David Lynch's mother was a city person and his father was from the country. That's a good place to begin this story, because this is a story of dualities. "It's all in such a tender state, all this flesh, and it's an imperfect world," Lynch has observed, and that understanding is central to everything he's made.[1] We live in a realm of opposites, a place where good and evil, spirit and matter, faith and reason, innocent love and carnal lust, exist side by side in an uneasy truce; Lynch's work resides in the complicated zone where the beautiful and the damned collide.

Lynch's mother, Edwina Sundholm, was the descendant of Finnish immigrants and grew up in Brooklyn. She was bred on the smoke and soot of cities, the smell of oil and gasoline, artifice and the eradication of nature; these things are an integral part of Lynch and his worldview. His paternal great-grandfather homesteaded land in the wheat country near Colfax, Washington, where his son, Austin Lynch, was born in 1884. Lumber mills and soaring trees, the scent of freshly mowed lawns, starry nighttime skies that only exist far from the cities—these things are part of Lynch, too.

David Lynch's grandfather became a homesteading wheat farmer like his father, and after meeting at a funeral, Austin and Maude Sullivan, a girl from St. Maries, Idaho, were married. "Maude was educated and raised our father to be really motivated," said Lynch's sister, Martha Levacy, of her grandmother, who was the teacher in the one-room schoolhouse on the land she and her husband owned near Highwood, Montana.[2]

Austin and Maude Lynch had three children: David Lynch's father, Donald, was the second, and he was born on December 4th, 1915, in a house without running water or electricity. "He lived in a desolate place and he loved trees because there were no trees on the prairie," said David's brother, John. "He

was determined not to be a farmer and live on the prairie, so he went into forestry."[3]

Donald Lynch was doing graduate work in entomology at Duke University, in Durham, North Carolina, when he met Edwina Sundholm in 1939. She was there doing undergraduate work with a double major in German and English, and they crossed paths during a walk in the woods; she was impressed by his courtesy when he held back a low-hanging branch to allow her to pass. Both of them served in the navy during World War II, then on January 16th, 1945, they married in a navy chapel on Mare Island, California, twenty-three miles northeast of San Francisco. A short time later, Donald landed a job as a research scientist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Missoula, Montana. It was there that he and his wife began building a family.

David Keith Lynch was their first child. Born in Missoula on January 20th, 1946, he was two months old when the family moved to Sandpoint, Idaho, where they spent two years while Donald worked for the Department of Agriculture there. They were living in Sandpoint in 1948 when David's younger brother, John, was born, but he, too, came into the world in Missoula: Edwina Lynch—known as Sunny—returned to Missoula to deliver her second child. Later that year the family moved to Spokane, Washington, where Martha was born in 1949. The family spent 1954 in Durham while Donald completed his studies at Duke, returned to Spokane briefly, then settled in Boise, Idaho, in 1955, where they remained until 1960. It was there that David Lynch spent the most significant years of his childhood.

The period following World War II was the perfect time to be a child in the United States. The Korean War ended in 1953, blandly reassuring two-term President Dwight Eisenhower was in the White House from 1953 through 1961, the natural world was still flourishing, and it seemed as if there just wasn't a lot to worry about. Although Boise is Idaho's state capital, it had the character of a small town at the time, and middle-class children there grew up with a degree of freedom that's unimaginable today. Playdates had yet to be invented, and kids simply roamed their neighborhood streets with their friends, figuring things out for themselves; this was the childhood Lynch experienced.

"Childhood was really magical for us, especially in the summertime, and my best memories of David took place in the summer," recalled Mark Smith,

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who was one of Lynch's closest friends in Boise. "My back door and David's back door were maybe thirty feet apart, and our parents would give us breakfast, then we'd run out the door and play the whole day long. There were vacant lots in our neighborhood and we'd take our dads' shovels and build big subterranean forts and just kind of lay in there. We were at the age when boys really get into playing army."[4]

Lynch's mother and father each had two siblings, all but one of whom married and had children, so theirs was a big family with lots of aunts, uncles, and cousins, and everybody occasionally gathered at the home of Lynch's maternal grandparents in Brooklyn. "Aunt Lily and Uncle Ed were warm, welcoming people, and their house on Fourteenth Street was like a haven—Lily had a huge table that took up most of the kitchen and everyone would get together there," recalled Lynch's cousin Elena Zegarelli. "When Edwina and Don and their children came it was a big deal, and Lily would make a big dinner and everyone would come."[5]

By all accounts, Lynch's parents were exceptional people. "Our parents let us do things that were kind of crazy and you wouldn't do today," said John Lynch. "They were very open and never tried to force us to go one way or another." David Lynch's first wife, Peggy Reavey, said, "Something David told me about his parents that was extraordinary was that if any of their kids had an idea for something they wanted to make or learn about, it was taken absolutely seriously. They had a workshop where they did all kinds of things, and the question immediately became: How do we make this work? It moved from being something in your head to something out in the world real fast, and that was a powerful thing.

"David's parents supported their kids in being who they were," Reavey continued, "but David's father had definite standards of behavior. You didn't treat people crappy, and when you did something you did it well—he was strict about that. David has impeccable standards when it comes to craft, and I'm sure his father had something to do with that."[6]

Lynch's childhood friend Gordon Templeton remembered Lynch's mother as "a great homemaker. She made clothes for her kids and was quite a seamstress."[7] Lynch's parents were romantic with each other, too—"they'd hold hands and kiss each other goodbye," said Martha Levacy—and in signing correspondence Lynch's mother sometimes wrote "Sunny," and drew a sun next to her name, and "Don," with a drawing of a tree next to his. They were devout

Presbyterians. "That was an important part of our upbringing," said John Lynch, "and we went to Sunday school. The Smiths next door were a real contrast to our family. On Sundays the Smiths would get in their Thunderbird convertible and head up to ski, and Mr. Smith would be smoking a cigarette. Our family got in the Pontiac and went to church. David thought the Smiths were cool and that our family was stodgy."

