

The Twelfth
Acolyte Reader

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The Balcony

by Graham Day

I was eleven when I found out that Captain Clay wasn't my real father. It was like this: I remember following a ragweed, blown in off the Texas plains. It goes tumbling down dusty, deserted, Main Street – me running after it – past the small granite courthouse and it stopping before a poster board announcing that *The Kid From Texas* is playing in double feature with an old '34 Tarzan picture. The sand stings the backs of my legs, naked below where my khaki shorts leave off. I go in to get out of the November cold. I normally make enough nickels and dimes to pay for the pictures once a week by clearing tables at the Captain's Saloon, while Ma sings sad songs for the morbid customers. The picture show provides the only real entertainment alternative in Shady Grove to the Captain's Saloon at the other end of town. That is if you don't count the Methodist and Baptist churches that square off against each other across Grove Street. Well, that and small-town gossip.

It is Thursday. On Fridays one set of lame, old films replaces another, so the Roxy is real quiet. Shady Grove is generally so quiet that a gathering of four boys on a street corner makes a pretty lively assembly. Folks say: "Apache-Springs is 150 miles from us and there ain't nothin' nearer."

I sit alone in the front row. In the 'fifties and 'sixties, in our town there is an accepted social code to where you sit at a picture show. The necking couples kiss and cuddle in the back rows, kids like me sit

in the front, and families and the rest in the middle. Then there is the balcony. Delinquent looking boys with ducktails stare belligerently at anyone coming up there without their blessing. The farther back you sit, the tougher you have to be.

I'm kinda bored with the old Audie Murphy Western and I need to take a leak, so I make my way up the darkened aisle. Stavros, the owner, is changing the glossy black and white publicity pictures for the following day's program. He calls it his Galaxy Of Stars. He has cut five pointed stars out of colored pasteboard, coated them with glue that makes the points twist and curl, then covers the treacle-glue with sparkling glitter-dust. I remember spending hours in front of his Galaxy coveting one of those stars. If I stare at them real hard, I see my sandy-brown burr-hair and freckled nose. Together, those stars and the Hollywood variety in the black-an'-white glossies represent a whole new world of excitement and opportunity beyond the sandblasted buildings of Shady Grove.

"H'lo Clay junior," he smiles, gap-toothed. "How's business at the cat-house?"

"Aw, okay, Mr. Stavros..." The Sheriff tolerates the goings-on back home as long as the Captain and the girls keep it discreet. When Belle, his best girl, proposed renaming the place "The Lonesome Pussy" and putting up a pink neon sign to drum up business, this had promptly been dropped to the joy of the Sheriff and both the town's Reverends who heaved a collective sigh of relief. No one wanted to cross the Captain. He'd been a professional wrestler before settling in Shady Grove and buying up the saloon. At fifty-eight, he was still in formidable shape. Apart from that, he was the meanest manipulator I have ever seen operate.

"There he is again," says Stavros, nodding his head towards the twin front doors where Jimmy-Bob Weaner, the 14-year-old

Methodist preacher's son, stands, nose pressed against the glass peering into the portals of iniquitous temptation.

"Aw what's he doin' here?" I ask. "He should be home reading his bible or playin' with his dick." Poor old Jimmy-Bob Weaner read the Old Testament to get his mind off his member and played with his cock to get his mind off God's wrath.

"I reckon that stupid-ass kid would take his chances in hell to come in here just once." Stavros laughs and tells me how he caught Jimmy-Bob riffling the trash cans for photographs of Ester Williams.

Among his other prohibitions, Jimmy-Bob Weaner is not allowed to speak to me. Come to think of it, a lot of the kids have been told the same thing, yet their disapproving dads all enjoy the Captain's hospitality from time to time. Stavros chuckles as he pins up the last picture.

"You're a good kid, Clay junior." He hitches his pants up over a big belly and returns to his usual place behind the popcorn machine which he nurses like a temperamental mistress.

