



REUNION

Written by John Cheever

The last time I saw my father was in Grand Central Station. I was going from my grandmother's in the Adirondacks¹ to a cottage² on the Cape that my mother had rented,³ and I wrote my father that I would be in New York between trains for an hour and a half, and asked if we could have lunch together. His secretary wrote to say that he would meet me at the information booth⁴ at noon, and at twelve o' clock sharp⁵ I saw him coming through the crowd.

He was a stranger to me -- my mother divorced him three years ago and I hadn't been with him since -- but as soon as I saw him I felt that he was my father, my flesh and blood, my future and my doom.⁶ I knew that when I was grown I would be something like him; I would have to plan my campaigns within his limitations.⁷ He was a big, good-looking man, and I was terribly happy to see him again. He struck me on the back and shook my hand. "Hi, Charlie," he said, "Hi, boy. I'd like to take you up to my club, but it's in the Sixties,⁸ and if you have to catch an early train I guess we'd better get something to eat around here." He put

25 his arm around me, and I smelled my father the way my mother sniffs⁹ a rose. It was a rich compound¹⁰ of whiskey and after shave lotion, shoe polish, woolens,¹¹ and the rankness¹² of a mature male.¹³ I hoped that someone would see us together. I wished that we could be photographed. I wanted some record¹⁴ of our having been together.

30 We went out of the station and up a side street to a restaurant. It was still early, and the place was empty. The bartender was quarreling¹⁵ with a delivery boy¹⁶, and there was one very old waiter in a red coat down by the kitchen floor. We sat down and my father hailed¹⁷ the waiter in a loud voice.

¹ bjergkæde i staten New York

² hytte, mindre beboelseshus

³ lejet

⁴ bås, bod

⁵ præcist

⁶ skæbne

⁷ begrænsninger

⁸ en gade i tresserne (se kort over New York)

⁹ indsnuse

¹⁰ blanding

¹¹ uldvarer

¹² (om lugt) stram

¹³ voksen mand

¹⁴ optegnelse

¹⁵ skændtes

¹⁶ bydreng

¹⁷ prajede

"Kellner!" he shouted. "Garçon! Cameriere! You!"
 His boisterousness¹⁸ in the empty restaurant seemed out of place.

35 "Could we have a little service here?" he shouted. "Chop-chop." Then he clapped his hands. This caught the waiter's attention, and he shuffled¹⁹ over to our table.

"Were you clapping your hands at me?" he asked.

"Calm down, calm down, Sommelier," my father said. "If it isn't too much to ask of you, if it wouldn't be too much above and beyond²⁰ the call of duty,²¹ we would like a couple of Beefeater

40 Gibsons."

"I don't like to be clapped at," the waiter said.

"I should have brought my whistle," my father said. "I have a whistle that is audible²² only to the ears of old waiters. Now, take out your little pad²³ and your little pencil and see if you can get this straight: two Beefeater Gibsons.²⁴ Repeat after me: two Beefeater Gibsons."

45 "I think you'd better go somewhere else," the waiter said quietly.

"That," said my father, "is one of the most brilliant suggestions²⁵ I have ever heard. C'mon, Charlie, let's get the hell out of here."

I followed my father out of that restaurant and into another. He was not so boisterous this time. Our drinks came, and he cross questioned me about the baseball season. He then struck the

50 edge of his empty glass with his knife and began shouting again.

"Garçon! Kellner! Cameriere! You! Could we trouble you to bring us two more of the same?"

"How old is the boy?"

"That is none of your God damned business."

55 "I'm sorry, sir," the waiter said, "but I won't serve the boy another drink."

"Well, I have some news for you," my father said. "I have some very interesting news for you. This doesn't happen to be the only restaurant in New York. They've opened another on the corner. C'mon, Charlie."

He paid the bill, and I followed him out of that restaurant into another. Here the waiters

60 wore pink jackets like hunting coats, and there was a lot of horse tack²⁶ on the walls. We sat down, and my father began to shout again.

"Master of the hounds! Tallyhoo²⁷ and all that sort of thing. We'd like a little something in the way of²⁸ a stirrup cup.²⁹ Namely, two Bibson Geefeaters."

"Two Bibson Geefeaters?" the waiter asked, smiling.

65 "You know damned well what I want," my father said angrily. "I want two Beefeater Gibsons, and make it snappy.³⁰ Things have changed in jolly old England. So my friend the duke³¹ tells me. Let's see what England can produce in the way of a cocktail."

¹⁸ højkrøstede facon

¹⁹ sjokke

²⁰ hævet over

²¹ pligt

²² hørbar

²³ notesblok

²⁴ en type martini

²⁵ forslag

²⁶ udstyr til heste

²⁷ råb fra rævejagt

²⁸ i retning af

²⁹ afskedsglas

³⁰ hurtigt

³¹ hertug

"This isn't England," the waiter said.
 "Don't argue with me," my father said. "Just do as you're told."
 70 "I just thought you might like to know where you are," the waiter said.
 "If there is one thing I cannot tolerate," my father said, "it is an impudent³² domestic.³³
 C'mon, Charlie."
 The fourth place we went to was Italian.
 "Bon giorno," my father said. "Per favore, possiamo avere due cocktail americani, forti
 75 forti. Molto gin, poco vermut."
 "I don't understand Italian," the waiter said.
 "Oh, come off it," my father said. "You understand Italian, and you know damned well you
 do. *Vogliamo due cocktail americani. Subito.*"
 The waiter left us and spoke with the captain, who came over to our table and said, "I'm
 80 sorry, sir, but this table is reserved."
 "All right," my father said. "Get us another table."
 "All the tables are reserved," the captain said.
 "I get it," my father said. "You don't desire our patronage.³⁴ Is that it? Well, the hell with
 you. *Vada all' inferno. Let's go, Charlie.*"
 85 "I have to get my train," I said.
 "I'm sorry, sonny," my father said. "I'm terribly sorry." He put his arm around me and
 pressed me against him. "I'll walk you back to the station. If there had only been time to go up to
 my club."
 "That's all right, Daddy," I said.
 90 "I'll get you a paper," he said. "I'll get you a paper to read on the train."
 Then he went up to a newsstand and said, "Kind sir, will you be good enough to favor me
 with one of your God damned, no good, ten cent afternoon papers?" The clerk turned away from
 him and stared at a magazine cover. "Is it asking too much, kind sir," my father said, "is it asking
 too much for you to sell me one of your disgusting specimens³⁵ of yellow journalism?"³⁶
 95 "I have to go, Daddy," I said. "It's late."
 "Now, just wait a second, sonny," he said. "Just wait a second. I want to get a rise out³⁷ of
 this chap."
 "Goodbye, Daddy," I said, and I went down the stairs and got my train, and that was the
 last time I saw my father.
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John Cheever was born in Massachusetts in 1912 and died in 1982. He received several literary awards, among them the Pulitzer Prize. "Reunion" first appeared in 1962.

³² uforskammet

³³ gammeldags udtryk for tjenestefolk

³⁴ her: ønsker os ikke som kunder

³⁵ eksemplar

³⁶ sladderjournalistik

³⁷ drille, irritere