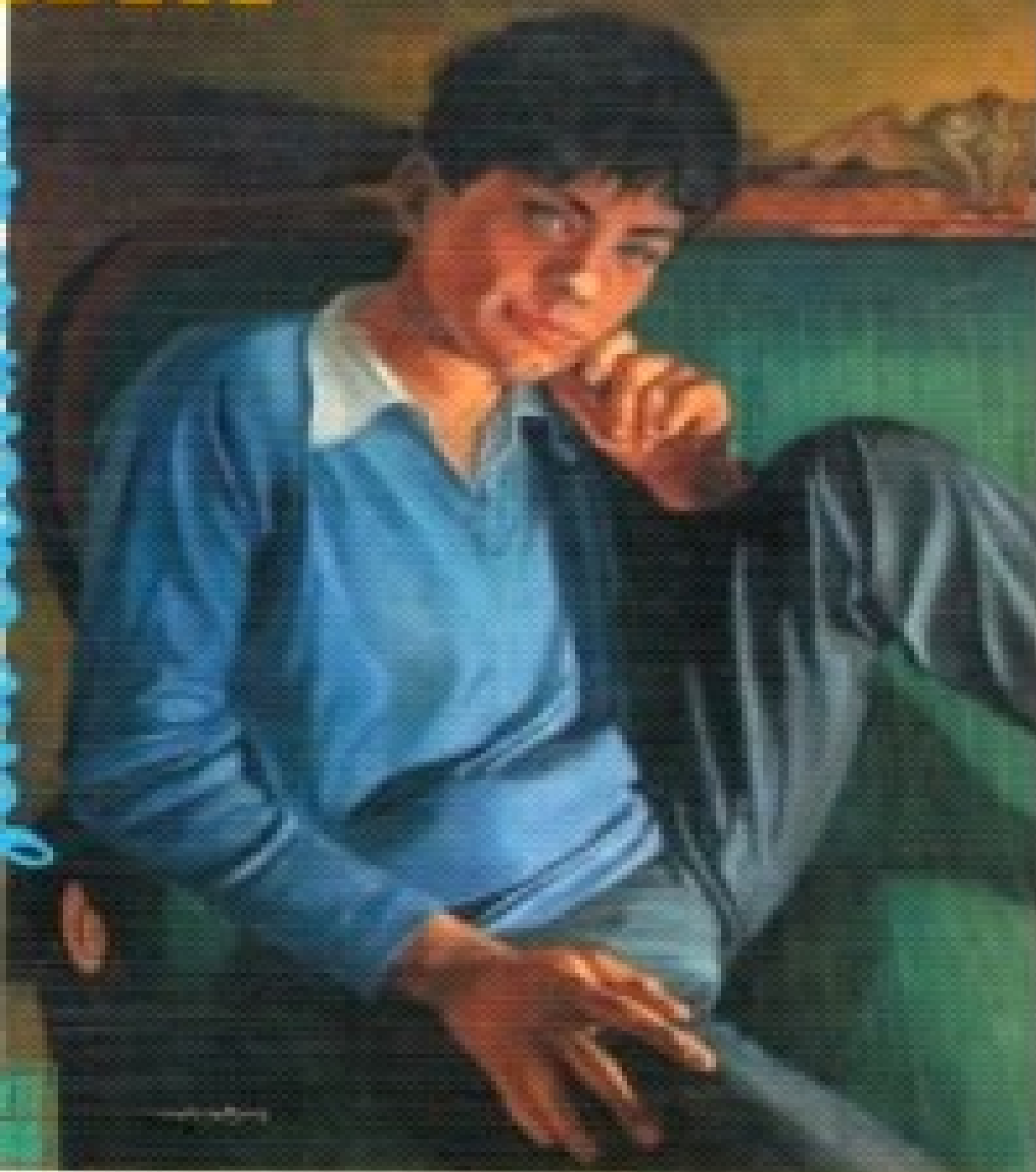


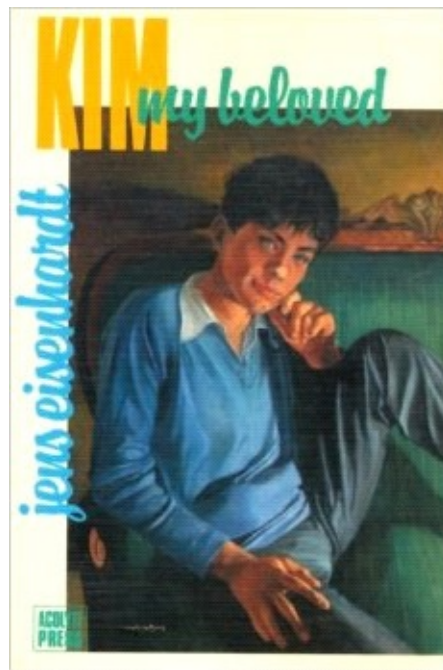
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Original Danish edition:

KIM, MIN ELSKEDE

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Borgens Verlag, Valby, Denmark

ISBN: 87-418-3327-9

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First edition of KIM, MY BELOVED published in December, 1989

Translation: Stephen W. Foster

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Cover design and painting by Mario de Graaf

The Acolyte Press P. O. Box 12731

1100 AS Amsterdam-ZO

The Netherlands

ISBN 90-6971-022-6

KIM MY BELOVED

by Jens Eisenhardt

Translated by Stephen W. Foster

All of a sudden there was this boy in my life . . .

I was twenty-eight. He was fourteen. And, to make matters worse, I was his teacher and he was my pupil.

It ought to have ended in catastrophe.

Instead it ended in love.

And that is what this first book of Kim and me is all about.

KIM, I LOVE YOU.

Today as much as ever.

"Watch out! Oh, sorry... you first."

I am writing my way back to our first meeting twenty years ago. On the path, suddenly, there you are.

Idiot, I tell myself: you're always in such a rush — and, typically, you talk too much.

We're in the school garden, paths freshly raked in honour of the occasion.

No matter. The collision was unavoidable. I have just rounded the corner of the dormitory. You were walking in the other direction, coming from the road.

And there we stand, the two of us clinging to one another.

A fine way to meet!

You mumble some sort of apology. I laugh nervously and put on my best don't-worry-about-it smile.

"Now then," I say, "it was really my fault."

And step back to get a better look at my new pupil.

With one arm you're clutching a quilt; under the other is a cardboard box bound with twine.

One could just as well say it's a box and quilt with a boy attached.

You come up to the middle of my nose, or thereabouts.

"Well, hello." — I present myself. — "What's your name?"

You blink, still a bit disoriented after our collision. You take a couple of swallows, shake your head impatiently.

I see you're wondering whether you should try to shake hands with me, but that's impossible because of the box and the quilt.

"My name is Kim," you answer with a light voice already hoarsely breaking out of childhood.

We size each other up.

To me, you are one among thirty-five new pupils, all starting that November day our first five-month

winter term. To you, I am just another teacher in a new school where you'll stay a while until it is time to move on.

"Kim," I repeat, searching the list of boarding students I have in my hand. "Kim, Kim, Kim," I drone. "Well, what do you know? Here you are. Kim Steffensen — that must be you, right?"

How asinine can one get?

But you nod, helpfully. Your eyes wander over to the yard in front of the school buildings: cars are arriving there with other students and their parents.

"And from Valby, no less," I go on chattering. "It's very nice to meet a true Copenhagenite way out here in the country. I come from the city myself."

And that's why you talk so much, I think, furious with myself but anxious to get it over with — out with the beggar from his miserable lair; back inside before he begins to complain!

"Did your parents bring you?" I ask.

You shake your head, looking away again. "The principal drove me up here."

Aha, you're one of our dear welfare kids, little Kim Steffensen! At once I indulge you with spontaneous feelings of sympathy. City boy, child welfare boy: you won't give me any trouble up there in one of those old cramped four-boy rooms. You are used to walking, and taking care of yourself. In your mind, we are just another institution.

"Is that your suitcase over there by the hedge?" I ask.

You nod.

"Well, Kim" I say, walking to the hedge and picking it up. "I'll take it, and now I'll show you where you'll be living."

I march you in front of me. "Yes, that's right, around the corner, in through the door — now to the left and up the stairs — watch your head! — well, *you* don't need to worry about that. And here" — pushing the door with my foot — "here you will sleep with three other boys. It looks like you're the first, so you have choice of beds."

You toss the quilt onto one of the top bunks.

"Well," I say (oh, I'm being so clever), "you choose an upper, eh?"

You don't answer.

"Okay," I say, "I'm sure you'll manage. The others will show up soon enough. This is your closet. You brought some hangers, didn't you? And there on the door you can read the regulations all of us must abide by if we are to endure living under the same roof."

I give you a well-worn pedagogue's smile. And get none in return. You are standing, in fact, with your back to me, fingers fiddling with the twine on the cardboard box which you have placed on the table by the window.

"All right," I say, with the hint of a sigh, shifting to another foot in the doorway, "I really must go — right now — to see about the others. Afternoon coffee's in about an hour."

Suddenly you turn around, and for two seconds we look each other straight in the eye. Or, I should say; at an angle: you looking up, I looking down. Your eyes are blue. No, they are not: they are more grey than blue. But wait a minute — is that a somewhat roguish gleam in those blue-grey eyes?

"Are you really a teacher?" you ask. For just a moment I suspect you were trying out a bit of cheekiness on me, but obviously that's not the case. You appear quite relaxed and natural; there would seem to be only the slightest trace of mischief in your smile.

"Of course," I respond quickly, a little hot in the face. "What else could I be?"

"Well, sir, I thought that perhaps you..."

But I'm not the least interested in what a whelp like you might think. Who do you imagine you are? Don't I look like a real teacher? Is my natural dignity slightly askew? How dare you suggest I'm not a full-fledged pedagogue?

So I interrupt: "Don't say 'sir'. We use our real names here."

"For the teachers too?"

"Yes. Their last names."

"And the same for the principal?"

I nod.

"I'm not used to that." You give your head the same impatient shake I'd noticed down on the garden path.

"Well, isn't it nice you have the chance to try something new?" I say drily, being perhaps a bit brusque.

"Yes," you answer, "it is nice."

That sounds sincere. Perhaps you aren't the little brat I'd first taken you for. Again I shift my feet and prepare to go. "Thanks for the help," you say.

"What do you mean?" I am immediately on my guard.

"With the suitcase."

"Well, that..." I begin.

And suddenly I *see* you. I mean I see you in a wholly new way. You become a reality for me. How can I explain it? — how, until now, just another new pupil, a name and a number on my list of boarding students, the Kim Steffensen from Valby, and Copenhagen spawn, changes in an eternity no longer than the blink of an eye into a human being which some force, or power, in myself begins to move into my life, into my own flesh, a living and yet new, an almost unused little creature, who fills me, becomes a flame, a fire in my blood, *and* etches on my inner retina that portrait of yourself which ever since has never quite been able to be erased.