I make my way across the foyer and round the corner to the boys' rest room. Billy Kane, one foot hitched up against the red velvet wall behind him, his palm on the opposite wall, is barring the doorway.

"Howdy, Clay junior." He raises his head slightly, showing me his blue eyes. At eighteen, Billy is already a local legend. He is the first kid in town to wear skintight faded jeans and a leather jacket. He's always in this plain white T-shirt that shows off his ample shoulders and V-shaped torso. Billy Kane just exudes sex, as a skunk puts out a bad smell. The young boys idolize him and there's not a girl in town who hasn't eaten her heart out or wet her panties for Billy. Word has it that a year ago Charlene Jones even cut her wrists and bled all over the Jukebox in the Springs Soda Fountain when he dropped her. Tales of Billy and his brother's battles with broken bottles and

stiletto blades at the Apache Springs Drive-in are legion. The two boys are down at the County-Sheriff's office almost as often as they're over at the Captain's, and that's often, too.

"Howdy, Billy."

"You here by yourself, Clay junior?" He combs back his thick brown wavy hair and smooths it into a luxuriant duck-tail at the nape of his muscular neck.

"Oh sure."

"An' where you off to, kid?" He shoves the comb back into his hip pocket.

"To the John, I gotta take a leak."

"Well goddamit if it ain't busy in there just now."

"Busy? How busy? There ain't practically no one here today."

"Well, piss-ant it's busy, so drop it." Those dark blue eyes of his are on the offensive.

When you are eleven it's not easy to stand up to a beefy 18-year-old tough. He vaguely resembles this new actor, James Dean that I've seen in the girl's movie magazines, but he looks less vulnerable. Now his face softens a little and he gives me this square-jawed smile.

"Tell you what, why don't we find Stavros an' drink us a little cherry cola?" Billy is one of the Captain's Favorites. Favorites get to wrestle with the Captain in his back room where he keeps in shape, and if they win it earns them certain privileges like a drink or a girl when they got no money. Billy mostly has no money.

"You ain't never bought me a drink before, Billy." Maybe he's paying me back for all the times the Captain let him win. He guides me, one big hand on my shoulder, round the corner to Stavros at the counter and orders me a cherry cola. Stavros raises a quizzical eyebrow at Billy.

"Yer playin' with fire, boy," Stavros says to Billy in his funny Greek-Texan accent. I'm impressed. I wonder when my generous friend plays with fire. I look up into his startlingly blue eyes. Just then the Pontiac salesman, who is always goofing-off work, makes his way over to the can. Billy does something real odd – he rushes over and kicks twice on the men's rest room door, before the fella can reach it.

"I guess you're tellin' them all to make room in there," I say.

"Enjoying your drink?" He gives me his thick-lipped smile. Billy's older brother, Hank, rounds the corner from the men's rest room, closely followed by a man I recognise as the bank manager.

I greet him politely – "Hello, Mr. Jeffrey." – but he looks scared and rushes out the front doors. Stavros laughs and says something about that being worth an extension on his overdraft.

"Clay junior," Hank greets me. He is still buttoning up his Levi's and tucking in his plaid shirt. I figure it's really busy in the John if poor Hank has to fix himself up out here.

"I had to buy Clay here a cherry-cola."

Hank is a scrawny version of Billy with a bad case of acne that spreads down under his collar. He nods slowly and peels off a dollar bill from a small bundle in his shirt pocket and hands it to his brother. I've never seen the Kane brothers with money and certainly never seen them sharing anything except for that time they were fighting over Viola-May, our five dollar whore. Belle said at the time, "There ain't no reason that fucker need ever pay for it. Love – it's all a game to Billy Kane. He does it 'cause it's there."

"Where you sittin', Clay junior?" Billy is giving me unheard-of attention.

"Front row, as always." I give him my best tough-to-be-a-kid sigh.