David's daughter Jennifer Lynch remembers her grandmother as "prim and proper and very active in her church. Sunny had a great sense of humor, too, and she loved her children. I never got the sense that David was favored, but he was definitely the one she worried about the most. My father deeply loved both of his parents, but he also despised all that goodness, the white picket fence and all that. He has a romantic idea of that stuff, but he also hated it because he wanted to smoke cigarettes and live the art life, and they went to church and everything was perfect and quiet and good. It made him a little nutty."[8]

The Lynches lived on a cul-de-sac with several boys of approximately the same age within a few houses of one another, and they all became friends. "There were around eight of us," said Templeton. "There was Willard 'Winks' Burns, Gary Gans, Riley 'Riles' Cutler, myself, Mark and Randy Smith, and David and John Lynch, and we were like brothers. We were all into *Mad* magazine, we rode bikes a lot, hung out at the swimming pool in the summer, and went to our gal friends' houses and listened to music. We had a lot of freedom—we'd be out riding our bikes until ten at night, take the bus downtown by ourselves, and we all looked out for each other. And everybody liked David. He was friendly, gregarious, unpretentious, loyal, and helpful."

Lynch seems to have been a savvy kid who hungered for a kind of sophistication that was hard to come by in Boise in the 1950s, and he's spoken of "longing for something out of the ordinary to happen" when he was a child. Television was bringing alternate realities into American homes for the first time and beginning to chip away at the unique regional character of towns and cities throughout the country. One imagines that an intuitive child like Lynch might've sensed the profound change that was beginning to transform the country. At the same time, he was very much of his time and place and was a committed member of the Boy Scouts; as an adult he's occasionally touted his status as an Eagle Scout, the highest rank a Scout can achieve.

"We were in Troop 99 together," said Mark Smith. "We had all these

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activities—swimming, knot tying—and one of them was a one-night survival camp where some guy taught us what you could eat in the forest to survive, how to catch a squirrel and cook it, and so forth. We had a few sessions learning this stuff, then we went into the mountains to survive. Before we left we bought all the candy we could, and after the first hour we'd eaten it all. So we get to this lake and we're told to catch a fish—which none of us could do—and by nightfall we thought we were going to die of starvation. Then we noticed a plane circling overhead, and out came a box on a parachute. It was really dramatic. The box was full of things like powdered eggs and we all survived."

Lynch was one of those children with a natural ability to draw, and his artistic talent became evident at an early age. His mother refused to give him coloring books—she felt they constricted the imagination—and his father brought loads of graph paper home from work; Lynch had all the materials he needed and was encouraged to go where his mind took him when he sat down to draw. "It was right after the war and there was a lot of army surplus stuff around, and I'd draw guns and knives," Lynch has recalled. "I got into airplanes, bombers and fighter planes, Flying Tigers, and Browning automatic water-cooled submachine guns."[9]

Martha Levacy remembered, "Most kids wore plain T-shirts then, and David started making customized shirts for all the neighborhood kids with Magic Markers, and everybody in the neighborhood bought one. I remember Mr. Smith next door buying one for a friend who was turning forty. David made a kind of 'Life Begins at 40' drawing of a man staring at a nice-looking woman."

A gifted, charismatic child, Lynch was "definitely somebody people were attracted to," said Smith. "He was popular and I can easily see him running a movie set—he always had lots of energy and lots of friends because he could make people laugh. I have a memory of sitting on the curb in fifth grade and reading stuff in *Mad* magazine out loud to each other and just howling, and when I saw the first episode of *Twin Peaks* I recognized that same sense of humor." Lynch's sister concurred that "a lot of the humor from that period in our lives is in David's work."

Lynch was president of his seventh-grade class and played trumpet in the school band. Like most able-bodied citizens of Boise, he skied and swam—he was good at both, said his sister—and he played first base in Little League baseball. He also liked movies. "If he went to a movie I hadn't seen, he'd come

home and tell me about it in detail," said John Lynch. "I remember one he particularly loved called *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* that he went on and on about." The first movie Lynch recalls seeing was *Wait Till the Sun Shines, Nellie,* a downbeat drama directed by Henry King in 1952, which culminates with the lead character being gunned down in a barbershop. "I saw it at a drive-in with my parents, and I remember a scene where a guy is machine-gunned in a barber's chair and another scene of a little girl playing with a button," Lynch has recalled. "Suddenly her parents realize she's gotten it caught in her throat, and I remember feeling a real sense of horror."

In light of the work Lynch went on to produce, it's not surprising to learn that his childhood memories are a mixture of darkness and light. Perhaps his father's work dealing with diseased trees imbued him with a heightened awareness of what he has described as "the wild pain and decay" that lurk beneath the surface of things. Whatever the reason, Lynch was unusually sensitive to the entropy that instantly begins eating away at every new thing, and he found it unsettling. Family trips to visit his grandparents in New York made Lynch anxious, too, and he has recalled being highly disturbed by things he encountered there. "The things I'd be upset by were mild compared with the feelings they'd give me," he's said. "I think people feel fear even when they don't understand the reason for it. Sometimes you walk into a room and you can sense that something's wrong, and when I'd go to New York that feeling covered me like a blanket. Being out in nature there's a different kind of fear, but there's fear there, too. Some very bad things can happen in the country."

A painting Lynch made in 1988, titled *Boise, Idaho,* speaks to these sorts of memories. Positioned in the lower right quadrant of a black field is an outline of the shape of the state, surrounded by tiny collaged letters that spell out the title of the painting. Four jagged vertical lines disrupt the black field, and a menacing tornado shape in the left of the image plane seems to be advancing on the state. It's a disturbing image.

Apparently the more turbulent currents of Lynch's mind weren't evident to his Boise playmates. Smith said, "When that black car is winding up the hill in *Mulholland Drive* you just know something creepy is going to happen, and that's not the person David was as a kid. The darkness in his work surprises me and I don't know where it came from."