You become *the other* for me.

The only.

The Kim.

I cross over, in my vision. Even though it is brief, you must feel my gaze penetrating you. In any case, you turn abruptly and look out the window, down to the school playground now teeming with people.

And I?

Andre Gide said somewhere that there is nothing more difficult than observing beings in growth. One should view them, actually, only from the side, in profile...

I see you in profile.

You stand at the window, with behind you the road and the dike, the ploughed sloping fields, and far out on the horizon the fjord with its choppy waters and foam under a shimmering, sun-filled November sky. It is clear today, unusually fine weather for the season. The wind about the old villa on the hill whistles through the leaky window frames, combs through the Virginia creepers on the grey brick wall and tosses about the flag which flies over our heads.

I see you in profile.

Your low forehead, your dark, fine hair plastered down with Brylcreem or Brilliantine and combed back in a hopeless, unbecoming attempt to follow the duck-tail fashion of the day. Your nicely shaped ear. Your light, slightly projecting cheek which reminds me of the Slavic boys I have met in East Europe. Your large yet soft nose. The rising of your neck over the shirt collar's chequered pattern, your light blue sweater. The corner of your mouth pulls downward. Are you biting your lip over my importune attention? Do you feel flattered, shy? Or are you simply indifferent? Do you think, "Why in hell doesn't the man just clear out?" Since then I have never been able to guess what you were feeling then in your heart, neither on that day nor since.

But I see your eye — the fallow-deer eye — under your obliquely outlined black eyebrow. I remember and see, even now. The colour is blue-grey, the shape is of an almond, the expression is wondering, vulnerable, on guard...

A boy's profile. Graceful and yet so shy...

I tear myself away and tumble down the stairs.

In headlong flight.

EASTER SATURDAY, five and a half months later. I am up at a most ungodly hour.

Sweet Jesus, am I ever in the proper mood to celebrate the resurrection!

The weather is beautiful, the school mercifully quiet. Showering in the little bathroom behind the kitchen, I can't help breaking this tranquillity by bawling lustily, "I love you, I *love* you, I L-O-V-E you!"

It sounds awful, but there's no one about to shut me up. I eat breakfast, spruce up in my room and drive down to the co-op store.

I have an account here, thank God. The last half of every month I must pinch my pennies. But the co-op profits from the school. We are fine friends, the co-op and I. I say good morning to the taciturn but clever girl in the blue smock behind the main counter.

"Do you have a dry white wine?" I inquire. I have guests. I have to give a party.

Careful. They might think I just sit up there in my room and get drunk. Well, it's true, but what people don't know, etc. Not that there are any puritans in our little parish. People here know how to have a good time. No fundamentalist shadow falls across this gentle Funen countryside. Local Christianity is of the joyful variety which holds that divine charity is the one great commandment.

"How about this?" asks the girl in the blue smock, holding a bottle under her nose.

"Is it dry?"

"Yes, it might even be a bit on the sour side," she replies in her characteristic sing-song.

"Then I'll take it, two bottles. And two of my usual con... hold on, I'd better also have some of your best sherry — and, while we're at it, a bottle of the cheapest, too... Yes, the one with the yellow label. It's awfully sweet, but I think that my guests..."

I am out of my mind. What possesses me? But, good lord, it is *Easter*. It is *holiday*, it is *resurrection*. Larks sing over the fields. The air trembles with luminescence. Standing in that dark co-op at the bend in the road across from the white village church, I want to burst out into the light, the open air, the springtime.

"Do you have Russian crabs? Do you have caviare? Do you have...?"

I am intoxicated.

It's a love feast I am preparing.

Then I come down to earth and acknowledge that you are a fourteen-year-old boy, so I buy cakes and chocolates and oranges and sodas and, for safety's sake, beer for myself.

"How about some grapes?" asks the officious co-op manager who can always be counted on to turn up wherever he smells a potential sale.

"They don't look very good," I say.

"I'll let you have them cheap."

"Okay, but only the best bunches. Now I also better have a litre of ice-cream — no, two — we'll make it nougat, and some waffles and..."

Yes, what else, I ask myself, does a fourteen-year-old eat?

Everything, I suppose!

"Sausages," I say. "Give me two, no, three cans of red sausages..."

At last I tear myself away from the co-op's temptations and its manager's salesmanship. My old bike is so heavily laden I have to walk it the two or three hundred uphill metres back to school. I greet our carpentry shop teacher's wife and the Social Democrat parish council member who has recently become active in school affairs —

A victory for us.

"Good morning," I say.

"Good morning," they say.

Everyone is ebullient because of the instant spring weather. Some children come whistling down the hill towards the village.

"Good morning, good morning."

(That was before we started to say "hi".)

I take the ice-cream to the freezer, put the sodas and beer in the refrigerator. The girls are on holiday. The kitchen is empty and clean. I have the whole school to myself. But it is still early. It will be hours before my guest arrives and the feast can begin. I decide to take a bicycle ride.

There are two ways I can go: out along the fjord toward the gym teacher's farm where you are visiting over the holidays and helping with the chores, or around by the cove. The first I took the other day when I invited you to visit me this afternoon. So I now choose the second. With a couple of cool bottles of beer in my carrying case, I set out towards Kerteminde, but turn off just before the town and proceed to the right around the cove. With several rest stops it takes me a couple of hours. And I have my own special place where there is a broad view of the undulating hills pinned here and there by tall poplars, the trees of my childhood, of our old home at the lake. Here I stop, sit on a stone garden wall and pull out a beer. It is only April but the sun warms my nose. I close my eyes and drink. Then I open them and absorb the landscape and its trees. By now I know this view in all its seasons. Long ago I made it mine, but today it is more beautiful than ever. The trees seem to draw near, become my confidants. I whisper to the naked, aspiring poplars, "It's quite true, I assure you — I love him. It's impossible, but I love him. What shall I do?"

And, blinking my eyes, I feel something wet. It *could* be the wind: an April day is unpredictable. Back on the bike, pumping hard, the wet dries. And as I make my way home a wild joy springs up in me, transforming mere courage into recklessness. I am young. I am strong. I can cope with anything. I challenge the world. I shout to the skies and the earth, to the sun. "Hey," I cry, "look at me! Watch me fly over the fields and home! I'm in a hurry, my friends. And do you know why? Today, today my beloved is coming... is coming... is coming... today!"

YOU DON'T COME.

Goddamnit, you don't come!

But what have I been *doing*? Preparing a feast for a fourteen-year-old boy! To make him a declaration of love! I must be crazy.

I *am* crazy.

I wait the whole afternoon. At first in high spirits and trembling with vitality, then troubled, at last apathetic. After all, why *should* you bother to come? You are free from school, now, out of the cage and the dust and all that interminable talk, talk, talk. Well, I wasn't planning to act like a teacher. How could you imagine I was? Haven't I said we must discuss future plans? *Future plans*?

What an ugly phrase!

I should have known you'd much rather drive a tractor. No, you are a turd. A dumb little boy I'm just wasting my time on. A mess. A Valby punk.

Ah, Kim, why don't you come?

I eat the crabs and drink the first bottle of white wine. Now I fetch the other: you won't get any of *that!* You'll have to settle for a pink soda. If you come, that is. Yes, if you come...

But you don't come.

When it grows dark outside I realise you really have let me down. It's intolerable. For two days I've lived in an ecstasy of anticipation: two days filled with bright dreams about my first meeting alone with you, after all the winter's trials and troubles. No, no, I'm not up to anything, absolutely not! I just want to chat with you, get to know you better, find out a little more about you. That's all I have in mind. That's all I want.

To get to know you better...

Man, how you lie, I tell myself in white wine intoxication, it finally sinking in that all my joy has been in vain. I've waited in vain. Dreamed in vain.

You're still lying, Jens!

For I know in my heart that I want more than just to talk with you about — future plans! I don't give a damn about plans in the future. It's *now* I want to be with you. It's now I want to be near you. How near? Very near. It's now I....

Watch out!

My first words to you, spoken on that first day on the path, sound a warning in my ears. "Yes," I say aloud, rising from my chair, "you really must get yourself together. Don't ruin everything. Besides," — I laugh an ugly and bitter laugh — "besides, he hasn't even darkened your door, and probably won't before it's time to go back to Valby for the summer holidays. And then you won't see him for months, perhaps ever again. Isn't it better that way? You'll have time to forget him. So, for chrissake, pull yourself together. You've got more important things to do than moon over some snot-nosed kid!"

I put a record on — Chopin's nocturnes. Of course they don't help, they just make things worse. So I try Bach's preludes. Peace descends. I become cool and remote. Preludes to what?

And I finish the white wine.

But in the night I awake and make love to you in the dark. I kiss your hair, your eyes, your too-low forehead. I let my tongue play with your nose, my lips glide along your cheeks. I cleave to your soft skin.

I drink the sweetness of your fallow-deer's eyes, and I come, groaning aloud, and weep for a moment in despair. The little death.

And afterwards the loneliness of hell. The troubled dreams. The shadows. A hangover. Slime on the tongue. Sand in the eyes.

Then Easter Sunday is breaking. Resurrection.

I have beer for breakfast, hating the world.

YOU COME IN THE AFTERNOON.

"Good day," you say, and sit down uninvited on the sofa.

"Good day." I stare, gape at you. Here you are, so healthy and fresh after your ride in on your bike. Irritatingly fresh. Irritatingly unconcerned.

You look at me calmly.

"Whew, I had a head wind," you say.

"I thought we'd agreed it was yesterday," I begin. My voice is tight.

Then I get hold of myself.

"But it doesn't matter. You are welcome, Kim."

And so I begin. And so it starts. Thank heavens you are quite unaware of the agonies you have caused me. I swear you'll never find out about them. Now I must pull myself together, play my part. There you sit on the sofa, sweet and kind and trusting. I can't guess what you're thinking, but that, too, doesn't matter. I have to assume you have come because you wanted to come.

"You could drink a glass of sherry, couldn't you?"

"Yes, please."

"You'll get the cheapest," I grin. "Not because of the cost but because it's the sweetest. For myself, I prefer it half-dry."

What does all this matter to you? But I have to say something. Your sudden appearance has thrown me. I'd just resigned myself to endless hours of nursing a hangover in masochistic lust, my heart upside down, on this wretched Easter Sunday, and now this little person comes into my home demanding all my attention, not to speak of my ingenuity. What, precisely, are we going to talk about? We find that out soon enough: first priority is to get something crammed into your stomach so you'll really feel welcome in my home.

