

Excerpt from *This Boy's Life* by Tobias Wolff, pages 143-144, ©1989

After a week or so I announced at dinner that I had decided not to go to Paris.

"The hell you aren't," Dwight said. "You're going."

"He gets to choose," Pearl said, on my side for once. "Doesn't he, Rosemary?"

My mother nodded. "That was the deal."

"The books aren't closed on this one," Dwight said. "Not yet they aren't." He looked at me. "Why do you think you aren't going?"

"I don't want to change my name."

"You don't want to change your name?"

"No sir."

He put his fork down. His nostrils were flaring. "Why not?"

"I don't know. I just don't."

"Well that's a lot of crap, because you've already changed your name once. Right?"

"Yes sir."

"Then you might as well change the other name too, make a clean sweep."

"But it's my last name."

"Oh, for Christ's sake. You think anybody cares what you call yourself?"

I shrugged.

"Don't badger him," my mother said. "He's already made up his mind."

"We're talking about Paris," Dwight shouted.

"It was his choice," she said.

Dwight jabbed his finger at me. "You're going."

"Only if he wants to," my mother said.

"You're going," he repeated.