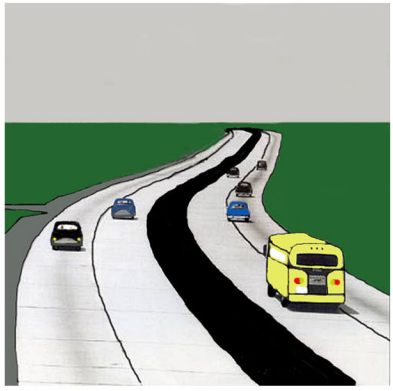


The Lie 1962

Interpreted by Nimsi Guerrero

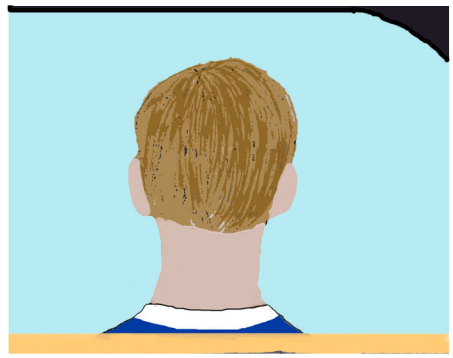
It was early spring time. Weak sunshine lay cold on old gray frost. Willow twigs against the sky showed the golden haze of fat catkins about to bloom. A black Rolls-Royce streaked up the Connecticut Turnpike from New York City. At the wheel was Ben Barkley, a black chauffer.

"Ain't just people and animals feel good in the springtime, motors feel good too. You should feel good to be going to a wonderful school," he said to his young passenger, Eli.

The wonderful school was the Whitehill School for Boys, a private school in North Marston, Massachusetts. That was where the Rolls Royce was bound. The plan was that Eli would enroll for the fall semester while his father, a member of the class of 1939, attended a meeting of the Board of Overseers.

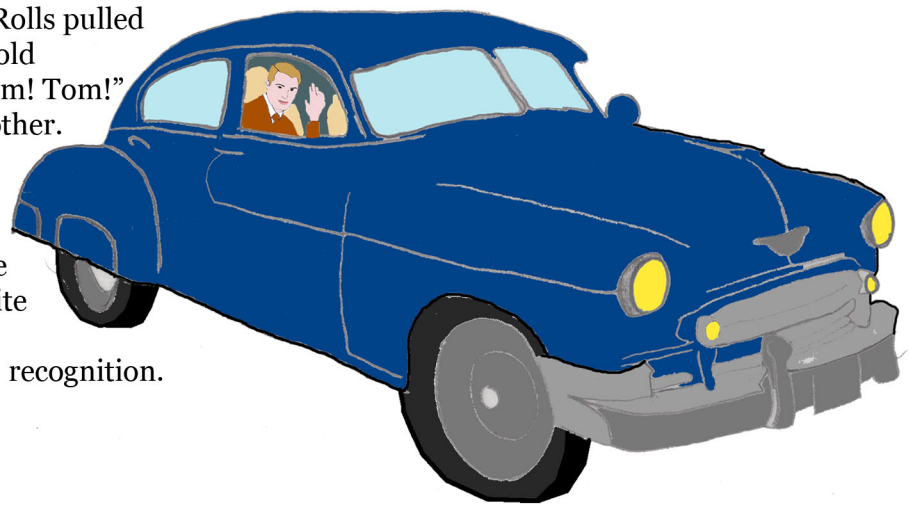
Eli's father, Dr. Remenzel, was a dignified physician, a healer for healing's sake, since he was born as rich as the Shah of Iran. Eli's lovely mother, Sylvia, sat next to the him in the car.

"If I were you, I'd be so excited I could hardly stand it. The best four years of your whole life are about to begin," Eli's mother said.



"Sure," Eli sadly replied.

Just then the Rolls pulled abreast of an old Chevrolet. "Tom! Tom!" yelled Eli's mother. The man was a Whitehill classmate of Eli's father. He waved his White Hill tie at the Doctor in gay recognition.



Eli slumped because he knew he had been denied admission to Whitehill. He had failed the entrance examinations. Eli's parents did not know this.

His father saw him slump and said, "Eli! Sit up straight!"

Half an hour later, Ben Barkley brought the limousine to a stop on campus at the Holly House, a rambling country inn twenty years older than the Republic, where they checked in for the night.

Inside Dr. Remenzel sheperded Sylvia and Eli into a familiar, low-ceilinged world of pewter, clocks, and lovely old wood.

Eli, clumsy with horror of what was surely to come, banged the grandmother clock with his elbow as he passed.

They were given a table beneath an oil portrait of one of the three Whitehill boys who had gone on to become President of the United States.

The dining room was filling quickly with families of future and current Whitehill student families.