In 1960, when Lynch was fourteen years old, his father was transferred to Alexandria, Virginia, and the family moved again. Smith recalled that "when

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David's family moved it was like somebody unscrewed the bulb in the streetlight. David's family had a 1950 Pontiac and the Pontiac symbol was the head of an Indian, so there was an ornament of an Indian head on the hood of the car. The nose on their Indian was broken, so we called the car Chief Broken Nose, and they sold the car to my mom and dad before they moved." Gordon Templeton remembers the day the Lynches moved, too. "They left on the train and a bunch of us rode our bikes to the station to see them off. It was a sad day."

Though Lynch flourished as a high school student in Alexandria, the years he spent in Boise have always held a special place in his heart. "When I picture Boise in my mind, I see euphoric 1950s chrome optimism," he's said. When the Lynch family left Boise, a few other neighbors moved, too, and John Lynch recalled David saying, "That's when the music stopped."

Lynch had begun edging out of childhood prior to leaving Boise. He's recalled the dismay he felt as a young boy when he learned he'd missed Elvis Presley's debut on *The Ed Sullivan Show,* and he'd become seriously interested in girls by the time the family moved. "David started going steady with a really cute girl," said Smith. "They were so in love." Lynch's sister recalled that "David always had a girlfriend, starting when he was pretty young. When he was in junior high I remember him telling me he kissed every single girl on a hayride his seventh-grade class went on."

Lynch returned to Boise the summer after he completed ninth grade in Virginia and spent several weeks staying with different friends. "When he came back he was different," Smith remembered. "He'd matured and was dressing differently—he came back with a unique style and had black pants and a black shirt, which was unusual in our group. He was really self-confident, and when he told stories about experiences in Washington, D.C., we were impressed. He had a sophistication that made me think, My friend has gone somewhere beyond me.

"After high school David stopped coming back to Boise and we lost touch," Smith continued. "My youngest daughter is a photographer who lives in L.A., and one day in 2010 she was assisting a photographer who told her, 'We're shooting David Lynch today.' When they took a break during the shoot she approached him and said, 'Mr. Lynch, I think you might know my dad, Mark Smith, from Boise.' David said, 'You're shitting me,' and the next time I visited my daughter I got together with David at his house. I hadn't seen him since

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high school and he gave me a big hug, and when he introduced me to people at his office, he said, 'I want you to meet Mark, my brother.' David's very loyal, and he stays in touch with my daughter—as her dad, I'm glad David's there. I wish he still lived next door to me."

The 1950s have never really gone away for Lynch. Moms in cotton shirtwaist dresses smiling as they pull freshly baked pies out of ovens; broad-chested dads in sport shirts cooking meat on a barbecue or heading off to work in suits; the ubiquitous cigarettes—everybody smoked in the 1950s; classic rock 'n' roll; diner waitresses wearing cute little caps; girls in bobby sox and saddle shoes, sweaters and pleated plaid skirts—these are all elements of Lynch's aesthetic vocabulary. The most significant aspect of the decade that stayed with him, however, is the mood of the time: The gleaming veneer of innocence and goodness, the dark forces pulsing beneath it, and the covert sexiness that pervaded those years are a kind of cornerstone of his art.

"The neighborhood where *Blue Velvet* was shot looks very much like our neighborhood in Boise, and half a block from our house was a creepy apartment building like the one in the movie," said John Lynch. *Blue Velvet*'s opening sequence of idyllic American vignettes was drawn from *Good Times on Our Street,* a children's book that permanently lodged itself in David's mind. "The joyride in *Blue Velvet* came from an experience in Boise, too. David and a few of his buddies once wound up in a car with an older kid who claimed he was going a hundred miles an hour down Capitol Boulevard. I think it was frightening, this crazy older kid with a hot car driving dangerously, and that memory stuck with David. He draws on his childhood a lot in his work."

Lynch does reference his childhood in his work, but his creative drive and the things he's produced can't be explained with a simple equation. You can dissect someone's childhood searching for clues that explain the person the child grew up to be, but more often than not there is no inciting incident, no Rosebud. We simply come in with some of who we are. Lynch came in with an unusually intense capacity for joy and a desire to be enchanted, and he was confident and creative from the start. He wasn't one of the boys buying a T-shirt with an irreverent drawing on it. He was the boy who was making them. "David was a born leader," said his brother, John.

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It's nice of my brother to say I was a born leader, but I was just a regular kid. I had good friends, and I didn't think about whether or not I was popular and never felt like I was different.

You could say that my grandfather on my mother's side, Grandfather Sundholm, was a working-class guy. He had fantastic tools down in his basement woodshop and he had these exquisitely made wooden chests, all inset locking systems and stuff like that. Apparently the relatives on that side of the family were expert cabinetmakers and they built a lot of cabinets in stores on Fifth Avenue. I went to visit those grandparents on the train with my mom when I was a little baby. I remember it was winter and my grandfather would stroller me around, and apparently I talked a lot. I'd talk to the guy who ran the newsstand in Prospect Park, and I think I could whistle, too. I was a happy baby.

We moved to Sandpoint, Idaho, right after I was born, and the only thing I remember about Sandpoint is sitting in this mud puddle with little Dicky Smith. It was like a hole under a tree they filled with water from the hose, and I remember squeezing mud in that puddle and it was heaven. The most important part of my childhood took place in Boise, but I also loved Spokane, Washington, which is where we lived after Sandpoint. Spokane had the most incredible blue skies. There must've been an air force base nearby, because these giant planes would fly across the open sky, and they went real slow because they were propeller planes. I always loved making things, and the first things I made were wooden guns that I made in Spokane. I'd carve them and cut them with saws and they were pretty crude. I loved to draw, too.

