
dancing.

JAKE'S FATHER

Jake, I told you we won't have any
of that monkey music in this house.
Turn it off.

JAKE'S MOTHER

Oh Lyle, if that's the way Jake wants to express himself, I don't think we should stand in his way.

BETTY

Are you serious? What kind of a pushover mother is this? If I were there, I'd slap them both down!

SAME SCENE - LATER

The screen shows the next preview. Title: *Howard Hepburn's Half-Hour*. Hepburn appears on screen to introduce the show, looking every bit the poor man's Alfred Hitchcock.

HEPBURN

Ladies and gentlemen, what you are about to see is one of the strangest cases ever to meet with the psychiatric wards...

BETTY

Oh no, it looks like one of those weirdy shows.

The screen shows an OFFICE. An EMPLOYEE enters with a crazed expression. The other employees all stare at him with alarm.

EMPLOYEE

Who am I?!

SECRETARY 1

I beg your pardon?

EMPLOYEE

I woke up this morning and when I was putting my wallet in my pocket, my driver's license had another man's name and picture on it!

SECRETARY 2

Joan, do you recognize this fellow?

EMPLOYEE

(addressing JOAN, a secretary)
Joan, Joan! Please tell me you remember me. I'm Martin Cogwell, aren't I? I've worked in this office for the past thirteen years?

JOAN

Mister, I've never laid eyes on you
before. I'm calling the police.

EMPLOYEE

NO!!

BETTY

I can't believe what passes for
entertainment these days. This
stuff could give you nightmares.

SAME SCENE - LATER

JOEY

Small World is next!

BETTY

Finally!

She reaches for some popcorn.

The screen shows the intro sequence of *Small World*: Suburban neighborhood, the Travers family riding in a convertible, peppy theme music.

The scene opens on the Travers kitchen: the same scene which we earlier saw rehearsed.

MRS. TRAVERS

Boys, breakfast is on!

MR. TRAVERS

Am I included under the "boys"
rubric?

MRS. TRAVERS

(playfully jesting)

I suppose so. Your tie is sloppy
enough.

MR. TRAVERS

Oh! I dressed in a hurry.

TOBY

Morning, Mom. Morning, Dad.

JOEY

Hi, Mom. Hi, Dad. Oh boy, a fancy
breakfast!

MRS. TRAVERS
 Would you like pancackes or
 waffles, Joey?

JOEY
 I'll have a pancake with peach
 marmalade on it, Mom.

Joey, Charles, Betty, and Betty's mother exchange smiles of excitement and pleasure at seeing Joey onscreen.

SAME SCENE - LATER

The screen shows the climactic scene of the episode of *Small World*. Joey is on the school PLAYGROUND facing off with BUZZ, a bully, while other KIDS look on. A child's version of the climactic scene of *On the Waterfront*.

JOEY
 Leave me alone, Buzz. I'm not
 giving you my lunch money, so
 there's no use tryin' to get it.

BUZZ
 Listen, squirt, you owe me one. I
 know it was you who squealed
 on me about turning the fire alarm
 on last week.

JOEY
 It's just what you deserved, Buzz!
 You scared a lot of people into
 thinkin' there was an actual fire.

BUZZ
 You know the trouble with you,
 squirt? You think it makes you the
 big man on campus just because you
 tattle to the principal. Well, I'm
 gonna get even with you.

JOEY
 You know what, Buzz? You take away
 those goony friends of yours and
 you're nothing.

BUZZ
 You're talkin' yourself into a
 fight, kid.

JOEY

You think you're the king of the world but you know what you are? You're a cheap, lousy, dirty, stinking wise-guy! And I'm glad for ratting on you. You had it comin'.

BUZZ

You've asked for it, kid.

Buzz lunges at Joey and the two get in a tussle. The other kids watch, some of them cheering for Joey. The fight migrates to the playground set. At one point Joey escapes from Buzz by going down a slide. Buzz meets him at the bottom and they tussle some more. Buzz is stronger than Joey and Joey has clearly had enough. He lies curled up, inert.

BUZZ (cont'd)

There. That'll teach you to mess with me, squirt.

JOEY

(still on the ground)

You may be bigger than me, Buzz, but I've got your number. You're gonna get in big trouble with the principal.

Buzz has nothing to say to this. He walks away in silence. Joey's friend Pete comes over to help him. The other kids stand around.

PETE

Are you OK, Joey? Did he hurt you?

JOEY

Not much.

Pete helps Joey to his feet.

PETE

You know what you are, Joey? A hero!

JOEY

But I lost the fight.