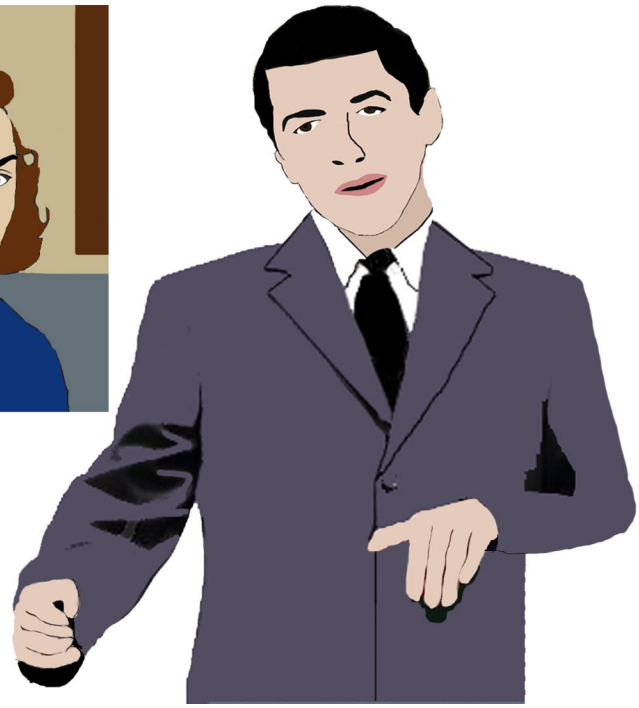
Dr. Remenzel ordered a Martini and then turned to his son and said, “Your mother has the idea that you’re entitled to special privileges.”

“It would be a source of the greatest embarrassment to me,” said Dr. Remenzel with considerable grandeur, “if I were ever to hear that you had used the name Remenzel as though you thought Remenzels were something special.” “I know,” Eli replied.

“I think everything’s exciting here. I only wish Eli had a blazer on,” Sylvia said.

“He isn’t entitled to one yet, and don’t ask for special permission to put one on him,” said Dr. Remenzel.

"I wouldn't do that. Why are you always afraid I'll embarrass you?" asked Sylvia.



"Never mind. Forget it," said Dr. Remenzel.

Suddenly, Eli got up abruptly and fled the dining room. He fled as much of the nightmare as he possibly could. He brushed past Dr. Warren, the headmaster of Whitehill, rudely.

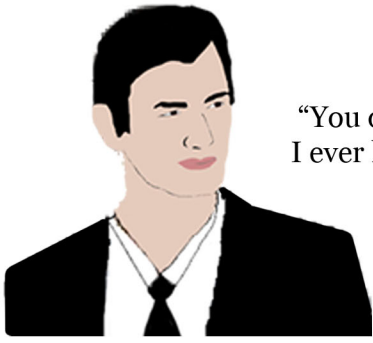
Dr. Warren sat with Dr. Remenzel and Sylvia.

"We saw Tom on our way here. Will Tom's boy be going to Whitehill in the fall?" said Dr. Remenzel.

“Tom’s boy earned the highest score anyone’s ever received on the entrance examinations. We feel privileged to have him,” said Dr. Warren.

“We never did find out Eli’s score,” said Dr. Remenzel. He said it with good-humored resignation, without expectation that Eli had done especially well.

“A good strong medium, I imagine,” said Sylvia.



“You didn’t get his scores? The letter I wrote you was the hardest letter I ever had to write,” Dr. Warren confessed.

"We never received any letter from you," said Sylvia.

"I mailed it myself. It was definitely mailed two weeks ago," Dr Warren said with guilt and sadness.

"What the letter said was this..."

WhiteHill
School for Boys

On the basis of his work in primary school and his scores on the entrance examination, I must tell you that your son and my good friend Eli cannot possibly do the work required of boys at Whitehill. To admit Eli to Whitehill, to expect him to do Whitehill work, would be both unrealistic and cruel.

Regretfully yours,

Dr. Warren

After his explanation and condolenses, Dr. Warren left Sylvia and Dr. Remenel to decide what to do next.

"We've got to find him," said Sylvia.

"Right now I'm a lot more interested in what people are going to do. There's a majority of the Board of Overseers in this room at this very moment. Every one of them is a close friend of mine. If they tell Dr. Warren Eli's in, then he's in. If there's room for all these people, there's damn room for Eli too," said Dr. Remenzel.

Sylvia went in search for Eli.

He was outside all alone on a bench.

"Did you find out or do I still have to tell you?" asked Eli.

"Your father and I have always made you feel that you had to go to Whitehill, that nothing else would do," said Sylvia.

Eventually, Dr. Remenzel joined Sylvia and Eli outside.“They all said no. I asked them to make an exception in your case to reverse their decision and let you in,” the Doctor said to his son.

“You shouldn’t have done that! How awful. Now I *am* ashamed. A Remenzel has asked for something as though a Remenzel were something special,” said Eli.

Eli got up, and the Remenzels started walking away.

“I don’t suppose that we’ll be coming here anymore,” said Dr. Remenzel.