"Kid stuff! I was just fixing to go back in, you wanna sit with the big guys?" I blush – the balcony! I nod my eager agreement, not trusting the words to my mouth. Hank takes up Billy's old place at the rest room door but he lounges casually, like he's waiting for a friend. He starts whistling Your Cheatin' Heart and Billy lands him one hell of a thump on the arm. These are two real peculiar brothers.

Billy hustles me ahead of him, up the stairwell's carpet that's sure seen better days. Behind the curtains, in the blackness of the picture show balcony, I stop to let my eyes adjust to the dark. What's showing is the end credits of the western. I spot a young curly-headed Mexican kid, about thirteen, and he's flashing me a big white-toothed smile. He yanks a five-inch prick out and waves it at me in friendly way.

"Fifty cents?" He asks with a smile. Why would he want to give me fifty cents? My heart beats hard. Then he notices Billy with me. "Aw, sorry Billy, mi amigo!" The kid sheepishly recovers his pecker. Billy places his large hand on my shoulder and we climb the stairs right to the back.

"Can you believe that? Mixicans! I reckon Stavros would let niggers in here if we had any hereabouts." Billy sure ain't no liberal. He stops me in the very back row. I suppose you'd have to kill someone to get a seat this far back. We try to squeeze by a fattish man who is sitting next to Jordan Mosey, another one of the Captain's favorites. The fat man seems to be wrapping up a parcel on Jordan's lap.

"Done caught yourself a chicken, Billy?"

"Shut it, Jordan, or your trashy John here can take it home with him in his pocket and you'll be outta business. You like to have his pecker mounted above the mantle?"

This makes both Jordan and the fat man real obliging and they stand politely for us. Jordan pats my butt as I pass him. The balcony is turning out to be a lot friendlier than I imagined.

Billy pushes me right to the end of the back row against the side wall and there we are very much alone. This is living! The Western has finished. Now we watch Johnny Weissmuller, Tarzan, King of the Apes. Billy slowly stretches both arms along the top of the seats on either side of him, including mine. He takes the bubblegum out of his mouth, like there is something real important he has to say. He presses the wet gum on the back of the seat in front of him.

"You think he has a good body?" Billy asks. His arm sags around my shoulder, like I'm his kid brother... or his girl. I am having difficulty hearing him over my excited heartbeat.

"Oh Yeah." My bladder reminds me that I never did make it to the men's room.

"Reckon he's got him a big pecker under that there loincloth?"

The cherry cola didn't help much either.

"Yeah, I reckon it's pretty big." I laugh nervously. The excitement and the cherry cola are definitely swelling my bladder to the bursting point.

"Yep." He stretches his legs. Our knees touch. I squirm back in my seat to give him more legroom, but it seems the more space I give him the more he needs.

"Sit still, will yeah?" He seems restless. His big hand holds my knee still, and, pressed so firmly against him, I can feel his taught leg muscles through the denim.

"You done seen a grown man's pecker?"

"No," I lie. I mean, this is a pretty piss-ignorant question – I live in a goddamn brothel, after all. I suppose Billy would ask Dwane, the butcher's son, if he'd ever seen a side of beef!

On the screen Tarzan seems to be deciding what to do. He strikes a muscular pose on a rock then raises his fist to his forehead – it's all pretty dumb stuff but, maybe, if I concentrate on the movie for a spell, my piss will subside.

"You ever wanted to take a look inside a grown man's fly?" Billy has run his warm hand up the inside of my leg and it's resting on my inner thigh. He smells of Brylcreme and leather.

"Aw, I don't know."

"You mind?" he whispers near my left ear. I can feel his breath on my neck. It's smell is real masculine.

"Nope." I don't mind. In truth, I find all of this very exciting. Too exciting! But I know he is going to mind one whole lot when I piss on his hand, which is going to happen real soon. I squirm in my seat, trying to clamp down on my bladder.

He misinterprets my discomfort. "You also feeling horny?" I see him knead the front of his Levi's where there's a howling great bulge that I've never noticed before. Oh God, if only I could get rid of that re-processed cherry coke – then he could pull these moves on me all day if he likes.