"Have you eaten?" I ask. "So you have. Well, I still can give you some cakes and..."

I dish them up: cakes, oranges, grapes, chocolate, cigarettes. I feel ridiculous, but you seem to appreciate my efforts. In any case, you tuck into everything with enthusiasm.

"I have some ice-cream, too," I say. "Nougat. It's down in the kitchen freezer."

"We might save it till later," you suggest magnanimously, and set your teeth into a piece of co-op ickysweet sugar-coated jam roll. That disappears in two mouthfuls. You lick your fingers, take another piece and smile at me. God be praised for giving me that smile — the jam roll you can keep.

"To your health," I say.

"To yours," you say, suddenly grown up, and lift your glass. We give each other the traditional nod, raise our glasses to our lips and drink. And you start to cough, the wine and jam roll going down the wrong way. I get up and slap you on the back.

"Excuse... me...!" — you sputter the words along with the wine and crumbs, red in the face. You hiccup. Your eyes water. Then we start to laugh.

That helps. After a while I assume my teacher's rôle, and in my usual teacher's voice — how I hate it! — I say, "It's my impression, in fact the impression of all of us, that you like it here in the school. Isn't that right?"

"Yes," you say, your eyes growing serious.

"Now, I know you got yourself into some kind of trouble back in Copenhagen. But maybe it can be turned to your advantage, being a ward of child-care. We figure for the present those people will let you to carry on here with our ten-month course beginning in September. We will have to wait for the final decision, but if they give their permission, would you go along with it?"

"Yes," you answer, "I'd like that."

"In the long term we must see if you can't be eased back into the normal school system. But it all depends on whether you have the abilities and the desire. That's what you want, isn't it?"

"Yes," you answer, "I realise that."

"And it would be stupid," I go on lecturing, "if you didn't take advantage of this opportunity now while they're willing to pay for your education. For you must realise, Kim, that without formal schooling no one gets anywhere...."

God help me, how I'm talking! But what am I talking about? There is really only one thing on my mind: Kim Steffensen must come back to our school in September....

For me, that will be enough.

"Maybe you don't like being under child-care all that much," I suggest.

You shrug your shoulders. "I haven't really thought about it."

Immediately you are on the defensive.

There is no conviction in what you've just said.

"Obviously, that can be rather unpleasant," I add. "But it does give you certain economic advantages. While you're here at school the child-care people don't stick their noses into your life, do they?"

"No," you say, "that's true."

I don't press any further. I have uttered words, you have affirmed them. Is this the sort of intimacy I am after? Certainly not. I decide to let all future plans hang in abeyance and try to get you to talk about yourself. But how does one induce a fourteen-year-old to open up to a man almost old enough to be his father — especially when that grown-up is his teacher?

I ask if you like music.

"It can be very nice," you answer, and look as people look when they're asked such a stupid question.

"Okay, what *sort* do you like?"

Once again you shrug your shoulders.

"Different kinds."

"Well, you can't sing," I say with a touch of good-natured irony. "That we learned at the Christmas programme. But, what's more important, you have a natural sense of rhythm."

I put a 45 RPM record on the player. Tommy Steele's *Cool Water*, the only thing of that kind I own. It was an ironic going-away present from a Copenhagen friend when she learned I'd be working with young people. I don't like it, but it does have 'drive'. It is coarse, obtrusive, impudent. Your face, however, betrays nothing of what you think of rock-and-roll. You sit on the sofa and pretend at least to listen. You are a polite guest. Afterwards I play a Josephine Baker disk, and then some Polish and Hungarian folk music and a Russian pop song I'd bought in Moscow. By now I have exhausted my entire repertory of popular music.

Now what in the world should we do?

"By the way, my brother is crazy about opera," you suddenly, and gratuitously, announce.

"He is? How interesting," I say.

"Yeah," you add with a giggle, "and my big sister the oldest but one, I mean — is in love with the ancient Egyptians."

I look at you closely from my station by the record player. You are still a very *little* boy. Aren't you just showing off for me? I am ashamed of myself. It is my fault that you feel you have to trot out an opera-loving brother and a big sister having an affair with Tutankhamun. Why did I have to fill your head with all this culture nonsense?

You raise your eyes and look at me. Do you still have a surprise up your sleeve?

"You're a communist, aren't you?"

"I consider myself one, yes," I say, but decide not to try to explain the difference between the old orthodox and newly established party.

"My father was a communist, too," you say proudly. "But I never knew him. That's because he died before I was born."

A COUPLE OF HOURS later I have finished off most of the co-op's expensive, semi-dry sherry, while you have sipped only one or two glasses of the sweet and have now switched to soda. You have eaten all the cakes and we have shared the ice-cream. There is only the fruit and chocolate left. I have forgotten about the sausages.

"Eat up!" I say giddily, and you put away another couple of sticks of chocolate, the last of the grapes and three-fourths of an orange. I cannot eat a bite more but on the other hand I am getting gloriously drunk. I don't believe you realise that yet. I am quite good at disguising a drunk.

It has been dark for a long time outside. I switch on the stand lamp by the sofa and set a couple of lighted candles on the table. I pull down the blinds over the window which gives onto the principal's house. Security measures, I reason. But what do I mean, 'security'? What is going on in my befuddled brain? Well, I cannot be bothered with that question. I sit down heavily in front of you in the armchair. You are sprawled on the sofa leafing through some large picture books I bought on my trips to Eastern Europe. The glow of the candles and the lamp falls on your hair and your cheeks as you idly turn the pages. Yes, we have talked about travel. That is to say, *I* have talked about travel — and the arts and politics and God knows what else. I even, at last, tried to explain to you the difference between orthodox party communists and members of the new Left Wing Socialist Party. My tongue has loosened. I talk so easily to you. And I need to talk. You are a good listener. You have a sense of humour. You can laugh at things.

It's a relief.

I put another record on the player. I no longer worry about your tastes but select the music I like. And it seems that's exactly what you want, too. You feel at home. You feel confident. There's no one telling you what to do and what not to do. You can be yourself.

Am I exaggerating? Idealising? I'm an incurable romantic. Typical of me to put such a slant on things. It is I who am transforming this into an idyll, I who will my lonely teacher's den into a warm room welcoming real people, you and me...

Good lord, how silly can one get?

You yawn and stretch. Actually you just look sleepy. I re-fill my glass. I cannot let you depart. I cannot bear the thought of being left alone in this empty house. I need people around me, a place to go to, a bar, two bars, a hundred. And people. People to talk to. You get to your feet slowly, hitch up your trousers, look around.

"I really have to start back home," you tell me.

"No, wait!" I say, too sharply, but that's the way I mean it. "Only a little while. We were just becoming comfortable. It's not all that late."

"We get up early in the morning," you say with a yawn, but sit back down like an obedient student.

"Well, I can stay in bed as long as I want, and I really think out there they'll indulge you and let you sleep past your usual rising time."

"And if I *want* to get up early?"

"That, obviously, is something else," I say, "but..."

I must invent *something* to hold you here as long as possible. Clearly I have reached a moment of truth — without daring to say what that truth really is.

What shall I do?

I rise from my chair. You sit and stare at me blankly, face swollen with fatigue but still beautiful, incredibly beautiful. Standing in that corner of half-darkness, I contemplate you. Through the whole of last winter I have contemplated you, observed you secretly month after month. I've never tired of looking at you. Now I see you full-face, just as I saw you in profile that first day, and I know the significance of that initial vision. You are in, my blood. A flame, a fire. I can no longer run away, as I could have then. And why should I have to?

You raise your eyes and for a short, intense second they answer mine. You let your eyes yield. I stagger. I am actually drunk, more drunk than I realise. Suddenly I cannot resist: I reel and stagger the two or three steps over to the sofa...

"Kim," I say.

My voice is hoarse.

"Kim!"

I collapse heavily at your side. You sit completely still. Perhaps paralysed? — I haven't the foggiest notion; I don't care. No, that's not quite true. I am vaguely aware of the damage I am doing, but it doesn't seem to matter, now that the comfort of my teacher's den has gone. Now that it is full of unrest, tension, anxiety.

And lechery. And the lechery comes only from my side. It coils in my body. My cock is stiff. I don't know what I'm doing...

I take your hand.

"Kim," I repeat in a whisper, imploring, begging for something you are utterly unable to give.

Alarm bells sound crazily in my head, warning lights blink on and off before my eyes.

Watch out! Watch out!

What am I doing?

You don't withdraw your hand. You don't move away. You do nothing at all. You just sit there completely still while, for a few short, eternally long seconds, I keep your limp hand in mine, a hand far too big for your slender body. It is cool, neutral, utterly without response.

"Oh, Kim," I mumble huskily, "I'm so very, very happy now I've got to know you...."

With infinite caution I squeeze your fingers, but your fingers are dead among mine.

"I'm so..." I begin again, but stop short in an awkward attempt to lift my other arm, the left, and lay it around your shoulders, those shoulders covered in light blue behind which I have so often stopped the past winter in class.

"I like you so very, very much," I say, on the verge of tears.

You don't move. You don't respond.

Like a little captured animal you sit there for a moment as if paralysed by a sudden and unexpected danger.

Only your fallow-deer's eye is blazing.

Then suddenly you free yourself and quickly rise. Your body trembles. Your eyes are dark with unrest.

Now I see it. For the first time.

"I have to go."

Your light voice has grown hoarser. You lick your lips and force the words out.

"I have to go now," you repeat.

"No, no," I weep. "Don't go. Not yet."

"You are tired, Mr. Eisenhardt," you say evenly.

"I am not tired, I'm just drunk. Oh, Kim, there's something I have to tell you. Kim, are you listening?" You have started putting on your things.

I collapse on the sofa. Vacant. Downcast. Alone. I almost had you in my arms. I've inhaled your odour. I might have kissed your cheek, your eye, your blue-grey, fallow-deer's eye. You are so young, so very young! Exactly. Can't I understand what I am dealing with? No, I understand nothing. There is only one thought in my head, only one great, warm, tender feeling in my body. I like you, I need you, I love you.

This is impossible.

You have put on your wind-jacket, your scarf and your cap. Now you move silently toward the door.

"No, Kim, don't go, don't go!" I whine. "Wait. First I have to tell you something. It's important. Are you listening!"

"You're just tired, Mr. Eisenhardt," you repeat.

"Tired? Just tired? Yes, maybe that too. Maybe you're right..."

"I have to go now."

But you stand at the door. Your voice is so light and calm. So soft. As if you wanted to console me. Then, you aren't afraid? No, you can't be. You are still there, my Kim. You haven't fled from me in terror.

The heavens, after all, haven't collapsed about our ears.