I had a friend named Bobby in Spokane who lived in a house at the

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end of the block, and there was an apartment building down there, too. So, it's winter, and I go down there in my little snowsuit, and let's say I was in nursery school. I'm in a little snowsuit and my friend Bobby is in a snowsuit and we're going around and it's freezing cold. This apartment building is set back from the street and we see that it has a corridor that goes down to these doors, and the door to one of the apartments is open. So we go in there and we're in an apartment and no one's home. Somehow we get this idea and we start making snowballs and putting them in the drawers of this desk. We put snowballs in all the bureau drawers—any drawers we could find, we'd make a hard snowball and put one in there. We made some big snowballs, about two feet across, and set them on the bed, and put some more snowballs in other rooms. Then we got the towels out of the bathroom and laid them in the street, like flags. Cars would come and they'd slow down, then the driver would say, "Screw it," and they'd drive right over these towels. We saw a couple of cars go over the towels, and we're in our snowsuits rolling more snowballs. We finish up and go home. I'm in the dining room when the phone rings, but I don't think anything of it. In those days the phone hardly ever rang, but still, I'm not panicked when the phone rings. My mother might've answered, but then my father took it, and the way he's talking, I'm starting to get a feeling. I think my dear dad had to pay quite a lot of money for damages. Why did we do it? Go figure . . .

After Spokane we moved to North Carolina for a year so my dad could finish school, and when I hear the song "Three Coins in the Fountain" I'm a certain height and I'm looking up at this building at Duke University and there was a fountain there. It was sunny 1954 light, and it was incredible with that song going in the background.

My grandparents Sundholm lived in a beautiful brownstone on 14th Street, and they had a building that my grandfather oversaw on Seventh Avenue. There might've been some storefronts in the building and it was a residential building, too. People lived there, but they weren't allowed to cook. I once went there with my grandfather and the door to one of the apartments was open and I saw a guy cooking an egg on a flat iron. People find ways of doing stuff. It's true that going to New York would upset me when I was growing up. Everything about New York made me fearful. The subways were just unreal. Going down into this place, and

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the smell, and this wind would come with the trains, and the sound—I'd see different things in New York that made me very fearful.

My father's parents, Austin and Maude Lynch, lived on a wheat ranch in Highwood, Montana. My father's dad was like a cowboy and I loved to watch him smoke. I came in wanting to smoke, but he reinforced that desire. My dad smoked a pipe when I was real little, but then he got pneumonia and quit. All his pipes were still around, though, and I loved to pretend to be smoking them. They put Scotch tape around the mouthpieces because they figured they were dirty, so I had all these scotch-taped pipes, some curved, some straight, and I loved them. I started smoking when I was really young.

My grandparents had a ranch, and the closest big town was Fort Benton. At a certain point in the fifties they moved from the ranch to a small farm in Hamilton, Montana, where they had a farmhouse and quite a bit of land. It was real rural. They had a horse called Pinkeye I would ride, and I remember Pinkeye taking a drink out of a creek and it took everything I had not to slide right down that horse's neck and head into the creek. You could go out and shoot a gun in the backyard and not hit anything. I grew up loving trees, and I had a strong connection with nature when I was a kid. It was all I knew. When the family drove anywhere across the country, we'd pull over and my dad would set up a tent and we'd camp—we never stayed in motels. In those days there were campsites all along the roads, but those are gone now. On the ranch you had to fix stuff yourself, so there were tons of tools for everything, and my dad always had a woodshop. He was a craftsman and he rebuilt people's musical instruments and made ten or eleven violins.

Projects! The word "project" was so thrilling to everyone in my family. You get an idea for a project, and you get your tools together, and tools are some of the greatest things in the world! That people invent things to make things more precise—it's incredible. Like Peggy said, my parents took it seriously when I got ideas for things I wanted to make.

My parents were so loving and good. They'd had good parents, too, and everybody loved my parents. They were just fair. It's something you don't really think about, but when you hear other people's stories you realize how lucky you were. And my dad was a character. I always said if you cut his leash he'd go right into the woods. One time my dad and I

went deer hunting. Hunting was part of the world my dad grew up in and everybody had guns and hunted some, so he was a hunter, but not an avid hunter. And if he killed a deer we'd eat it. You'd rent a freezer and every once in a while you'd go down to the freezer in the basement and get a piece of meat, and for dinner we'd have venison, which I hated. I never shot a deer, and I'm glad I didn't.

Anyway, I was around ten at the time and we were going deer hunting, so we drive out of Boise and we're on a two-lane highway. The only light is from the headlights of the car and it's pitch-black. It's hard for people today to imagine this, because there are no roads that are pitch-black, hardly ever. So this is pitch-black; we're going on these winding roads up into the mountains, and a porcupine races across the road. My dad hates porcupines because they eat the tops of trees and the trees die, so he tries to run over the thing but it makes it across the road. So he screeches to the side of the road and slams on the brakes, pops open the glove compartment, takes out this .32 pistol, and says, "Come on, Dave!" We run across the highway and we're following the porcupine up this rocky mountain, and we're sliding down while we're trying to go up this hill, and at the top of this little mountain are three trees. The porcupine goes up one of them, so we start throwing rocks to see which tree it's in. We figure out which one it's in, my dad starts climbing the tree, and he says, "Dave! Throw a rock and see if it moves. I don't see it!" So I throw a rock, and he yells, "No! Not at me!" So I throw some more rocks, and he hears it running, and—Bam! Bam! Bam!—it rolls down out of the tree. We get back in the car and go deer hunting and on the way back we stopped and found that porcupine and it had flies all over it. I got a couple of quills from it.