PETE

But you won the war. Buzz won't be scaring us any longer. Principal Wilson's gonna punish him big time.

JOEY

I hope so.

PETE

You followed your conscience, Joey.
And just think: Buzz didn't get
your lunch money!

JOEY

Boy, conscience! That stuff can
drive you bananas!

He brushes himself off. He and Pete walk along with the other kids back to the school. At this point a TEACHER appears at the side door.

TEACHER

All right, kids! Back to class!

INT. CHARLES' DEN - LATER THAT EVENING

The room is shrouded in darkness apart from some moonlight streaming through the window and illuminating Joey. Joey is talking on the phone.

JOEY

Well, Toby, my plans are busted.
The show didn't bring Ma
and Pop together like I'd
hoped. They sat in separate chairs
the whole time and wouldn't even
stay for coffee afterwards. I guess
you were right. Life isn't like TV.

INSERT - TITLE PAGE OF SCRIPT, READING "SEASON FINALE:
'THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME.'"

INT. TV STUDIO - EVENING

A live filming of the season finale is in progress. Set for the Travers living room. A small studio AUDIENCE is present. Charles and Betty are both present, though not sitting together; they glance furtively at each other.

MR. TRAVERS

Joey, I just don't understand
it. What would possess you to run
away from home? Don't we do
everything to make you happy here?

MRS. TRAVERS

Dear, I imagine Joey has had enough
turmoil for one day.

During the following speech, the poignant reactions of
various members of the audience.

JOEY

It's all right, Mom. I'd like to
say something. At first I thought I
didn't like living here. I thought
you guys didn't appreciate me. But
then I got out there - in the
outside world. I realized how much
I need you. How much I like Dad
quizzing me on my spelling
homework, and Toby helping me with
math. Mom always having a treat
ready to eat when I get home.

TOBY

Too bad you chickened out, Joey. I
was all set to make a nice profit
on your baseball cards.

Audience laughter.

INT. BACKSTAGE AREA - LATER

Filming of the finale is completed. General rejoicing among
the cast and crew. Betty is chatting with Mrs. Popkins.

BETTY

My dear, the costume is lovely,
goes just perfectly with your
complexion. In fact, it looks like
something I would wear.

HEPBURN

Folks, will you be quiet,
please. We've been through a lot
these past several months. I've
worked you all hard, I know, but I
also know our work will pay off. I
think we've created a one-of-a-kind
show, one that will make television
history. Just watch.

The talking and laughter start up again. Hepburn approaches
Joey.

HEPBURN (cont'd)

Joey, I want to say something to you personally. Your acting back there, when you were telling your parents why they mean so much to you...you made me tear up, and that's saying something. I'm just a battered fool who made a lot of mistakes in life. But I know that hiring you was not one of them.

JOEY

Gee, thanks, Mr. Hepburn.

HEPBURN

Now, don't lose it, Tiger. I hope we can be together for another season.

JOEY

Yes, sir.

They shake hands. Hepburn starts to depart.

HEPBURN

By the way, Joey - I even liked your ad libs.

Hepburn exits. Toby approaches Joey.

TOBY

What were you and Mr. Hepburn talking about, Joey?

JOEY

It was a real s'prise! He got all weepy and said I did a great job in one of my scenes. I've never seen him act like that before.

TOBY

That means you're "in" with him. Congratulations! The most I ever get these days is a pat on the back and "Nice going, Toby." I guess it's because I'm not a cute little kid any more...

JOEY

You know what, Toby? I'm lookin' forward to being your brother again next season.

TOBY

Yeah, if America wants us!

Toby exits. On his way, Betty approaches and greets him warmly. Then Betty approaches Joey.

BETTY

My, that Toby is such a courteous boy. Joey, how do you feel?

JOEY

Pretty good, Ma. But a little sad too, because the season is ending and I don't know if we'll be back for another one.

(He notices Grace standing nearby with a YOUNG MAN.)

There she is! Ma - I want you to meet my script coach, Grace Baumgarten. She helped me talk better for the show.

BETTY

How do you do.

GRACE

What a pleasure to meet you, Mrs. Coletta.

JOEY

Miss Grace, is this the fee-an-cee you told me about?

GRACE

(laughing)

Yes, this is my fiancé, Paul.

PAUL

This is my first time on a Hollywood set. It's all so exciting! I'm in the insurance business, you see.

GRACE

(warmly)

Once we're married you'll be seeing plenty of the creative side of life.

PAUL

Boy, I'm lucky to marry a script girl.

Betty notices their mutual affection.