Suddenly I see everything in crystal clarity. The room. The candles. The bottles. The curtains drawn. A record turning on the player. The ashtrays. The orange peels. The chocolate candy wrappers. And you, the boy who is waiting with his hand on the door-knob, loyally waiting while I, the grown-up, your teacher, can get himself together and become his old self again.

Myself?

You are right. What I tried to do in a fit of desire was juvenile, crass. No one could in decency behave that way. It was horrid, it was loathsome, it was impermissible.

And yet, have I really done anything more than tell you I liked you?

Have I?

You open the door. I slowly rise and follow you out. Suddenly we both stiffen. Light is coming from under my neighbour the schoolmistress's door. Inside a radio is playing. She must have come back without our hearing her. You understand immediately. We do not need to communicate by any word or sign. We both sense the danger and tip-toe past the door and out into the yard where you have leaned your bike against the house.

In the dim, outside light I try to catch your eye, but your eyes are dark and they refuse to engage. You swing up onto the bike. I grasp the handlebars.

"Kim," I whisper as quietly as I can, "you'll have to forgive me. I'm sorry. You're right. I've had too much to drink. We've talked too much. Forgive me, Kim."

But you are far, far away.

"You're not mad at me, are you?"

You shake your head. From far, far away.

"But then..." Suddenly I am terrified. "Then I'll ask you to forget about all of this. Keep it between the two of us. Will you promise me that?"

How deep can one sink? How completely can I disgrace myself?

You move in the saddle, eager to be off. I have to release you...

But bless me, bless me, my angel; I will not let you go into the darkness before you bless me!

What can you say? Too much has already been said. Here I'm stomping around in this, impossible situation with my over-grown grown-up feet! All you can say is nothing.

With a timid little goodbye, you disappear into the night.

WAVES OF ANGUISH

There's never been anything the matter with my imagination, especially when it's turned loose on the possibility of disaster.

I awake with a start.

What have I done?

In this early morning the whole horror hits me at once. The vision of a little animal trembling between my hands hounds me out of the darkness and into day.

This isn't just a monster from the unconscious. It's no nightmare. Suddenly I'm aware of real danger.

Good God, how could I have been so stupid?

I drag myself out of bed and look with loathing at my face in the mirror. As soon as you'd left I'd poured that hideous sweet sherry into me, neck of the bottle plugged into my mouth. Now the anvils are clanging in my head. My eyes smart. My tongue is coated. My throat is clogged with phlegm. I'm sick with paralysing nausea and disgust with everything, especially myself.

I'd stumbled. Fallen. Hurt myself. I am in pain.

Ugh!

I hurl myself back to bed and abandon myself to a storm of morning sex which doesn't help at all. The release gives way only to disgust. I feel dirty and sticky and full of fear.

Yes, I'm frightened.

The last thing I wanted was to behave toward you like a filthy molester. I wouldn't dream of seducing you. Liar! I *have* dreamed of seducing you, but I wouldn't actually *do* it. Isn't that closer to the truth? It's one thing to dream and yearn, another thing to act like a complete idiot. And drunk, too. What an admirable man I am! Aren't my inhibitions able to do their job? Shouldn't my deep love prevent me from thinking of you as some pretty little piece it's all right to paw? I sincerely, truly like you. And above all I don't want to hurt you.

Hurt you?

Yes, that's the way it appears to me now, so cowed am I. The horrible image I have of myself is of a horny satyr attacking and trying to rape an innocent little boy.

What if you tell someone? But what can you tell? That I held your hand and said I liked you? That proves absolutely nothing. No, but it wouldn't take much to compromise me publicly. Once awakened, suspicion would never be lulled back to sleep. And no one would come to me and tell me what was happening. I can see exactly how it would go: in all innocence you let a couple of words slip to our gym teacher, our gym teacher talks to our principal, our principal talks to your principal in Child-Care, your principal calls in the police...

Stop it!

Nothing happened. No, but maybe I've frightened you. Maybe at this very moment you are so tormented with fear that you must unburden yourself, confide in someone. No, no, damnit, why would you have to say anything at all? You aren't just an ordinary stupid brat. You are a sweet boy, an unusual boy, an intelligent boy. You like me, I'm certain of that.

But if...

Yes, *if* that happens, I'll deny everything, absolutely everything. The boy is lying, I'll say. There is no truth in him.

The early morning agonies of hell.

"AH, MR. EISENHARDT," our principal calls, "do you have a moment?"

I've already seen the car with the two plain-clothesmen — I know what I can expect. It is a couple of days after the Easter holidays. My Danish class for the eight-month students has just ended. Our principal is waiting for me in the corridor outside the classroom.

"It's about Kim," he says.

I nod silently. I cannot speak. I am knotted with fear. My legs start to give way. I hold myself up by clinging to the radiator knob under the window and look dully out into the school yard. The car with the two men is still there. I'd spotted it the instant it arrived, near the end of my class. It was all I could do to finish what I was writing at the blackboard. One of the men — a typical cop: tweed jacket, pipe — climbed out of the car, looked around inquiringly and went over to the principal's residence. A little later he returned with our principal himself. And now it has happened...

It was to be expected.

Every time, since that Easter Sunday disaster, a strange car has driven into the school grounds, my first thought is, Here they come — at last. So now I'm not in the least surprised.

But I am afraid.

At the same time I know I'll fight. They won't get me all that easily. We'll go up to our principal's office and these gentlemen in plain clothes will grill me, politely but firmly, to discover the truth. Which is that you, this youth, this boy, this child, this under-age student, this fourteen-year-old Kim Steffensen from Valby, you have told them all about me, how I, your adviser, your teacher...

But nothing happened! The words scream inside my head.

How can that help me now?

Be that as it may, information has been received of an *attempted* abuse of authority. I'd tried to take advantage of my greater age and experience...

I see my safe little school world crumbling before me in ruins. I see those warm, amiable people among whom I live, colleagues and friends, transformed into adversaries and enemies, all because of one word from you.

In the last several days I have told myself over and over again I must talk to you. I must make sure you aren't gossiping, that you are keeping quiet. But I've procrastinated. In truth, I simply haven't dared.

And now it is too late.

"Kim's principal phoned me this morning," says our principal, and by the tone of his voice I know what is coming.

"Yes?"

That's all I can get out. My mouth is dry. Bile rises in my throat. I'm clinging to the radiator handle so hard my

knuckles have turned white.

Outside in the school yard the two men sit in the car and glance through some papers.

My case file?

Our principal says something I don't understand. I have to ask him to repeat it.

"We can keep him," he says. "The Department has given its approval."

"Department?"

"Yes, that's why Kim's principal phoned. I couldn't wait to tell you. After all, you're the one who's had the

most to do with him."

Out in the school yard the two men put their papers away. The one behind the wheel starts the motor.

"That's... That's very nice," I stammer.

"When you get a chance you might phone Kim and tell him the good news. He's a little anxious, I've seen..."

I nod.

"Yes, I'll do that," I say.

The car with the two men starts and backs out of the school yard.

"Kim makes twenty-one in our new ten-month programme, so things are looking up, aren't they?"

"Yes they are."

The car drives off.

"Well... that was all."

As is his habit, our principal remains standing even though he has finished his business. I feel... No, I don't

know how I feel. But I have to ask:

"Who were those people in that car?"

"Oh, you mean the surveyors. They show up at the damndest times. Apparently there's some sort of major

project under way."

Now I can smile at him.

"I'm glad this thing has worked out for Kim. He visited me, you know, over Easter, and I really think he is serious and eager to get something out of our programme."

"Yes," says our principal. It seems he is finally about to leave. "We'll enjoy having him with us."

I can only agree.

"ONE MOMENT, MR. EISENHARDT, I shall see if he is in."

Our gym teacher's old mother puts down the receiver. I can hear her walk, out of the room and call you. I'm still afraid. Even though I have the best excuse in the world for talking to you, I have no idea how you'll react.

I will soon find out.

"Hello?"

Your light, slightly hoarse voice seems so little and despondent. Are you, too, afraid?

"Is that Kim?" I ask. Out of nervousness I go into my grown-up routine: I am to greet you from your principal and our principal and tell you arrangements have been completed for you to remain with us through the next school year.

"Oh, that's great!" you exclaim. The joy is unmistakably genuine.

"Yes, isn't it? Here we're all very glad, too. Everything else is all right?"

"Yes, thanks, everything's fine."

"Are you coming in on Friday for the farewell party for your class?"

"Yes, I'll be there."

"And you're well?"

"I am, thanks, and you?"

"Fine, thank you."

I'm almost unable to go on. I squeeze the telephone and hear my voice on the verge of breaking.

"Well, that was all I called you about, what I just told you. You, had to know right away. Say hello to the family

out there for me. See you."

"Yes," you say, "see you."

"Goodbye, Kim," I say.

"Goodbye," you say.

And I go up to my room and weep.

FRIDAY, A LITTLE before noon and just after I've changed my clothes, there is a knock on the door.

"Come in," I call, adjusting my Windsor knot in front of the mirror.

The door opens. It's you.

We stare at each other. I cannot guess what you are thinking. I only know that right away I feel enormously relieved. Your face is blank, mouth a bit sulky.

But I am no longer afraid.

"Hello," you say. "I thought I'd just come by before we go."

"Well, first let's go down and enjoy your banquet."

"There'll be an awful lot of people," you say.

What he means slowly sinks in. I am so glad! But I just can't keep quiet.

"You must excuse what happened the other night." I'm not looking at you. Instead I stand at the window and watch our two principals walking down to the dining hall.

You don't say anything.

"We'll forget about it, right?"

I look at you, and now you nod.

So I take a deep breath and start fresh. "Actually I have something for you," I say, leaving the window and going over to my desk. "I know how you like to read, so I thought maybe you'd get some small pleasure out of these over the holidays."

I hand you a package. You take it, surprised but at the same time pleased. I hope you won't see in my gift the bribe it really is.

You tear off the wrapping.

"Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy-tales!" you cry enthusiastically. "Oh, that's wonderful, Mr. Eisenhardt. Thanks a million!"

"I suspected you might like them," I mumble, embarrassed by your spontaneous joy, "and so I thought, with this nice new paperback edition..."

You come to me and put out your hand.

"I'm pleased as hell!" you tell me, then, realizing what you've said, "Oh, excuse me... I mean..."

You shake your head and smile, every bit as uncertain as I. So, characteristically, you repeat yourself, just to make sure:

"Thanks a million!"

They don't call you 'The Thankster' for nothing.

"Well, we better catch up with the others," I say brusquely in a vain attempt to hide my emotion.

How I want to give you just the slightest pat on the shoulders!

But I won't risk even that.