I went to the second grade in Durham, North Carolina, and my teacher's name was Mrs. Crabtree. My father had gone back to school in Durham to get his doctorate in forestry, so he studied every night at the kitchen table and I would study with him. I was the only kid in my class that got straight A's. My second-grade girlfriend, Alice Bauer, got a couple of B's, so she came in second. One night my dad and I are sitting there studying and I hear my mother and father talking about a mouse that's in the kitchen. On Sunday my mother takes my brother and sister to church with the idea that my dad is going to stay home and get rid of

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this mouse. He had me kind of helping him move the stove, and this little mouse ran out of the kitchen and across the living room and leapt up inside a closet with clothes hanging. My dad took a baseball bat and beat these clothes until this little bloody mouse fell out.

Idaho City used to be the biggest city in the state of Idaho, but when we moved to Boise there were probably a hundred people living in Idaho City in the summer and fifty in the winter. That's where the research center was for the Boise Basin Experimental Forest, and my dad was in charge of the Experimental Forest. The word "experimental" is so beautiful. I just love it. They did tests on erosion, insects, and disease and tried to figure out how to get healthier trees. All the buildings were white with green trim, and in the yard there were posts with little wooden houses on top. They were kind of like birdhouses with doors, and when you opened them up you'd find all sorts of devices inside that were checking things like humidity and temperature. They were beautifully made and were painted white with green trim, just like all the buildings. Then you go into some office and there are billions of little drawers, and you open them up and there are insects in there on little pins. There were big greenhouses with seedlings going, and if you went into the forest a lot of the trees had little tags on them for some kind of experiment or something. They'd check them.

That's when I would shoot chipmunks. My dad would drive me into the woods in the Forest Service pickup, and I loved these pickups—they run so smooth, and they're Forest Service green. I'd get out with my .22 and my lunch and he'd pick me up at the end of the day. I was allowed to shoot as many chipmunks as I could, because the forest was overrun with them, but I couldn't shoot any birds. One time I was out there and a bird flew way up in the top of a tree and I raised my gun and pulled the trigger. I never thought I'd hit it but I must've hit it dead center, because the feathers just exploded and it came twirling down and plopped into a creek and swirled away.

We lived on Parke Circle Drive in Boise, and next door were the Smiths. There was Mr. and Mrs. Smith; the four boys, Mark, Randy, Denny, and Greg; and the grandmother, who was called Nana. Nana was always out doing gardening, and you knew when she was out gardening because you'd hear this little tinkle of ice against a glass. She'd be out

there with these gardening gloves on, with a mixed drink in one hand and a little spade in the other hand. She got the Pontiac that my family sold to the Smiths. She wasn't completely deaf, but she was deaf enough that when she started the car she'd almost floorboard the thing so she could hear that it was on. There'd be this gigantic roar in the garage and you'd know Nana was going somewhere. On Sundays people in Boise went to church, and the Smiths went to an Episcopalian church. They had a Ford station wagon they'd drive to church, and Mr. and Mrs. Smith would sit up front with a carton of cigarettes. Not just a couple of packs. A carton.

Kids then had a lot of freedom to run around. We went everywhere and we weren't inside in the day, ever. We were out doing stuff and it was fantastic. It's horrible that kids don't get to grow up that way anymore. How did we let that happen? We didn't have a TV until I was in the third grade, and I watched some TV as a child, but not very much. The only show I really watched was *Perry Mason*. Television did what the Internet is doing more of now: It homogenized everything.

That's something about the fifties that's so important and is never going to come back: There used to be differences in places. In Boise the girls and the guys dressed a certain way, and if you go to Virginia they dressed in a completely different way. If you go up to New York City they dress in a completely different way there, too, and they listen to different music. You go to Queens and the girls looked like—you'd never seen anything like it in your life! And in Brooklyn they're even different than in Queens! That Diane Arbus photograph of the couple with the baby, and the girl has a certain type of big beautiful hair? You would never see that in Boise or Virginia. And the music. If you catch the vibe of the music in a place, you just look at these girls and listen to what they're listening to, and you've got a whole picture. The world they live in is completely strange and unique and you want to know about that world and what they're into. Those kinds of differences are pretty much gone now. There are still minor differences, like there are the hipsters, but you'll find hipsters in other cities that are just like the hipsters in your town.

I had a girlfriend every year starting when I was really young, and all of them were great. In kindergarten I walked to school with a girl and

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we'd carry our nap towels. That was the thing you did with girls in kindergarten. My friend Riley Cutler that my son Riley's named after—well, in the fourth grade I had a girlfriend named Carol Cluff, and in the fifth grade she became Riley's girlfriend and they're still married today. Judy Puttnam was my girlfriend in fifth and sixth grade, and then in junior high I had a new girlfriend every two weeks. You'd have a girlfriend for a while and then you move on to a different girlfriend. I have a picture of me kissing Jane Johnson at a party in a basement in Boise. Jane's father was a doctor, and she and I looked at medical books together.

I'll tell you about a kiss I really remember. My father's boss was named Mr. Packard, and one summer the Packard family came and stayed at the research station. There was a beautiful girl in the family named Sue, who was my age, and she brought her neighbor boy up and they were having sex. I was so far away from having sex, and it just completely boggled my mind that they were so cavalier when they were telling me about this. One day Sue and I ditched her boyfriend and got off on our own. On the ponderosa pine forest floor are interwoven pine needles maybe two feet thick, and this stuff is called duff. It's so soft it's incredible, and we would run through these trees and dive into it and go into a long kiss. It was so dreamy. That was a kiss that got deeper and deeper, and it was lighting some fire.

Mostly I remember summers because winter meant school, and we human beings block out school because it's horrible. I barely remember ever being in a schoolroom, and I don't remember any of my classes except my art class. Even though I had a very conservative art teacher I remember really loving it. I still liked being outside more, though.

