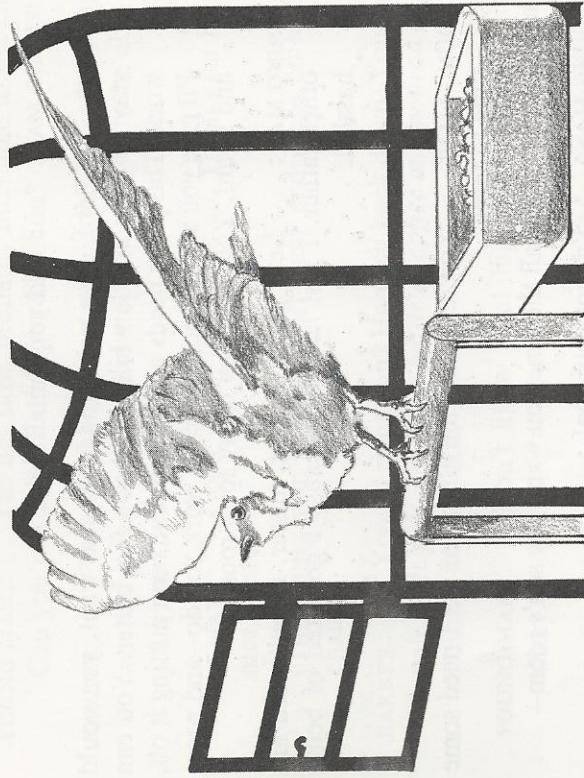


## MY LIFE'S MY OWN



**Characters:**

Fred Breitman  
John, Fred's friend  
Mr. Harold Breitman  
Mrs. Emma Breitman

**Scene:** the Breitman dining room, beautiful and richly furnished. Fred and John are seated at a table.

**JOHN:** Fred, I'm starving! When are we going to eat?

**FRED:** In a little while. I think my father just got home.  
**JOHN:** It's nine o'clock. I might make a pig of myself on second helpings.

**FRED:** (quietly) Oh, that's good. My mother will like that.

**JOHN:** (smiling) You're lucky I'm a good friend. Otherwise, I'd never put up with this! But seriously . . . why did you want me to come over tonight? You really seem upset about something.

**FRED:** (nervously playing with a fork) I'd just like you here when I talk to my dad—about my career choice. Dad always brings up the "family business" bit.

**JOHN:** (amazed) Oh wow. You're kidding. What am I supposed to do, calm your father down?

**FRED:** Well, I was hoping . . .

(At this point, Mr. Breitman enters the room. He walks over to the table and sits down.)

**MR. BREITMAN:** Hello, hello, young people. It's a pleasure to see you, John. How are you?

**JOHN:** I'm—

**MR. BREITMAN:** (interrupting and calling offstage) Emma!  
I'm home!

**MRS. BREITMAN:** (offstage) Yes dear! Dinner is coming!

**JOHN:** I'm fine.

**MR. BREITMAN:** What? Oh—oh, yes. Very good. (*Mrs. Breitman enters with a tray holding bowls of soup.*) Here, Emma, sit down. (*beginning to eat*) So Frederick, how was your day?

**FRED:** (after a pause) Fine, Dad.

**JOHN:** (winking at Fred, then turning to Fred's father) We had a really interesting day at school. There was an assembly on career choice, and many speakers.

**MR. BREITMAN:** Hah! Assemblies! Speakers! That might be necessary for children who are not sure about their future. But not for our Frederick. Right, Emma?

**MRS. BREITMAN:** Certainly, dear.

JOHN: (*forcing cheerfulness*) Well, Mr. Breitman, you know that many of us aren't really sure at this point.

MR. BREITMAN: (*laughing*) Maybe so. But not our Fred. He knows that his place is with me at the lumberyard!

JOHN: Oh?

MR. BREITMAN: (*while his wife clears the soup bowls and exits to kitchen*) Of course! Why do you think I worked so hard all my life? I'll tell you--so that my one son won't have to work so hard. (*He slaps Fred on the back.*) Soon Fred will finish his schooling and join me. Right Fred? (Mrs. Breitman returns with a tray of plates filled with food. Neither Fred nor John speak while the meal is served.)

MRS. BREITMAN: I hope you like lamb chops, John. We're very fond of them around here.

JOHN: (*looking at Fred*) Yes, ma'am.

FRED: (*suddenly*) No!

MRS. BREITMAN: What's the matter Fred? You don't like lamb chops?

FRED: It's not that, mother. (*He takes a deep breath.*) I just mean . . . No! I'm not going into the family business! (There is silence for a long moment.)

MR. BREITMAN: (*stunned*) Wha-what are you talking about?

FRED: I've decided. I'm going to be a physical therapist.

MRS. BREITMAN: A what?

FRED: A physical therapist. I'm going to help people who have had diseases or accidents that made their muscles stop working. (*He smiles proudly.*) When muscles don't work, they become a-tro-phied, and a physical therapist exercises them and makes them work again!

MRS. BREITMAN: (*happily*) Why, Frederick, that sounds wonderful. I'm very proud of--

MR. BREITMAN: (*jumping up and slamming his fist on the table*) Enough! I've heard enough! (*to his wife*) You're proud? Proud that your son wants to work all his life with freaks?

FRED: They're not freaks! They're people who need help!

MR. BREITMAN: And what about me? You don't think I need any help?

FRED: There's nothing wrong with your muscles!

JOHN: Hey, Fred, take it easy.

MRS. BREITMAN: (*upset*) Frederick, I've never heard you speak this way.

MR. BREITMAN: I need you to help me carry on at the lumberyard. (*with great firmness*) You're going into the family business, and that's final!

FRED: (*suddenly calm*) And if I don't?

MR. BREITMAN: If you don't? Then . . . (*He paces back and forth, then stops and stares at Fred.*) then you are certainly no son of mine!

MRS. BREITMAN: Harold!

MR. BREITMAN: (*shouting*) Quiet, Emma! Frederick, the choice is up to you. (*a long pause*) What is your answer?

FRED: \_\_\_\_\_