And then the triangle rings down in the school yard, sounding the official end of the eight-month

students' term. Their parents have been invited. The students themselves have decorated the dining hall for the celebration. By ingenious maneuvering I manage to sit at your side. Or is it you who makes sure you sit by me?

Afterwards we all say our goodbyes, milling around in a big mess.

"Thanks for the winter," you say, and warmly shake my hand.

"Same here, Kim. See you soon."

"Yes," you say, "see you soon."

"QUIT FIDDLING WITH MY TYPEWRITER!" I tell you for the thousandth time.

You make a face.

"And stop it *now*."

"Are you cross?"

"No, I'm not cross. Not at all. But you have to realise that isn't a toy. It's an implement, it's my tool. What are you grinning at?"

"You."

"At me? Well, maybe I *am* just a big joke," I say acidulously and smile at you.

October winds pick up the yellow and brown leaves and whirl them around my new little house. Outside my picture window the hill lies black and sear under the stormy skies. My willow tree streams wildly south in the wind, a broad stripe of water glistening between and beyond its branches. Not the fjord but the cove; the fjord is on the other side, to the north-west. If I rise from my chair I can see it through the narrow oblong window above my green sofa. On the other side of the road, where burned-off fields slope down to the beach and the sea-wall, red tractors are moving to and fro, ploughs turning the soil, flocks of greedy seagulls following the long furrows.

Yes, the wind whistles and roars around my new little house.

Outside, October storm. Inside, comfort.

We write poetry.

That is to say, *you* write poetry. I stay in the background with my book and my pipe. You have proposed in the new student council that your group put on a musical review during the weeks you are 'studying agriculture', as we call it.

As teacher, I've had nothing to do with the project. Officially.

"What rhymes with 'swine'?" you ask.

"Now what's the matter?"

"Well, I can't think of anything."

"Of course you can."

"You don't want to help me?"

"You're the one who's writing this script, not me. It was your idea."

"Damnit all, it was *your* idea!"

"Ssshhh, we can't say that. Officially it's one hundred percent your show."

"Wait, man, I have it, I have it!" you suddenly howl.

"Listen:

And when we saw the Funen swine,

They made us laugh, they made us whine.

Don't you think that's good?"

"No!"

"Then *you* think up something better, for God's sake! I'm not writing any more poetry."

You throw the ball-point away and glare up at the ceiling.

"Okay, let me have a look at it."

"Will you?"

"All, right, but this is just between you and me, right?"

"Agreed," you say magnanimously. "But you've got to admit you're a little more professional than the rest of us."

"Thank you." And we begin.

YES, I AM a bit more professional than you. In the past summer I have finally finished the story of my childhood under the German occupation, and it has been accepted for publication as a book *and* will be produced as a radio play. As a matter of fact, a good deal has happened in those months when we were apart. Among other things, you turned fifteen. I surreptitiously peeped in our principal's files and discovered your birthday is in July. So, with many doubts and misgivings, and just as many hesitations, I

sent you another Hans Christian Andersen book. You thanked me in a nice little letter — without spelling mistakes, I was proud to see. And so...

No, I could never tell you this. The day I received your letter I sneaked upstairs into the deserted boys' dormitory, stole into your old room. In your closet I found the khaki overalls you always wore when you helped out at the farm. I undressed and crawled into them, as though it were a new skin. I got in your bed. I made love to you at a distance of several hundred kilometres, longing only to be absolutely sure that the sharp, rich odours in the cloth were really yours.

And later I moved into my own little house with its study, bedroom, kitchenette, entrance hall and bathroom.

A happy change from last year's noisy teacher's den at the foot of the stairs.

I thrived. I yearned.

The whole summer I waited for you in my new house.

My books occupy the wall at the end of the room. Posters and reproductions decorate the other walls. I especially like my colour litho of a Braque with two small, elegant fish. And, of course, Picasso's nude boy with the horse: he is so tanned and gentle. He reminds me of you. I have put him up over my bed.

I live quite close to the students' dormitory, between the fields and the path that leads down through the vegetable garden to the school courtyard. My little wooden house has a front terrace from which I can look out over the countryside and talk to people on the path. Yet inside it is cleverly designed to shut out the mass of humanity. This is a place where I can work in peace. But... except to the school's community of cats, which come in all sizes, ages, colours and temperaments and live in the crawl space under the floor, the front door into the entry hall is always open. It works like a magnet, my little house. Something is always going on inside its thin walls. My living-room isn't just a work place for me: it's also a sort of club centre, work shop, classroom and whatever.

And now a place to write poetry in as well.

"Tell me, frankly, what you think of this," you say, and break into something like singing.

"Help! Stop it! You're off key!"

"Really? I just can't tell," you say, surprised.

"No, that's just the point. Let's put a record on. And what about a cup of tea? I need something to pick me up after all these poetics!"

YOU HAVE NOW BEEN here more than a month. And we've begun well. When I say well I mean well. I'm teaching well, far better, it seems to me, than before. Something is happening. There's a sense of movement. I'm inspired as I have never been in the past.

Remarkable, isn't it?

And I've made a trip to Odense to hash over progressive education with my progressive pedagogue friends: new teaching methods, new and exciting ideas.

"Divide them into groups," they advised. "Give them group projects. Let them try to figure out how to go about their work co-operatively. They'll have to get together on things like a pair of scissors, a tube of glue, a dictionary. They'll learn a lot about themselves, and about working with others."

And so I'm trying it.

We fill the classrooms with newspapers, reference books, film strips, everything we can think of. We prepare plates, workbooks. We make displays. We canvass the parish and interview the town clerk, the priest, the co-op manager, the head teacher, fishermen down in the harbour and, of course, the farmers. We discuss such subjects as THE UNITED NATIONS, THE NEWSPAPER, AFRICA. And sometimes we join the tables into a square and hold a forum. Yes, things are moving. When I walk about through our humming groups I no longer feel that all those old Pioneers of Education, with their goatees and sideburns, are threatening to tumble off the walls on top of my head but are actually looking down rather kindly on what we are up to.

"Well," you say, "I better get back. Aren't you going to have supper with us in the dining-room this evening?"

"What's being served?"

"Stuffed cabbages."

"No, Between you and me, I think I'll wait until next week."

"Picky eater!" you grin, and you go — no, dash — off through the door, spring over the terrace and run down the path.

But behind, in the gathering twilight, I can still see your fallow-deer's eye, looking at me.

KIM, CAN YOU REMEMBER those pictures the photographer from south Jutland came up every spring to take of us?

Now, twenty years later, I am looking at one of them. And sixty-three pairs of eyes are looking back at me. These are the people from your second winter at the school, and my fourth. Here are your teachers and my colleagues and friends. Here are your comrades and my students. Here are the girls in the kitchen, the matron. And last but not least, here's our bombastic incumbent vicar — how did he ever manage to get there on time? And here you are, and here I am. The two of us and all our erstwhile companions. They look at me from this old photo pasted on cardboard. It has turned yellow. The edges are frayed. Strangely enough, I remember all of these people, I remember you, I remember us, but to me the pictures are useless. Sixty-three portraits looking back at me, each from its own oval. Small islands. Small mirrors. Hello, there. Greetings to you all!

I sit looking at the faces in the ovals ordered around a central rectangle. In the rectangle is our school as it was then. Nothing much to brag about, as our principal's wife would say. Here she sits in the centre

with husband and child. That's only as it should be. The students are arranged alphabetically: you, Kim, look at me from a point just under our first family. Is this really the way I remember you?

In any case, the plain school buildings, forming a square behind the courtyard, did look rather bare and poor. Is that actually all we had? More than half of it, anyhow. In the old free school we finally installed a dining room and kitchen on the right; classrooms, hall, school kitchen and carpentry shop to the left. But for gym, indoor sports and all larger meets, we still had to ask permission from the parish council to use the facilities of the municipal school down in the village.

It's the building permit we were waiting for.

The school really was larger than that. One cannot see in the picture the old grey residence on the hill where you students slept in two groups, girls on the ground floor and boys above, and where I, too, at first had my room at the foot of the stairs— until I moved into my little house, which is also not shown in the photo.

Nor can you see the principal's new residence, first of the buildings that eventually sprang up but which didn't near completion, either, in my, or I should say, in *our* time.

I sit here looking at this relic from those days and see it hasn't preserved the truth very well. Photographs freeze things: this *is* the way it was! But no, never; it wasn't *only* like that: it was more. Photographs terrorize the memory.

I can only rely on myself. Which isn't much. But I must believe that my inner eye sees more clearly, its view is sharper, cuts closer to the truth....

Yet it can also reel before such a backward glance. Become dazzled as memory overwhelms.

Then I must rely on the courage of my feelings.

I AM HEAD OVER HEELS in love.

But that's absurd. It cannot be.

Yes, but it *is*. And I, after all, have to be the best judge.

But, Jens, you must be insane, I tell myself.

All right, I answer. Let me be insane: I'm in love.

But...

No *buts!* Good God, I'm twenty-nine, in the full flood of life. Is it, then, so astounding that I'm in love? People go around falling in love all the time. People meet and sweet music rises in their hearts. *All the world loves a lover...*

Okay, but not a lover like you!

Even so, I love him.

Impossible. He is a boy.

So what?

You can't love a boy.

Why can't I?

In any case, you can't *make love* to a boy.

Oh, can't I?

You're mad, I tell myself.

I love him.

Yes, but he's your student.

So what?

You are his teacher.

I am. So what?

The truth is you just don't *dare*. You backed off after that — misunderstanding — last Easter. Nothing happened, thanks to him and not to you. Wouldn't it be rather stupid to try to get something going again?

But I love him so! I answer myself. I love him, and he must never, never know.

This thought seems bearable, at least. Yes, obviously I must resign myself. I've done it often before. It is enough for me that you are simply *there* all the time. At least that is what I make myself believe. And where else could you be? As long as we are teacher and student at the same school how can we be parted? That is some comfort.

So it's just a question of making this arrangement last as long as possible.

"LISTEN TO ME!" I shout. "Kim, that means you, too. Huh? Well, okay, but that'll be the last peep out of you, the very last. Oh, no, my friend, don't try to make me laugh — because you might succeed..."

You little bastard!

No, that was last year. Now you are grown up. You look at your watch and say, "Well, I better be off with the others."

Now I'm the one who forgets about your bedtime.

Nevertheless...

You are a child.

What is a child?

You are a child, according to the law.

Okay, but what's a law?

In class...

No, I don't dare think about it...

In class I cannot ever seem to get close enough to you. Your scent of boy. Your faint smell of sweat. Your light blue sweater. The down on your neck. I have to stop behind your seat for a moment and bend down. Your neck, your fair skin — how beautiful it is!

