

Geoff Cochrane

Young Nick

The city's betwixt and between. Warm and quiet, empty and becalmed. Suspended between one year and the next. The city today is Herman Melville's Manhattan, Herman Melville's Wall Street on a Sunday.

My barista's called Nick. The last time we spoke, he was off to see the new Star Wars film. 'How was your movie?' I ask.

'Awesome. Outstanding.'

'You were worried about J.J. Abrams' involvement.'

'I was worried about J.J. Abrams' involvement, but he's done a terrific job.'

'Good. I'm glad.'

'And how's life treating you?'

Life? I can stand it. Continue to be able to endure it. 'Goethe said that the idea of suicide had gotten him through many a bad night.'

Nick's smile is undismayed. In terms of personality and style, he's bulked up winningly in the past few months. A savvy, cheerful kid with a good heart, he's growing daily in confidence and sophistication.

Young Elliot

I don't know it yet, but I'm in for a treat this morning: the charming flash of verbal delinquency.

Elliot hails from Liverpool, and I like Liverpoolians; he has an interest in film and is keen to make his first short movie right here in Wellington. Meanwhile, he's working as a barista at a place I frequent.

Taking a scheduled break from his duties within, he joins me at my table outside the café. And Elliot brings to the party a banana and a bottle—a bottle of bottled water.

'Hi,' he says.

'Hello.'

'You've been to the library?'

'I have.'

'It's a good library.'

'It is indeed. In many key respects.'

Young Elliot eats his banana thoughtfully; I smoke the perfect rollie I've just rolled. 'There's absolutely no need,' I say.

'No need for what?'

'No need for you to be buying bottled water. Not in New Zealand, like.'

'I know. It's just . . .'

'Just what?'

'It's just that I need the bottle itself, fuck it. I mean, I can't drink out of my hands like a cat.'