GRACE

Mrs. Coletta, I can't tell you what a fine boy you have. Joey is simply a dream. And so willing to learn.

BETTY

(a bit embarrassed, since Joey is no longer "hers")

Why, thank you.

Grace senses Betty's discomfort.

GRACE

Are you also new to Hollywood, Mrs. Coletta?

BETTY

(distantly and thoughtfully)

Why, yes. And I must say, while some things were as I expected, others were not what I expected at all...

PAUL

I think I know what you mean. I'd never set foot in Hollywood before today. To be honest, the whole idea of it kind of unsettled me.

(He and Grace clasp hands.)

But Grace works here, so it can't be all bad. And we're going to support each other.

Grace smiles at him.

GRACE

If you'll excuse us, we're going to say hello to some of the others.

The couple leaves. Betty looks deeply moved - pained at first, but with a smile of serenity and understanding slowly stealing across her face.

EXT. BACKYARD GARDEN PATIO - MID-MORNING IN SPRING

Guests are arriving for a garden party. A picnic is laid out on a long TABLE. FLOWERS are in bloom, including WHITE LILIES and CHERRY BLOSSOMS. Swing music is playing on a nearby PHONOGRAPH. Joey and Betty are present. Joey is wearing his blue pinstriped suit. Betty is wearing an ensemble of lavender, sky blue and pink. Note: Joey is now ten years old.

JOEY

...Oh sure, I'm looking forward to being an altar boy, Ma. I figure if I can learn two dozen scripts in American, I can learn one script in Latin.

Charles enters, wearing a light-colored suit. He and Betty exchange a meaningful glance.

JOEY (cont'd)

Pop! You're here too.

CHARLES

Of course. How could I miss my son's coming out ceremony? Joey, this came after you left.

He hands Joey a LETTER.

CHARLES (cont'd)

Gelatino is continuing its sponsorship of *Small World*, and three other sponsors have signed on. The show will go into a second season.

JOEY

Oh boy!

CHARLES

You'll find a contract. The read-through for the first episode is tomorrow. By the way, did you tell your mother about the fan letter you got?

JOEY

Oh yeah, Ma, I got a letter from a kid in Iowa. He said he liked how I showed up that Buzz kid. He said maybe now he'll have more courage in school.

Charles hands Joey a CUP OF PUNCH as MR. HUTCHISON and MRS. HUTCHISON approach.

BETTY

Mr. and Mrs. Hutchison, I'd like you to meet Joey.

JOEY

Pleased to meetcha.

MRS. HUTCHISON

My, we've heard so much about you,
Joey.

JOEY

Oh, yeah? I've heard a lot about
you too. Mostly good stuff.

MR. HUTCHISON

We don't have a television set.
Mrs. Hutchison says it ruins the
decor.

MRS. HUTCHISON

But we saw your lovely picture on
the news stand. Take as much punch
as you like. We'll have cake
shortly.

JOEY

Thanks.

Charles and Betty mingle with the other guests.

Joey drinks his punch. Suddenly we hear the voice of a GIRL.

GIRL

Joey?

Joey turns to address the girl. She is about Joey's age and
is wearing a party dress with a ribbon in her hair. Nearby
is a birch tree. A gentle breeze is blowing through the yard
and birds are singing.

JOEY

Yeah?

GIRL

You're Joey Coletta, aren't you?

JOEY

Yeah, that's me. Who're you?

GIRL

I'm Renata. Renata Hutchison.

JOEY

Oh, yeah. You're Mr. and Mrs.
Hutchison's daughter.

RENATA

That's right. I saw you on the cover of *TV Monthly*. I thought you looked good draped around the American flag like that.

JOEY

Thanks.

RENATA

What's it like being on a TV show? Do you get nervous?

JOEY

Well, when I first started I was a little a'scared. But then I got over it.

RENATA

I take piano lessons and whenever I have to be in a recital I get terrible stage fright. I fumble all over the keyboard and can't see straight.

JOEY

There's this real nice lady, Grace, who helps me. She taught me how to breathe and stuff. She showed me exercises for *pronunciation* and stuff like that.

RENATA

Really? What kind of exercises?

JOEY

I'll show you. But first I want a refill of punch...if you please!

RENATA

Of course. The punch bowl is empty. We'll have to go to the kitchen and get more.

They go into the HOUSE.

INT. HUTCHISON KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Joey and Renata enter. At the sink washing dishes is none other than...Frankie Ferrara.

JOEY
Frankie! What are you doing
here?...You're washin' dishes!

FRANKIE
(sullen)
So what of it, squirt?