Then I come to my senses and straighten up.

My senses?

I see you everywhere. Even when you're away. But it's as if you're always with me, wherever I might be. Or am I always where you are?

LAST YEAR...

I cross the yard on my bike or on foot. You are hanging in the glass door. You shout after me. I wave casually. No, I wave with *apparent* casualness, for I've been secretly observing you in closest detail, so that your image will remain as long as possible on my retina. Your slim body slantwise in the doorway, your dark hair still brushed back into a duck-tail — it's awful! Your plaid shirt, never buttoned quite all the way, always with one shirt-tail hanging a little out of your pants. Your over-grown hands and feet, little grinning gamin face with its soft nose, wide mouth — how beautiful it is! — and your eyes — above all those volatile blue-grey eyes, sometimes soft, sometimes flashing under long lashes which may suddenly lower coquettishly. Yes, languishing, seductive, those deer eyes, those fallow-deer eyes...

Delusions. What am I thinking about?

A fourteen-year-old boy!

A fourteen-year-old boy who clowns around to get attention. Your light, slightly hoarse voice. Your call ringing in my ears. My last name:

"Mr. Eisenhardt, Mr. Eisenhardt!"

I catch myself wishing that one day you will call me Jens.

"Hey, Thankster, shut up!"

They are shouting at you from behind the big glass door, forefinger to temple, shaking their heads. "Thankster, you're nuts!" You give me a last foolish giggle and scurry inside where it's warm. I hear yells. Now you are fighting. I hurry on.

And on and on. Always away...

But that was last year.

Now you don't call after me any more. It's more likely that I call to you. You are no longer at the glass door, giggling. Nobody calls you 'Thankster' this year. You no longer make a big thing of saying "Thank you" in the Copenhagen manner every time someone passes the gravy boat or a bowl of potatoes at the principal's table: "Thank you, thank you, many thanks, thanks a lot, thank *you*...." Even our principal can choke on the cherry soup and the salt pork when the little Thankster gets going.

But this year you're not at his table.

You sit at mine.

A victory on the very first day. My greatest obstacle overcome:

"We old-timers from last year have to stick together. Sit next to me!"

And that is where you are now.

The duck-tail has been replaced by bangs, which are very becoming. Your nervous laughter has been succeeded by a pleasing smile. You are one of the big boys. And you are studying hard. You are taking Danish with me and you are no longer just a giddy little kid, as your teacher last year — a woman — called you. You are, making social progress. In fact you are one of the trend-setters. I follow you jealously, observe you secretly through the long narrow window above my green sofa. You're in the middle of a group on its way to the co-op. Are you flirting? And if so, how serious is it? I cannot guess what goes on in your mind.

You are good at Danish and you are good at English. This year I don't have to say:

"Voice that 'S', Kim. *Iz, iz, iz...* Now, try it again. No, not 'is', as in the Danish word for icicle."

Yes, you're good at English, and at almost everything else, too. Suitably bookish, one might say. No doubt about that. And I lay my plans. I dream. But I still don't know anything about you. I observe you from a distance. I get frighteningly close to you. I almost get burned.

Watch out! Watch out!

Yes, I still remember those words from the first day I met you on the school path.

But I also remember what I saw...

A boy's profile — graceful, yet so shy...

I tore myself away and tumbled down the staircase. I the fool.

Nobody escapes that easily. Least of all someone wounded. Hit by the arrow. I am wounded. I am pierced. I am lost.

LATE AT NIGHT I write write some poems to you.

No, that's a lie.

Late at night I write some poems *about* you.

They are wretched.

I cannot write poetry.

When I try I change you into the boy I want you to be.

I LOVE YOU.

It is so simple and so completely impossible. Deep down I know that very well. Still, I wake up every morning filled with joy over the simple fact that you exist and that I exist, and that I love you and you don't know it.

I see you. I am near you... That's enough, I tell myself. I am at peace as long as you're around.

You jump about before my eyes, quite ignorant of my feelings for you. At least that's what I assume. It seems we have both happily forgotten what happened at Easter.

And this innocent state of yours gives me a sense of power. In my fantasies I hunt you, catch you, and I paralyse you with my erotic venom. I impale you like an insect on a pin. Yet I am anything but a collector. It's just you, this one unique specimen, I want.

And so I keep my love, my infatuation, my obsession, my mania completely to, myself.

Perverted.

Yes, *that's* what's perverted.

You are not an insect. You are not a vision which exists only in my heart, in my so-called soul. You are a little living person of flesh and blood.

A boy.

And I love you

It is insane....

IT IS INSANELY magnificent —

In my thoughts I kiss your hair, your brow, your blue-grey eyes. I let my tongue play on your nose, let my lips glide along your fair chin and come to rest in the hollow of your neck. You are lying down, now, with closed eyes, your mouth half open, a hint of a smile —

But I don't just walk around, fully aroused, thinking about you. It's not like that at all. Of course I see your body, your legs — you bow-legged clown — your back, your buttocks, and I'm happy you're slim and lithe, a nimble little lad. But when I think about you I see you whole. You're the sum of all those things.

My Kim.

And certainly, I see you through the eyes of desire, but my glance is always at least half-chaste.

THEN SUDDENLY something inside me screams, "Get rid of him. Get him out of your life!"

But how can I?

Then go away. Escape. Get the hell out of this place!

Nonsense. I'm no idiot. For twenty-nine years I've been in hiding. I ought to be able to keep it up it now.

But you're in love, Jens. Don't forget that.

Yes, I'm in love. Does that mean I'm lost?

"My beloved," I whisper, crying, "leave my dream, leave my poem!"

"IS THAT YOUR BOY?" The youngest son of my teacher friend looks at me and points at you with a very small finger. We all laugh. You and I are in Odense on an evening in January sitting at a round table groaning under ham, potatoes — and butter, yes, lots of real butter. They are great gluttons, my pedagogue friends.

"You certainly live well here," I say, and fall to eating. They agree, even though it's the end of the month and they've exhausted all their credit.

"Skoal!" We toast in their good co-op claret.

You join the round, which is terminated by one of the youngest children smashing his spoon on the table and with a howl tossing his high-chair tray on the floor.

Yes, it is very cozy here.

And it all began because you needed a new coat.

"I have my principal's permission to buy one," you tell me outside the school building one day. "Will you come with me and help choose it?"

"Certainly," I say. In a flash I hatch a cunning plan. "What kind of coat did you have in mind?"

"Corduroy, just like yours."

"I know what, let's pay a visit to the people I've been telling you about. They know a lot more than I about what it's like at the school there. They can tell you what your options are."

For several weeks I'd been waiting for just this chance to present you to my Odense friends. I would convince them you were fit to continue on in school. Cautiously and unobtrusively I would make sure of their support so you could stay with me, or, in any case, nearby.

Of course, I am also thinking about what is best for you. After all, that's what you want, too, isn't it?

And so one Sunday morning I drag you off.

That is to say, you drag me after you, down the road, slippery with snow, to the the co-op store where the buses stop.

"Can't you slow down a bit?" I beg, half out of breath. "Sorry," you say, and then a minute later rush off again on your now rather long legs.

"Well, it's nothing you need apologize about," I pant, "but we're really going to have to learn to walk at the same pace."

But that's something we'll never succeed in doing.

In an up-market men's clothing store in Vestergade, after much thought and trying on many different models, you choose an expensive, delicate light brown corduroy.

You certainly know what you want.

I discreetly keep in the background, but when you stand in front of the mirror and shake the sleeves and pull down the tails, while you turn around and look up and down at your reflection, you call to me,

"Well, what do you think?"

"You are... It's beautiful," I stammer.

Later we catch a local bus and ride out to where my friends live. It's right beside a brand new suburban school of which he has just become principal.

You fit in well, I think.

It's a warm and safe place to visit. The doors are always open, people come and go as if they were at home, which they obviously think they are. They give off that feeling of energy which goes with inspired work. Everyone is made welcome. Including us. I like this house.

We discuss plans for your future over a bottle of vermouth I have brought. Our hosts promise to see if you can eventually be enrolled in their tenth grade curriculum, which would lead on into senior high school.

In the meantime, however, we have to see that you are properly prepared.

There is much to catch up on. There are subjects you have never even taken.

But we depart full of hope and high spirits.

"Goodbye, merry Christmas," says our newly-appointed principal, and farts.

That's his way of showing he isn't stuffy.

"I really liked those people," you say quite spontaneously on the bus going home.

"I'm glad. You can count on them quietly doing all they can to help."

"But did you hear what he said?"

"Hear who say what?" I yawn, for it is late and the bus ride back to school takes a long time, with lots of detours in the wintry night.

"That kid," you answer, "when we were at the dinner table and he pointed at me and asked if I was your boy?"

I laugh. "Well, all right, aren't you?"

And in the darkness I move a bit closer to your body inside the duffle coat and fine new corduroy jacket.

"What a little twerp!" you exclaim indignantly. Apparently you haven't heard my question.

No matter.

I am happy. We have had a good and positive day, you and I.

It seems that my plans for you and me are going to succeed.

ALL WINTER AND ALL SPRING there is such a special feeling in my little house at lunchtime and for the hour thereafter.

"Welcome," I say when you come up for some extra study. "Would you like tea? Well, I would anyhow."

Have a seat on the sofa. You can start. I'll listen while I put the kettle on. No, not 'Lei-ces-ter', it's pronounced 'Lester', as in *Goodbye Piccadilly, farewell, Leicester Square...* The way we always sing it."

Yes, it is a very special feeling in my little house when we sit on that green sofa and read English and, later in the year, Danish and German. We drink tea or Nescafé, we eat cake and chocolate from the co-op. That is to say: you eat, I shop.

When the sun comes out my room is flooded with such intense light that I have to draw the unbleached cloth curtains over my large window.

THAT WINTER and that spring we are also on a jazz kick: Mulligan, Modern Jazz Quartet, Miles Davis, Coltrane, Bill Evans — *What is this thing called love?*

Good question, I think as the Evans Trio weaves its sound around us. I'd like to know myself.

But we also listen to old Kid Ory, and Armstrong for that matter. We are open to everything. You read Mezz Mezzrow's *My Ashes to the Blacks*. We check out books on Jazz from the library and borrow them from my friends. We even start a weekly jazz night when everyone can bring his own favourites and listen to them and discuss them.

But here we fail. The club is not a success. We are no match for Tommy, Elvis or Pat Boone.

Nor, perhaps, do we know how to sell the idea.

Only three others show up in the beginning, later none at all, and the two of us sit back and listen again to Billie Holiday singing *Strange Fruit*.

And then I turn thirty and our three spinster teachers arrive with the traditional bachelor gifts: three paper boxes, each one uglier than the last.

