



So this is a story, just like a movie, of a father picking up his daughter to take her out to a film. See, here is his little red car, all polished and shiny, just like a movie, entering the picture, arriving, cruising the short car-crowded street, looking for somewhere to park. Nope? Nothing? Turns around. Blocks the driveway, this won't take a minute, of someone's garage, her flat above it, gives a toot. Doesn't wait, gets out at once, locks his car, gives her door button a buzz, listens, no sound, of course, remembers, the buzzer needs a new battery, been fooled before, doesn't work, uses the car key still in his hand to impart to his daughter's door a decent declarative rat-tat-tat.



You know this movie?

You've seen this movie?

Maybe two more bangs, depending on the director, possibly even three, before the sound of tripping feet, a staircase, descending, just like a movie, precedes the door at last tugged open to admit the waiting dad.

Hi, she says, I'm making guacamole.

And turns, running, in upward flight, leaving the father, like some aged suitor with, indeed, a gift he's brought her, a book he knows she'll love in his other hand coily behind his back, to edge past her brought-in bicycle up this old flat's typically tattered carpeted stairs following his daughter where she's rapidly disappeared.

Where are you? he says.

Attaining, the father, too quickly, somewhat puffed, too much pipe, off the stairs to the right the flat's main room, his eyes in quick critical skim, never mind it's large, light, leafy, the plants on the sill, the branches of trees through the big windows directly outside, what's she reading? who's she listening to? the Picasso I gave her hasn't fallen off the wall?

I'm in here, she says.

Come on, come on, says the father, we'll be late.

But complying, going through, the father, he hopes unnoticed under cover of his pretend and not so pretend anxiety scanning the kitchen, the housekeeping, the order, the economy, the whole box of vegetables on the floor in the corner, the too many oranges, who's gonna eat all those oranges? the cups and bowls and plates of every various period and colour, that lemon over there could do with throwing out.

Wanna taste?

The daughter offering a spoon, a spatula, maybe it's a fork.

Just what I need, says the father, locked in his role of serious rush, a dribble of avocado all over my coat.

Da-ad, she says.

But not serious, don't be fooled, as neither is he, a

thing they do together, a movie, just like a movie, an age-old routine.

Yummy? she says.

Forcing the father, not to be bested, to flourish forth finally from behind his coy back, as Wow! says his daughter in capitulation and reward, his top gift of book.

(Or are you concerned about the critical, the always too critical, perturbed and don't exactly understand how the father in this story seems always too critical, too demanding, too hard?

Which you imagine the father isn't also?

As Himmelman?

As me?)

Because now it's the bedroom, a quick cut to the bedroom, a movie, just like a movie, the daughter getting ready, make-up, the mirror, grabbing up her coat and hat, the father, that aged suitor, permitting himself maybe at most the merest first foot inside the door.

But the eyes.

His eyes.

The father's dotting and noting and endlessly undying critical eyes.

It's cold, he says.

I'm warm, she says.

A scarf, he insists.

Sigh, she sighs, adding to her ensemble an obviously unnecessary scarf.

So here is a father and his charge, the dad and his daughter, the two of them, the pair, let's skip the drive into town, the distant edge-of-city parking for nothing, the father's legendary disinclination to pay for what God gave us for free, look, it's not raining, the walk will do us good, and even if it is, come on, run – as let's similarly skip the daughter's tumult of talk the while, her crazy flatmate moving out, the Sunday morning welding equipment candlestick maker when you're trying to sleep in the garage downstairs, her idiot and moron smelly boss. Ssh! says the father, calm down, relax, except he listens too, as a father should, except he counsels, as a dad does, never mind he has his own story to tell, his father's own heart's weight to unburden, relax, calm down, time for all that in good time enough, his job now to suggest and postulate and see if he can somehow decently guide and advise, which he does, as a sound father should, as this dad does, but skip that, who wants that? who needs that? we know all that, come on, it's late, it's starting, we'll be late, the father with his money already out, his daughter fumbling for her semi-fraudulent student



concession pass which, paid, done, the father in quick sweep around the bustling foyer, a look, an inspection, his fellow patrons, an assess, this white-bearded stocky fellow aged more than over fifty, his assorted op-shop-clad barely past teenage pal, who maybe misinterprets his anxious look and says, taking his arm, warm and tight, her father's hurrying arm, Don't be ashamed of me, Dad.

A movie?

You've seen this in a movie?



Which movie, which particular movie, this particular movie a father and his daughter are seeing together tonight, the name, the stars, the simple or wildly improbable storyline, the metal-bending catchy soundtrack, the corny or otherwise devious plot, not important, doesn't matter, let's skip that too, let's have supper, coffee, a cake, what'd you have for dinner? come on, I'm paying, my shout, you want something else? which they might, which she does, which they sometimes or usually do, which is why it's good to have the walk to the car after, the father by now, whatever the movie, whichever, subjecting it to his usual deep post-Freudian probing analysis, uncovering the metaphors, explaining what and why was consciously or otherwise really said, the father in full-flown flight and tide-high flood all the way driving his daughter home, and even





then, parked outside, still uncovering, still explaining, until finally Wow! says his daughter, and kisses his cheek, Thanks for the movie, Dad, is going, is gone, the father then to discover, a movie, just like a movie, he's talked his lights-left-on battery totally dead flat, a further buzz on the doorbell required, another half-hour with his daughter waiting for the breakdown man, whoops! of course! forgot again! a rat-tat-tat with his key.

I tell you.

They don't make movies like that any more.

No sir.