We skied at this place called Bogus Basin, which was eighteen miles away, up these winding mountain roads, and it was real good snow, much better snow than Sun Valley. It was small, but when you're a kid it seemed real big. In the summer you could work off your season pass by doing a few days of work at Bogus Basin, clearing brush and doing stuff. We were up there working one summer when we found this dead, bloated cow by a stream. We had these pickaxes, so we thought we'd try to pop this cow. One side of a pickax is kind of a blade and the other end is a pointed

piece of steel, so we slammed the pointed end of one of these things into the cow, but as soon as it hit we realized we were in trouble. You'd bang the pickax into this cow and it would fly off of this thing—it could've killed somebody. The cow would fart when you hit it really hard, and it was a poisonous odor because it was decaying, but we could not pop this cow. I think we gave up. I don't know why we wanted to pop it. You know, kids . . . you want to do stuff.

This place had a T-bar rather than a chairlift to get to the top of the mountain, and in the summer you could find stuff in the area where people stood in line for the T-bar. People would drop things in the snow, then we'd find them after the snow melted. You'd find five-dollar bills, all kinds of change—it was so beautiful to find money. One time I was walking past the junior high on the way to the ski bus, and there were six inches of snow on the ground, and I look over and there's this fat little blue coin purse. I pick it up, it's sopping wet from the snow, and I open it and there's a roll of Canadian money, which works great in America. I spent quite a bit of that money that day skiing. They had Danishes at the lodge, and I might've bought some for my friends. I took the rest of the money home and my father made me run an ad in the paper in case somebody lost it, but nobody claimed it so I got to keep it.

My fourth-grade teacher was named Mrs. Fordyce, and we called her Mrs. Four-Eyes. I sat three or four seats from the front of the room, and there was this girl who sat behind me who'd wear this bracelet and just rub herself like crazy. It's like she couldn't stop herself. I sort of knew what she was doing, but I didn't really know. Kids learn about this stuff in little bits. My sixth-grade girlfriend, Judy Puttnam, had a friend named Tina Schwartz. One day at school the girls were all asked to go to a different room, then they came back. I'm very curious. What's the deal? That afternoon I go to Judy's house, then we walk down to Tina Schwartz's house, and Tina says, "I'll show you what they told us." She comes out with this Kotex and squats down and shows me how this thing was supposed to be worn, and that was really something to me.

People came of age much later in life during the fifties. In the sixth grade there was a story going around about a guy in our class who had to shave and was bigger than most kids. The story was that he went into the boys' room and did this thing with his penis and this white fluid came

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out. I said, What? I can't believe what I'm hearing, but something tells me it's true. I equate that with transcending with meditation. You can't really believe that someone could become enlightened, but something inside tells you it could be true. It was the same thing. So I thought, I'm going to try this tonight. It took forever. Nothing was happening, right? And all of a sudden this feeling—I thought, Where is this feeling coming from? Whoa! The story was true and it was unbelievable. It was like discovering fire. It was just like meditation. You learn this technique and, lo and behold, things start changing and there it is. It's real.

I remember discovering rock 'n' roll when I was a kid, too. Rock 'n' roll makes you dream and gives you a feeling, and it was so powerful when I first heard it. Music has changed since the birth of rock 'n' roll, but the difference isn't anywhere near as great as it was when rock 'n' roll came in, because what had preceded it was so different. It's like it came out of nowhere. They were doing rhythm and blues but we weren't hearing it, and we weren't hearing jazz really, either, except Brubeck. In 1959 the Dave Brubeck Quartet released "Blue Rondo à la Turk" and I just went crazy. Mr. Smith had the album and I listened to it at the Smiths' house and fell in love with it.

Movies weren't a big part of Boise in the fifties. I remember seeing *Gone with the Wind* at an outdoor theater in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, on a beautiful mowed lawn. Seeing *Gone with the Wind* on a giant screen, outside, on a summer evening—that was nice. I don't remember telling my brother about movies, and I don't remember when I first saw *The Wizard of Oz*, but it stuck with me, whenever it was. But I'm not alone. It stuck with a lot of people.

That fifties small-town thing, it's different, and to catch that mood is important. It's dreamy, that's what it is. The fifties mood isn't completely positive, though, and I always knew there was stuff going on. When I was out after dark and going around on my bike, some houses had lights on inside that were kind of warm, or I knew the people who lived in the house. Other houses, the lights were dim, and with some houses they were almost out and I didn't know the people who lived there. I'd get a feeling from these houses of stuff going on that wasn't happy. I didn't

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dwell on it, but I knew there were things going on behind those doors and windows.

I was out one night with my brother and we were down at the end of the street. Everything is lit up at night now, but in the fifties in small towns like Boise, there were streetlights, but they were dimmer and it was much darker. It makes night kind of magical because things just go into black. So, we were down at the end of this street at night, and out of the darkness—it was so incredible—came this nude woman with white skin. Maybe it was something about the light and the way she came out of the darkness, but it seemed to me that her skin was the color of milk, and she had a bloodied mouth. She couldn't walk very well and she was in bad shape, and she was completely naked. I'd never seen that, and she was coming toward us but not really seeing us. My brother started to cry and she sat down on the curb. I wanted to help her but I was young and didn't know what to do. I might've asked, Are you okay? What's wrong? But she didn't say anything. She was scared and beat up, but even though she was traumatized, she was beautiful.

I didn't see my friends every time I left the house on Parke Circle Drive. One day I went out and it was kind of a cloudy day and it might've been early in the morning. The next house over from the Smiths' was the Yontz family's, and the Smith lawn sort of blended with the Yontz lawn, and between the two houses was a little space with bushes on one side and a fence on the other and a gate that opened to a dead-end street. Sitting on the ground on this side of the gate was this kid I'd never seen before, and he was crying. I went over to him and I said, "Are you okay," but he didn't answer me. So I moved closer to him and asked him what happened and he said, "My father died." He was crying so hard he could hardly get the words out and the way he said it just killed me. I sat down next to him for a little bit but I realized I couldn't help him. Death is far away and abstract when you're a child, so you don't worry about it so much, but I felt this thing with that kid that was just horrible.