"Ugh!" you say, and think they are silly.

I love you for that, too.

Soon there is nothing the two of us don't agree on. Well, I think as I listen to the Bill Evans Trio, there is still one thing left.

So, tell me, please —

What exactly *is* love?

SATURDAY EVENING...

We are so happy, just being alone with each other. And then our Home Economics teacher has to come, uninvited and unwanted. Why the hell can't she leave us alone?

But I can't very well throw her out.

She has brought a bottle with her.

Sherry — she's at least been thoughtful enough to pick some up. But *sweet!*

She sits down on the sofa and, with woman's prerogative, fills our glasses and starts to talk, as always, about school.

Well, she's really quite harmless.

But it's infuriating.

I hate this ridiculous comedy I so often have to play. "Shall we listen to some music?" I ask, in an attempt to ameliorate my ugly mood.

I put a record on. Menuhin's performance of Carl Nielsen's violin concerto. Our Home Economics teacher, poor dear, probably thinks I'm playing it for her, but it's really for you — you sitting in my arm chair, bathed in soft light from the stand lamp behind, your dark hair, open shirt revealing the long muscles in your neck, your legs far apart, the fly in your pants...

You rest your head back, close your eyes in order to enjoy the music.

The slow movement begins — and runs into harsh interference...

I've taught you to love the concerto.

Now I discover you are asleep.

I'm disappointed, furious, in fact. Don't you realize I'm playing the concerto for you, not for her, not even for myself? I want to make you experience something, so I can share that experience with you — double it, so to speak.

But, dammit, you sit here and snore.

Menuhin reaches the last movement without, apparently, touching you. As the music dies away you wake up and look about in mild confusion. So you smile your courteous, apologetic smile, the one you always have ready for grown-ups. And we really are grown-ups, our Home Economics teacher and I.

Over the head of the boy sleeping in the chair we'd smiled at each other indulgently.

Good God, you are *the student*.

And all the time I thought it was *you* I loved.

In just a few minutes, for the benefit of our Home Economics teacher, and all normal grown-up persons, I will have to glance at my watch and ask, ironically, whether you don't think it might be time for you to go off to bed.

And our Home Economics teacher will sit back and we'll exchange a few meaningless homilies about what a nice boy you are.

Good God!

I can't endure it.

THE MARDI-GRAS BALL has been in progress for a couple of hours.

I sit in my house growing more and more furious.

Why don't you come by? We've agreed you would. I empty my glass and rush down to the ball.

There you are...

I can barely look. You are dancing with *her*. And she is openly flirting with you. It's horrible to watch. You are a lousy dancer, but the dumpy little cunt obviously doesn't mind. She has rather pretty eyes, one has to admit, but, damnit, she doesn't have to turn them loose on you!

Plum stones.

Ugh...

And to make matters worse, you are dancing cheek to cheek!

I smile idiotically at one of the girls, who asks me why I'm not out on the floor myself. I try to catch your eye but fail. That little viper has your total attention. This is unsupportable. You *did* tell me were coming up to my room. You *did* tell me you couldn't be bothered to dance with these wenches. You *did*, indeed, tell me...

I turn on my heel in a huff and go over to the dining hall, which has been turned into a bar. Here things are more lively, the company is merry. Pale ale is flowing, soda water fizzes. It's better here. Our principal is in the kitchen drinking beer with the chairman of the school board. I have a beer with them. Then they begin to sing. They call me to join them. I stuff a red sausage in my mouth to show I'm busy. They only call louder. I try to get out of it, but that seems to be impossible. Good God, it is Mardi-Gras, our big costume party. So I 'make merry', as they say.

Now I am up on a chair to give it my all...

My solo turn.

"Alouette, gentille alouette,

Alouette, je te plumerai..."

The crowd in the dining hall bawls along with me, making so much noise we must be heard all the way over in the ballroom.

You must hear us. *She* must hear us.

I sing:

"Je te plumerai la tête..."

The crowd responds:

"Je te plumerai la tête..."

I sing:

"Et les yeux..."

The crowd responds:

"Et les yeux..."

I sing:

"Et le bec..."

The crowd responds:

"Et le bec..."

I sing:

"Et le cou..."

The crowd responds:

"Et le cou..."

And so on and on, until we finally reach the culmination where even the slowest-witted have to be with us:

"Et... la... stic..." I sing:

"Et... la... stic..." replies the chorus with amusement.

I feel completely ridiculous, performing like a teacher-clown, or a clown-teacher.

Ridiculous to whom?

To you? To myself?

Suddenly you actually are there.

She and you. You and she. Flushed in the faces. Shining in the eyes. So obscenely young.

Have the two of you also...?

But when I finally finish bawling at that insane French bird I see you signal me — a nearly imperceptible toss of the head — and with it you vanish out into the darkness.

Discreetly I follow after you, slipping unnoticed through the door. Up at my house you are waiting for me. More beautiful than ever in your frizzy white shirt, your new tan jacket and a pearl-grey necktie you have borrowed from me.

"Whew," you exclaim, and fling yourself into the armchair, "I don't feel like messing around down there any more."

And you light a cigarette, one of those new long ones, and pensively sip the sherry I give you.

In some ways, I think, you're not a really reliable friend to the other students.

But never have I adored you as much as now. I'm hopelessly in love — I, a totally unreliable egoist!

"AH, EISENHARDT," says our principal after the evensong service, "may I have a moment of your time?"

How often through the years have I heard those words! Spoken in a low voice, intimately, almost as if in prayer. Usually after everybody else has left and we're alone. Or, as now, when the buildings are emptying themselves of sleepy students and teachers. A kind of pat on the back, almost a granted accolade.

"Now, don't forget, this week *you* do bed check," I say with a kind of glint in my eye.

"Oh, yes." Our principal looks at his watch. "But it's a bit early, isn't it? We must give them time to undress."

"Good! I'm coming."

I can't help liking the man. With all these little eccentricities, as if he were something, or rather *someone*, who's had to struggle to realise himself.

As so often before, he needs to talk. To unload his worries. Without disgrace, without shame. And, over the years, I have trained myself to become a good listener.

"How about an Albani?" he asks.

"Fine."

"And a vodka?"

"Of course. I never say no."

Humming and mumbling to himself, our principal goes out into the kitchen and comes back with bottles and glasses. He spreads a newspaper on the dining table, opens a couple of cans of sardines and thrusts a fork into my hand.

A feast.

And an echo from his days at teachers' college.

"My wife has gone to bed," he tells me. "She was tired. I dare say we're all tired. But I need a moment to unwind. Cheers."

We toast with vodka purchased in Poland the previous summer on our school tour. It is important for both of us that one does more than just talk about peace and friendship across political boundaries.

"Yes," says our principal, after the second vodka and the third sardine, "isn't it amazing how fast we're growing? Already in our fourth winter. Remember when we started off, Eisenhardt? Even you and I could hardly believe it would succeed. Everything was so disorganized..."

He loses himself in reminiscence.

And I, too. For, though I still feel a bit like a guest in the school environment, I have gradually become a member of it. One can't participate in work like this without getting involved. At any rate, *I* can't. We have common work to do. We must stand and work together. And my feelings of loyalty to our school and our principal have grown stronger and warmer through the years. From time to time I catch myself wishing he could be my confidant, as I am his.

But that's impossible.

He doesn't know that. He doesn't know he really houses a viper in his midst. That even now he is sitting in a room with a traitor.

But is this really what is going through my mind?

No, I have so habituated myself to the rôle I play that it no longer feels like a rôle. I wear my mask lightly. I can lie in good faith to my employer and friend, right to his face, and experience not the least discomfort. I have developed to the point of absurdity my ability to dissimulate.

Yet, on a late evening over a couple of glasses of vodka and a bottle of beer, I am seized by a wild urge to confide, to reveal myself as I really am; immediately my inner alarm system sounds and quashes the sentimental impulse.

My instinct of self-preservation is stronger than any compulsion I may have toward honesty. And, in any case, I have to survive in order to protect my love.

But what would happen if I actually said, "Oh, by the way, I've fallen in love"?

And our principal said, "So! And who is the lucky one?"

And I said, "Kim Steffensen."

And our principal said, "Really? How wonderful for you. We must drink to it!"

And it would be a joke, merely a joke. But if it wasn't taken as a joke?

No, I remember other voices, from the teachers' luncheon table.

"Oh, this is horrible!" Our principal's wife is leafing through the newspaper, helter-skelter, back to front, as usual.

"And what's so horrible now?" her husband mumbles absent-mindedly behind *his* newspaper.

"All of these sex scandals," she says, laying her paper down with obvious disgust. People aren't yet used to such things.

"They are very sick men," says her husband, "and they should be treated as such."

"Yes, and now it's a teacher who is implicated. I don't think they should be allowed to teach."

"Well, you are in agreement with the majority of our people," I say. "According the Gallup poll, over half of all Danish adults believe that homosexuals should be kept out of the school system."

"I agree," says our principal's wife.

And, amazingly, I feel quite unaffected.

I HAVE NOW KNOWN YOU for a year and a half, and I still haven't *touched* you.

Except for my Easter débâcle a year ago.

That we never talk about. It almost seems we have both forgotten it. Or completely repressed it. But I know better. The simple fact that you haven't, on some occasion over the past year, blurted it out somehow I see as a sign of loyalty — or perhaps simple solidarity. Haven't you in so doing revealed something about yourself?

I like to think so.

Many years later you will confide to me that on your way back to the farm that Easter night you actually wondered whether you should tell someone. But it wasn't your teachers, my colleagues, you had in mind — you were thinking, rather, of your friends.

And were silent, as you now are silent.

This just cannot continue.

I am more in love than ever. Each day we sit beside each other on my green sofa and study languages. The air burns between us. I feel it as physical pain.

But I will never again act like a *seducer!*

Therefore I must talk to you. Yes, I *have* to talk to you. But we talk all the time. No, we chat. Our mouths are always working. We chat, chat, chat. About books, music, politics. All sorts of things. About your future. Your future that gradually I am also making mine. You will acquire more education, you declare, by way of, and amply assisted by, me. And welfare will support you financially. That's good. All looks bright. I push on. Partly for your sake but, in truth, also for mine. Your future is mine as well. The longer you need me the better. But I dare not plan past next year. I dare not have faith in any progress in our relationship. And at the same time I realise things cannot continue as they are.

With words... words... words...

And with those sultry intervals when I fear you will hear my thunderous heartbeats.

And so I explode:

"We did, too, agree on two o'clock! Why didn't you come? I looked all over for you. What was the big idea? Am I being unreasonable?"

No, my darling, I think, but I'm sick of being in love! Or disappointment over your lack of trust:

"Why didn't you tell me?"