"I... I gotta piss, Billy," I stammer in confession. If I run I might just make it to the men's room in time. I try to squeeze past him. He catches me around my waist.

"Hey kid, yer goin' chicken-shit on me? Piss right here against the wall." There is a rough sound in Billy's voice.

"But... Please, Billy." I am trembling. I can feel the pressure brimming up and prickling the very slit at the tip of my cock.

"No one is gonna see nothin'. Here, I'll help yer..."

He drops my shorts and guides my little prick out of my Jockeys just as the first drops are escaping and points it towards the wall to our right. Then comes the hard, hot spray. God, what a relief! But

what a racket it makes! Everyone in the entire hall must be able to hear my pee splashing and splattering up there high in the balcony. Are they afraid it's going to drip down and get them? I am grateful for the jungle noises coming out of the speakers.

"That's a nice little pee-pee you done got there... real neat," Billy says.

He holds my cocklet like I'm some three-year-old boy who needs help. As the pee rushes out, his finger and thumb start slipping back my foreskin that has been causing the piss to spray. Now the jet makes even more noise. His fingers explore the surrounding flesh. This is weird. I have heard about guys that want to do stuff that harms your butthole. Is Billy (the heart-breaker) Kane, one of them? His face is near my yellow jet, as if he actually doesn't find it dirty. Without my wanting it to, or even knowing why, my cock starts to stiffen.

"Real smooth, no hair at all," he says softly. "You just fixin' to throw yourself a boner, aren't you, little buddy?"

My bladder relieved, I reach down for my pants and underwear but Billy has somehow spirited them away. I don't know if I should yell in fear or give in to pleasure. I turn to face him and see in the gloom that he's opened his fly and while the fingers of one hand stroke my little two-and-a-half-incher, his other is fisting this real big erection. His nips show through his white T-shirt. I stroke one of them with unsure fingers and he groans. He spots the last droplets of pee shining in the reflection off the screen and milks them onto his index-finger which he then puts to his lips.

"Yep, cherry cola," he says. This makes me giggle. "Come take a look here, Clay Junior. You ever seen such a beauty?"

I tighten my butthole and my little worm springs to attention and clicks three times between his fingers. I suppose I'm letting him

know I'm no longer scared at what he is doing to me.

Until this moment I've never given much thought to sex. Well, I never thought of myself doing sex stuff. I know that it happens all around me at home. I know that at school you sometimes see those girlie magazines that do such profound things to guys like Jimmy-Bob Weaner, but they've always just left me unmoved. Sometimes when I'm scared or lonesome I'd play with my cock like any other kid or I'd take the pillow between my legs at night and fuck that for a while. But this is different – very intensely different.

"Hey, Clay, you likin' it all right?" He slumps back in the cinema seat and guides my bare ass onto his lap. I straddle his strong legs, facing him, belly to belly, cock to cock. His rough hands seem to be everywhere. He rubs my chest and my nipples tingle to his touch. I have always figured I had a good body for a kid. Now he is milking my pee-pee between thumb and two fingers. He manipulates its slightly pointed tip wrapped up in its long, crinkled, foreskin. He massages my scrotum which is still a firm, oval-shaped thing, not the loose, separated sac where a man feels his balls.

This sure beats fucking ten pillows.

Now he is stroking my ass, fingertips dangerously close to my butt-hole. "Them's some nice young buns you got, buddy-boy!"

I ignore his praise, hoping he isn't planning a rape today, and scoot further up onto his lap.

"Come here an' let 'em get to know each other." He draws my prick to his and sinks it into his testicles. A tremor shudders through my body and bewilders me. He lifts the front of his T-shirt over his head, keeping it on like a shrunken waistcoat. Billy Kane is just about naked now and he is built like one of those Greek statues in the art books at school that make the girls giggle nervously. Except he beats those statues all to hell in the prick department.

I play with his belly button from which a fine line of black hair runs down to the bush of pubic hair. At first I don't like all this hair but pretty soon I'm thinking it's kind of neat. I bend to kiss one of his dark silver-dollar-sized nipples.