Up on Vista Avenue were all kinds of little stores, like hobby shops and hardware stores, and we got stuff there to build bombs. We learned how to make pipe bombs, and we made three of them in Riley Cutler's basement,

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and they were powerful. Riley blew up one of them on his own near this big irrigation canal and he said it was incredible. I threw the second one in front of Willard Burns's house. We all played baseball so we had good arms, and I threw this thing really high; it came down, it hit and bounced up, but it didn't go off. So I threw it again, and this time when it hit the ground it bounced up and blew like crazy. It turned this pipe into shrapnel and blew a board off of Gordy Templeton's fence next door. Gordy was on the throne while this was going on and he came out pulling his pants up, holding toilet paper. We said, Wait a minute, this could've killed somebody or blown our heads off, so we threw the last one in an empty swimming pool, where it could detonate and not hurt anybody.

It made a huge noise when it exploded in the pool, so Gordy and I go one way and everybody else went the other way. I went to Gordy's house, and his living room had a huge picture window looking out to the front. We're there on the couch and Mrs. Templeton made tuna fish sandwiches and chips, which is something I never encountered at home unless they were on top of a tuna fish casserole. Those were the only chips I ever had. And no sweets except maybe oatmeal cookies with raisins. Healthy stuff. Anyhow, we're having our sandwiches, and then gliding into view outside the picture window was a gold and black and white giant motorcycle and a giant cop. He put his helmet under his arm and walked to the door and rang the bell and he took us to the station. I was the seventh-grade president, and I had to write a paper for the police on the duties and obligations of leadership.

I got in trouble for other stuff. My sister, Martha, was in elementary school when I was in junior high, and she had to walk by the junior high to get to school. I told my dear little sister that when she walked by the junior high she should stick up her middle finger at people because that meant friendship. I don't know if she ever did it, but she asked my dad about it and he got really upset with me. Another time this kid stole a bunch of .22 bullets from his father and he gave me some of them. They have such great weight, .22 bullets; they're sort of like little jewels. I kept them for a while, then I started thinking I'd get in trouble for having them, so I wadded them up in newspaper, put them in a bag, and threw them in the trash. In the winter my mother would burn trash in the fireplace, so she put all this paper in the fire-

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place and lit it and pretty soon bullets started flying all around the living room. I got in trouble for that.

One day we were having a badminton tournament in the back of the Smiths' house and we heard this giant explosion and ran to the street, and we saw smoke rising at the end of the block. We walked down and there was this guy named Jody Masters who was older than us. Jody Masters was building a rocket out of a pipe and it accidentally ignited and cut his foot off. His mother, who was pregnant, came out, and she saw her oldest son and he couldn't get up. He tried, but his foot was hanging by tendons in a pool of blood and billions of burned-out match heads. They sewed his foot back on and it was fine. There was a lot of bomb building and gasoline-powered things in Boise.

We left Boise and moved to Alexandria, Virginia, after I finished eighth grade, and I was upset when we moved from Boise. I can't express how upset I was, and it was the end of an era—my brother is right when he says that's when the music stopped. Then, the summer after ninth grade, my mother and sister and brother and I went back to Boise on the train.

My grandfather Lynch died that summer, and I was the last person to see him alive. He'd had his leg amputated and it never really healed because he had such bad hardening of the arteries, so he was staying in a regular neighborhood house with five or six other people, being taken care of by nurses. My mother and grandmother visited him every day, but one day they couldn't go, and they said, "David, would you go visit your grandfather today because we can't go?" and I said yes. Some of the day went by and it got late, then I remembered about visiting him, so I borrowed a bike from this kid in front of the South Junior High swimming pool and I rode out Shoshone Street. There he was in a wheelchair out in the front yard, getting some air. So I sat with him and we had a really great talk. I can't remember what we talked about—maybe I asked him some questions about the old days, and there were some stretches where nobody talked—but I always loved just sitting with him. Then he said, "Well, Dave, I better go back in now," and I said, "Okay, Granddad." I got on my bike, and as I was riding away I look back and I see nurses coming out to get him. I'm riding down the street and I get to a green wooden garage that blocks my view, so the last thing I see is some nurses coming toward him.

From there I went to Carol Robinson's house because her cousin, Jim Barratt, had built a bomb as big as a basketball and he was going to set it off. He set the bomb in the freshly mowed backyard and it smelled so beautiful. I haven't smelled that in a really long time and don't know of any mowed lawns around here in L.A. Anyhow, there was a porcelain washbowl about a foot and a half in diameter, and he set it on top of the bomb and lit the fuse and this thing went off like you cannot fuckin' believe. It blew this dish two hundred feet in the air, it blew dirt everywhere, and smoke was coming out of the lawn in a really beautiful way ten or fifteen feet out. It was an amazing thing that I saw.

Then some moments pass and I hear sirens and think maybe the police are on their way, so I hightail it to the pool and give the kid's bike back to him. As I'm walking home to my grandparents' apartment, I see my mother out in the front. She was headed to the car, but when she saw me she started waving wildly, so I go faster and I get to her and say, "What is it?" She says, "It's your grandfather." I drove her fast to a hospital in downtown Boise where my grandfather was, and I double-parked and my mother went in. She came out fifteen minutes later and I could immediately tell something was wrong, and when she got in the car she said, "Your grandfather died."

I'd been with him just fifteen minutes before it happened. When he said, "Dave, I better go back in now," I'm pretty sure, playing it back, that something was going wrong in him—I think he had internal bleeding—and he didn't want to say it in front of me. That night I sat with my grandmother and she wanted to hear all about my visit with him. Later I put two and two together and I realized those sirens weren't for the bomb; they were going to get my grandfather. I was very close to my grandparents, all four of them, and he was the first one I lost, and I loved him so much. It was a huge thing for me when my grandfather Lynch died.