RENATA
He got in trouble too many times
with the principal at school, so
his father is making him do chores
all around the neighborhood. Isn't
that right, Frankie?

FRANKIE
Leave me alone, ya hear?

RENATA
His father says he won't get his
allowance back until he does three
solid months of "community
service." He also mows our lawn on
the weekends.

JOEY
Gee! Frankie was always such a big
shot. Now here he is doin' the
dishes at the Hutchisons' garden
party!

FRANKIE
Get lost, both of you, before I rub
soap into your eyes!

RENATA
Come on, let's go, Joey. Frankie
wants to be alone.

Joey and Renata start to walk back outside with cake and
punch. But Joey is attracted by the Hutchison's sumptuous
living room and makes a detour to take a look.

INT. HUTCHISON LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A dark figure of a MAN sits in an armchair reading. At first
we see him from the back; then he turns to address Joey.

MAN
So you're Joey, the actor?

JOEY

Yeah, I'm Joey Coletta. Who are you?

MAN

Jackie Taylor. I'm Mrs. Hutchison's brother.

JOEY

Why aren't you out in the party?

JACKIE

I don't think my sister wants me out and about.

JOEY

Gee, that doesn't sound very nice.

JACKIE

Well, my sister can be nice - to the right people. But enough about me. How do you like show business?

JOEY

It's real neat. Oh, some parts of it have been hard. But boy, it's real nice when people crowd around me and tell me I'm great! I even started making up stories in real life.

JACKIE

Don't let it go to your head, Joey. Keep a clear mind and a clear conscience. Don't make the mistake I made.

JOEY

You?

JACKIE

I became a star of sorts. A star in the business world. But I let it all go to my head. I ordered my people around, became a hothead and a swellhead. The business went bad and before long I ended up with zero. I haven't been able to build anything since.

JOEY

Golly. Couldn't you start a lemonade stand or somethin'?

JACKIE

That may be my future now. But what I'm saying is, don't let that happen to you. Every time someone pats you on the back, remind yourself to work a little bit harder. Don't bask in your own accomplishments, and keep working!

JOEY

(backing away a little nervously)
OK, Mister. Thanks for the advice. I'll be seein' ya.

Joey goes back outside.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

BETTY

Oh, there you are, Joey!

JOEY

Yeah, here I am, Ma.

CHARLES

The party seems to be breaking up.

BETTY

You're right. We might as well go.

CHARLES

(helping Betty with her coat)
Shall I drive you home?

BETTY

(with affection)
Why yes, Charles. That would be lovely.

JOEY

Ma, you mean you're coming home with Pop and me?!

BETTY

(nonchalant)
Of course. Where else shall I go?

The three proceed out the white picket GATE.

MRS. HUTCHISON

Thank you all for coming!

BETTY

It was a pleasure to be here, and to meet your lovely little daughter.

CHARLES

We'll be seeing you!

MR. HUTCHISON

Good luck on the show, young man! If we ever get a TV set, we'll watch it.

JOEY

Thanks, Mr. Hutchison!

RENATA

Bye, Joey!

JOEY

So long, Renata! Maybe you could come over and watch the show at our place.

RENATA

I'd like that!

The Colettas get in their convertible.

MRS. COLETTA

Now, the first thing I'm going to do when we get home is clean the kitchen. I can just imagine what it looks like.

MR. COLETTA

And I'll clean up the yard and start rebuilding the wood shed.

By now Mr. Coletta has started up the engine and the trio are on their way home.

MRS. COLETTA

Joey, I don't want you to waste time reading those space magazines tonight. Get straight to bed so you'll have plenty of energy for the read-through tomorrow. What's the episode going to be?

JOEY

"Joey Goes to the Fair."

MRS. COLETTA

Well, don't let them feed you a lot of cotton candy and other junk like that. We're having lasagna tomorrow night.

JOEY

I have a couple instructions for you guys, too.

MRS. COLETTA

Oh?

JOEY

No more hollerin' and arguin'. That's no way to resolve your problems. Mr. and Mrs. Travers taught me that. All the nervous tension makes it hard for me to digest your wonderful food, Ma.

MR. COLETTA

I think what Joey is trying to tell us, dear, is that love is more than just emoting. It's discipline.

JOEY

Yeah! Spoken like Mr. Hepburn.

MRS. COLETTA

Hepburn! That lout wouldn't know discipline if it slapped him in the face. If you ask me, Joey should be directing this show!

MR. COLETTA

He is, dear. Can't you tell?

The car recedes into the distance.

CLOSING CREDITS MUSIC: Harold Shapero, *Symphony for Classical Orchestra*, second movement.