"You can touch yer big friend, you know. Let me show you how...." My hands flutter and fumble at first like I'm spastic or something. "A little more squeeze... higher... yeah, that's a little better... Oooo, that was good, baby real good...."

I find my hands are learning fast. I begin to sense what he needs. "There, you're getting the hang of it," he tells me. Man, the town's girls would kill for this: Billy's prick is hot, iron-hard and I can make out thick veins running along the sides. I can feel his pulse racing in my palms. Its big plum-smooth head is spreading a silky oil that makes jerking him off so much easier. I wonder where it comes from. Billy drops his blue-jeans to the floor, but I don't miss a stroke.

"This thing is so big!" I say. "It's just the most wonderful thing I've ever did see."

He pulls me hard to his chest and I loose my grip on his pecker. He starts rubbing it against my own little hard-on. The feeling is electric. Now he lifts my bare legs inside his and squeezes them together with his knees. His cock slips between my thighs, just below my nuts. He gently slips it back and forth in its own goo, past my balls, close to my ass-hole. In and out – his pace accelerates – in and out. I hang on for dear life, both arms around his neck. Sweet Lord, he is fucking me between the legs, his pecker sliding back and forth so I can feel its head break into the open on the other side. He kisses my face, he is panting and sweating. My tits have started to prickle again and I feel so incredibly alive. He humps us up and down on the picture show seat fit to bust it. He is bucking like a bronco at a rodeo – then suddenly he breaks off.

"I reckon you can do the rest by hand..." Billy steers all ten of my little fingers around its circumference. I don't know exactly what he wants, but this is the sort of shit I hear from the girls' rooms. I do the best I can, tiring my arms. Next thing I know, the town idol is grunting unintelligible stuff. I'm glad that the jungle sounds on the screen drown out the groans of "baby, baby, baby..." Any second now I'm expecting a blood-curdling "Ahawowawowawaaahh!" from the Tarzan here below me. And then from the head of his cock out spouts an impressive first jet of cum that hits my shoulder; the second splatters onto his chest; several smaller waves spill over my hands.

"Oh my God..." he sighs. I run my hand over his chest, spreading the pungent, sticky, unfamiliar goo. It has the same smell of the girls' rooms after a busy night. I can draw out long, shiny strands of it with my finger like a spider's web. I test a bit of it on my tongue. It's warm and salty to taste.

His eyes gleam at me in the dark. "That the first time you done seen shootin' jizz?"

I smile and plant a kiss on his chin.

"Did I get you on the shoulder there baby? It's past belief what you done to me."

He wipes the load of cum off me with the back of his hand. Billy's cock is softening – I cuddle it in my hand. Courses of sperm and sweat drain off his body. My own cock is still rock hard. I wish he would touch it again, and he does.

"Yessir, that's just the cutest little piece you got there, kid, I ever did see. You gonna break some hearts with it, years to come, just like my ol' lady-killer." He gently lifts me off his lap and lowers my butt onto the top of the backrest in front of him. Then he lowers his head between my open thighs.

My sweet Lord, Billy Kane is actually sucking on my two-and-a-half-incher! He is using his tongue to move the skin back and forth over its tender tip. I close my eyes, throw back my head and groan in pleasure. He tongues my crotch and moves down to my balls sack and takes my cock and nuts into his mouth at one time while his hands fondle my butt. His large fingers spread my cheeks apart and I hear him sigh, "Lord, what a petite ass you got there!"

The strangest feeling is spreading through me now, from my chest down and from my legs up, converging, wonderfully, where Billy's ducktailed-head is bobbing up and down on my prick. Oh, I think, what's happenin' to me? What's Billy doin'?

What he is doing was giving me for the first time in my life a beautiful, if dry, climax, my first ever orgasm. Billy feels my body convulse. There are two savage spasms, followed by three clicks in my cock. I jack-knife, trapping his head and shoulders between my thighs. I stand up, rib-cage and bare ass caught somewhere in mid-air above our row of seats.