I went back to Boise another time, in 1992, to find out what happened to a girl I knew there who committed suicide in the seventies. This story started a long time before that, though. When I left Boise for Alexandria after the eighth grade, my girlfriend was Jane Johnson, and during that first year in Alexandria—my worst year, ninth grade—I wrote to Jane and kind of kept that relationship going. When we went back to Boise the

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following summer of 1961, Jane and I broke up within the first two weeks, but while we were there I started hanging out with this other girl, and after we went back to Alexandria she became the girl I was writing to. We wrote to each other for years, and in those days you wrote long letters.

The summer after I graduated from high school I went to visit my grandmother on a Greyhound bus. This bus had a big engine that made a lot of noise, and the driver was going seventy or eighty miles an hour on these two-lane highways, and the whole trip is basically sagebrush. I remember there was this guy on the bus who looked like a real cowboy. He had on a cowboy hat all stained with sweat, and his face was totally lined, like leather skin, and he had steel-blue eyes, and he just stared out the window the whole trip. An old-style cowboy. So we get to Boise and I go to my grandmother's place, where she's living with Mrs. Foudray, and they're old ladies but they doted on me. They thought I was so handsome. It was really great.

My grandmother let me use her car and I went to this hotel, up to the mezzanine level, which was kind of strange and dark, and there was a soda fountain there where this girl I'd been writing to worked. I asked her if she wanted to go to the drive-in that night, and after I had dinner with my grandmother and Mrs. Foudray, this girl and I went to the drive-in. In those days there were drive-ins everywhere. It was fantastic. So we start making out at the drive-in and she's telling me things about herself and I realize this is a really wild girl. She had strange boyfriends after that, probably because so-called regular guys like me were sort of afraid of her. I remember her saying to me, "Most people don't know what they want to do in life and you are so lucky that you know what you want to do." I think her life was already headed in a dark direction.

We continued writing to each other—in fact, I was still writing to her, and two other girls, when I married Peggy. I'd been writing to these three girls for years, and finally one day Peggy said, "David, you're married now; you gotta stop writing to these girls." Peggy wasn't the jealous type at all, but she said, "Look, you write a nice little letter and they'll understand," like I was a little kid. And I stopped writing to them.

Many years later, in 1991, I'm up shooting *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*, and during lunch I go into my trailer and meditate. One day after I finish meditating, I open up the trailer door and there's somebody on the

film saying, "There's a man named Dick Hamm here, and he says he knows you." I said, "Dick Hamm? Are you kidding?" I'd gone to elementary school with Dick Hamm and hadn't seen him in decades. I go over and there he is with his wife from New York City, and it was great to see him. I asked him if he'd run into this girl I'd gone to the drive-in with and he said, "No, she's dead. She jumped into the big canal and killed herself." I started wondering, What is the story here? What happened to her? So I went back to Boise after the film wrapped and looked into this thing. I went to the library and read articles about this girl, and I saw police reports about the day she died.

This girl had married an older guy who her brother and father hated, and she was also having an affair with this guy who was a prominent citizen in Boise. One Friday night this guy broke it off with her and she was devastated. She couldn't hide her sadness, so maybe her husband suspected something. The following Sunday morning a neighbor down the street was having a brunch, and she and her husband went there separately. The story goes that her husband left the brunch and went home, and a little while later she comes home and goes into the bedroom and gets this Western-style .22 pistol, then goes into the laundry room, points it into her chest, pulls the trigger, then staggers out of the house and dies on the front lawn. I wondered, If you were committing suicide, why would you stagger out on the lawn?

As far as the police looking into this, I think they got word from the guy she was having the affair with: This is a suicide; don't go anywhere near it, because it's going to come back to me; don't fuck around, guys. Put it under the rug. I went to the police department and tried to trick them by saying, "I'm looking for a story for a film; do you have any girls who committed suicide during this period?" It didn't work, because they were never going to bring up that story. I got permission to get a photograph of the crime/suicide scene, and I filled out these forms and turned them in, and they said, "We're sorry, but that year's stuff was thrown away." I knew this girl from the beginning, when she was young, and I can't explain why her life went the way it did.

But I do know that a lot of who we are is already set when we get here. They call it the wheel of birth and death, and I believe we've been around many, many times. There's a law of nature that says what you sow

is what you reap and you come into life with the certainty that some of your past is going to visit you in this life. Picture a baseball: You hit it and it goes out and it doesn't come back until it hits something and starts traveling back. There's so much empty space that it could be gone for a long time, but then it starts coming back and it's coming back to you, the person who set the baseball in motion.

I think fate plays a huge role in our lives, too, because there's no explaining why certain things happen. How come I won an independent-filmmaker grant and got to go to the Center for Advanced Film Studies at the American Film Institute? How come you meet certain people and fall in love with them and you don't meet all those other people? You come in with so much of who you are, and although parents and friends can influence you a little, you're basically who you are from the start. My children are all really different and they're their own people and they came into the world with their little personalities. You get to know them really well and you love them, but you don't have that much to do with the path they're going to travel in life. Some things are set. Childhood experiences can shape you, though, and my childhood years in Boise were hugely important to me.

It was an August night in 1960. It was our last night in Boise. There's a triangle of grass separating our driveway from the Smiths' driveway next door, and my dad, my brother, my sister, and I were out in that triangle saying goodbye to the Smith boys, Mark, Denny, Randy, and Greg. Suddenly Mr. Smith appears and I see him talking to my dad, then shaking his hand. I stared at this and started feeling the seriousness of the situation, the huge importance of this last night. In all the years living next to the Smiths I had never spoken one-on-one with Mr. Smith and now here he was walking toward me. He held out his hand and I took it. He might've said something like, "We're going to miss you, David," but I didn't really hear what he said—I just burst into tears. I realized how important the Smith family was to me, then how important all my Boise friends were, and I felt it building on a deeper and deeper level. It was beyond sad. And then I saw the darkness of the unknown I'd be heading into the next day. I looked up through tears at Mr. Smith as we finished shaking hands. I couldn't speak. It was definitely the end of a most beautiful golden era.