Then I slip back on Billy's lap, panting like I'd run a mile, and Billy's holding me close to him.

"That yer first time you done cum, Clay junior?" he asks.

"Yeah, Billy, I guess so."

"Proud of you, champ. You done good." He caresses my chest. "How'd yer get a harmless face like that, when yer so hot?" He smells strongly of his recent emission and he kisses me on the side of my head. We lie together watching the cigarette smoke from the hall below twist and curl in the beam from the projection booth above.

"Tarzan and Jane don't seem to have noticed what we was up to," I say at last. This makes him laugh.

After a while he says, "Clay, you must never tell yer ma and the Captain about this stuff, you hear?"

"Talk? You gotta be kiddin'. My pa would kill me." I shudder at the thought.

"Your pa...?" It seems Billy doesn't even know his own wrestling partner. Maybe that cum damaged his brain. Come to think of it, the cum had to come from somewhere – maybe it was his brain that was liquefying.

"The Captain, dummy," I inform him. Billy lifts my butt off his lap, reaches between my open legs, retrieves the stale cold gum from the seat and pops it back in his mouth. I think to myself, This guy is so handsome but so dumb.

"The Captain? Your pa? Why that is just about the damnedest thing I ever heard. The Captain is not your pa, boy. The Captain is a...a homasexyule, he's as queer as a two an' a half dollar bill, he can't get it up in front of no woman no way." In his mind, what he had just done to me clearly does not make him a two and a half dollar bill.

"But...." I stammer then fall to thinking. The Tarzan film is showing the end credits. A part of my life is also coming to an end. Somehow it even makes a twisted kind of sense. I don't know the phrase "rough trade", but I have a pretty good idea of the Captain's relationship with Favorites like dumb Billy Kane. My fear of the man who had dominated all our lives is passing with this new understanding.

"Your ma was pregnant when she come here," Billy goes on. "Captain gave you his name 'cause he always wanted a son, but he's no more your pa than I am."

This is all a lot to think about. Everything is just happening awful fast. I get off his lap. He mops us off with some Kleenex he produces from his jeans pocket.

"I suppose you wanna get dressed now an' go home. I suppose you're pretty pissed with me."

I don't reply and dress in silence. So does he. He lights up a Marlboro. The house lights are on once more. The fat man and Jordan must have left earlier. The Mexican kid is jacking off furiously as we pass him – I reckon he'd been watching us. The terrible thing about living in Shady Grove was that the old folks seem to know everything about us kids. Even news of your most secret erections gets out. Maybe there is something different about this balcony that makes it safe for kids like that Mex boy and Billy and well, yes, me too.

Stavros is pacing nervously behind the popcorn machine. Nobody fucks with the Captain or his goods, and, "son" or not, I am his goods. I've just been had by the town stud and somehow I find it exhilarating.

"You okay Clay junior?" I realize he knows dumb ol' Billy Kane better than most and that I am probably not the first boy to be treated to a cherry cola. He hands me one of the pasteboard stars that I have coveted all these years. I experience this weird new sense of power.

"Well," I say, "that depends." I look at him then at a rather sheepish Billy, "I ain't got no hard feelings." Then to Stavros: "Shall we say a free ticket from you an' a cherry cola from Billy Kane every Thursday from now on till I say when?"

Billy smiles; Stavros looks relieved. I reckon there is a lot more I can learn at the Roxy and I think dumb Billy Kane might be a handy teacher.

"Thursday, it's a date, kid." Billy Kane the town's heartthrob and trainee desperado is in my power. I remember all the times that Stavros wasn't at his popcorn machine and he came panting down the stairs after "checking on what's up with the young uns on the balcony."

I give him my best innocent-kid grin. "Oh an' Stavros, Billy ain't got money enough for buying cherry cola's for no other kids, will you see to it?" Maybe there was something of the Captain in me after all.