You say nothing.

"Listen, I could have helped you. That's what I'm here for, isn't it? You've got to rely on me, Kim. Otherwise... nothing makes any sense. First and foremost, we must be able to trust each other. Isn't that true?"

Yes, I chat...

I am good at chatting, but I do love you, too. And one day I will have to tell you. But not now. No, not now. How long will I have to wait? My head hurts. My body burns. My hand creeps nearer. My fingers itch....

Good Lord, how much longer?

I've lifted you like a kitten by the scruff of his neck and taken you out into the light of learning, desire for knowledge, analysis, musical feeling, rhythmic sensuality, everything I value myself. At the same time I'm egotistically interested, erotically involved. Thanks to my nurturing and care, your abilities have been cultivated, you've been led along new, fruitful, generous paths. But, since I admit my love for you and that I want to be as near you as humanly possible, my motives would seem a bit mixed. I see you in light of my longing. I contemplate you through my lust. Everything around me is coloured by my erotic desires, my sensuality.

That is marvellously awe-inspiring.

And I understand that last winter's infatuation has been replaced by a real, deep and universal, all-embracing, irresistible love.

As a child and youth my secret homosexual dream was of an intelligent boy — like myself. An artistically gifted and politically aware and involved young person — like myself. A dreamy but not overly weak guy — like myself. And, of course, good-looking — better looking than myself. But when I couldn't find him I sought in defiance his exact opposite, and it wasn't until you that he was revealed to me in a younger person, someone I could form into an image of the boy/youth I had never met and who was like me.

But if you — the boy of those days — actually came knocking on my door after all these many years, and I yelled, "Come in!" and you stood in my room, would I still be similarly receptive to your simple and trusting magnetism, your questions, your searching, your sweetness? What is it that we see in each other? How does it come about? Do we each create the other in our own image?

What actually happened when I met you?

We call that 'love'.

A word.

A concept.

But I was never in doubt.

Where did the knowledge come from that *this* really is love?

I don't know.

And you appeared at just that moment when I need what we call 'love'. Have I sought and found it? I don't know. I feel love has come to me, but I don't know how or from where.

It is simply there.

And, brought up as we are to believe in the purity of our motives — as if feelings were detergents — I imagine, in the beginning at any rate, that this... that *you* have been given me by the fates I otherwise don't believe in.

I have fallen in love; thus I have fallen ill.

I *have* to see it this way. This is how I've been taught to look at it. I've learned to view such matters in the best, or the worst, high romantic Western tradition. But my type of love is a catastrophe, a disaster, a disease. Where in my surroundings could I find fertile soil and nourishment for its growth? My love is a cancerous ulcer which has to be cut away. Where, in music, literature, could I find works which would certify my kind of love? Which would reflect it and set it in relief? Which would give it amplitude, identity, tradition? I search in vain. I find nothing resembling even the crumbs which fall from the opulent table of what people call 'normal' love. My ignorance at the time is total. I know nothing yet about the great homosexual tradition which winds through our culture.

I have to invent and construct the image of my beloved alone.

Without models, without references, and in an atmosphere of mystery and secrecy, I breathe life into

that flame which on our very first day, on the school-yard path, you lit in me. You've become everything to me, as no one else ever has. You've abolished my past. You've cancelled my defeats, my disappointments, my dejection. You've dried my tears. You've washed the blackboard clean. You've made me light, so very light...

You've become my new life.

The other one.

The only one.

The Kim.

And I realise I've never taken myself wholly seriously. I've always seen myself through the eyes of others, or at any rate perceived myself as I believed others did.

And now you are teaching me to love myself because I love you.

But this love, this longing after my particular form of love, is not to be allowed me. In our so-called bourgeois democracy it is allowed to be a rebel, a revolutionary, an arrant socialist or communist — at least as long as I don't become a direct threat to the government and the established order. But it is not allowed for me to make love to the one I love.

And, of course, I know that perfectly well.

Still, it never occurs to me to perceive myself as a paedophile, and certainly not as a *pedagogic* paedophile. On the contrary, I have time and again, during the year and a half we have known each other, told you I don't want to play the rôle of a teacher in our relationship. I won't be a pedagogue to you, I say. A somewhat extravagant declaration considering I really am your teacher. But I'm quite sincere. In fact, what I want is that we be friends and comrades...

And lovers.

My hypocrisy is disguised in the way I treat the possibility of a sexual relationship with you. Even now, after all these years, I find myself trying to think of possible and impossible excuses and explanations, instead of saying honestly:

"I love you. Therefore, of course, I want to get it on with you."

Or:

"I want to get it on with you because I love you."

To whom am I trying to apologise? For whose sake am I thinking up all of this bullshit? Who am I still afraid of? Which commissioners?

And even now...

Now, as then....

At night I light a candle and sit still in the room among its shadows and stare into the flame. Sometimes I listen to music. Sometimes even the music is too much. The relative stillness of the never-still school is enough for me. Now it sleeps. Now you sleep. Now you become all boys to, me. Now you become the boy I, myself, once was. A sleeping child. A slumbering Eros. A dreaming and self-reflecting Narcissus. Ah, Kim, your quiet breath in the night. It reaches me though the darkness, it pushes in through the walls of my house, adds fuel to my candle and makes its flame flicker in greeting. You are like the flame — little, full of life, incredibly quick, incomprehensibly fresh and young and ready to burst with possibilities...

I have burned myself on you. So I puff you out. It is impossible. You *cannot* be blown out. Not even the darkness can make your image go away. On the contrary, your image is brighter than in light. You come to meet me. I kiss you and touch you. I make love to you. I am full of longing.

Yes, I am brimming with love and I have no idea what I should do with it. My hands smart with pain. They long to caress and be caressed. My mouth burns. It would taste and be tasted. My lips glow with fever. They would kiss and be kissed. My tongue hungers. It would eat and be eaten. My eyes thirst. They would drink and be drunk. My nose would smell. My cock would find relief. My arms would embrace. My balls would empty. My toes would intertwine with yours. My nails would dig into your back. My arse would feel your hands.

I cry out to you...

Listen to me, hear me!

AT LAST....

We are alone.

On the annual school outing to Vendsyssel, you and I drift away from the others, in secret and dread. It is a free afternoon: most everyone has gone to the beach, but we have sneaked away along faint foot paths to meet secretly in a deserted spot in the hills, far from the others. We lie down in the grass and look up at the heavens. The sun is warm. A premature, wholly unexpected spring day has exploded with a suddenness which takes our breaths away. It is magnificent and we are alone. Now, yes, now, is the time to tell you. But how? You lie at my side, so near and yet so far.

I raise my head on my elbow and contemplate you.

And in that sandy, hilly field, under a capricious April sun, I begin to talk and talk, as I gaze fixedly on that profile I love but daren't caress. Your fallow-deer eye glints, your nostrils quiver. And at last I can no longer hold back and more than hint at my feelings for you. I don't come right out and say what I think and feel. I come as close as I dare. But I sense that you understand me, even though you don't say so. You remain silent.

When Easter comes we will both go to Copenhagen I to attend a meeting of the anti-nuclear forces, you to your family. I frantically search for an excuse to get together with you, and find it in jazz...

WE ARRANGED TO MEET at eight pm outside Jazzhus Montmartre in Store Regnegade, and there you are waiting for me by the entrance. I'm in high spirits — elated, actually — by the campaign's hugely successful meeting in Raadhushpladsen, the town hall square. My father is there, and afterwards we have a lively political discussion over a couple of bottles of *Stille* beer.

"Hello, Kim," I say, with a great smile of joy at seeing you again. We shake hands. "Have you been waiting long?"

"Well, a couple of hours," you grin back, shaking your head. You are obviously relieved I actually showed up. I suspect you arrived there very early.

"Shall we go inside?" I suggest.

The hall is jammed as usual. Cigarette smoke billows up to the ceiling and smarts the eyes. Candles flicker growing out of bottles. Beer bottles clink. Voices drone. But the music carries everything before it, and it is for the music we have come.

We find a pair of seats at some distance from the musicians' podium. I'm finally able to get some drinks. We toast each other and look around. Montmartre seems to have its regular customers — and then there's us. I know little about the Copenhagen jazz world. I moved in quite different circles in the past.

You seem very much involved in what you hear and see. I push back my chair a bit from our long table and watch you secretly from the side. You look so sweet in your corduroy coat and white shirt and that pearl-grey tie. The tyranny of the necktie hasn't quite come to its end: not even jazz fans have liberated themselves from the universal cravat. But here and there a beard is seen — and isn't hair also getting a bit longer?

I lean forward and half shout into your ear, "What do you think of this place?" With eyes and mouth you tell me you like it. So we toast again, abandon all further conversation and give ourselves up to the music of Dexter Gordon.

Suddenly I feel a hand on my shoulder; at first I think it's you. But there you sit half with your back to me, chin propped in your hands, seemingly lost in the music.

"What the devil," I cry.

It's an old friend from my political days.

He squats with his hand on my shoulder. We smile and start speaking at the same time. Neither of us can be understood; the words vanish like smoke to the ceiling. I assume he'll ask me what I'm doing now.

"I teach," I tell him, and try to explain what our school is like.

"I'll be damned," he says. "You can actually put up with all that establishment farting around?"

I shrug.

"And have you got anything written?"

I tell him about my radio script and my new book which will be coming out in the autumn.

He rises to a crouch and smacks me on the shoulder again.

"I saw you as soon as you came in, but I thought you might have company?"

I don't answer.

"Won't you join us at our table? I'd like you to meet a colleague of yours..."

He points behind. I turn around and recognise one of the most talked-about young writers of the day, a slightly older acquaintance from the time when I was secretary of the Festival Committee and, later, on the staff of the new Socialist Party. He was one of a group of intellectuals who in those early years were hard-working contributors to the our journal. Suddenly I recall that he always referred to me, sarcastically, as "The Briefcase Man".

I steal a glance at you.

So I find myself in a dilemma. During our rather loud conversation you have been sitting silently apart, for all the world completely engrossed in the sounds of Dexter Gordon. You haven't made it obvious we are together. I haven't introduced you. Nor will I now. I am undecided. Should I go over and chat with my old friends? In a way I'd like to. This is the kind of group I enjoy. On the other hand, you are here. For obvious reasons I hesitate to drag you into this crowd of acquaintances from my Copenhagen past. How would I explain you? How would you yourself react? And they? Of course they would be polite, friendly — and soon would be ignoring you totally. But wouldn't they also be suspicious of this somewhat peculiar relationship between teacher and pupil? I simply don't dare have a confrontation. And at the same time I realise this will be the price I will have to pay over and over again in the future for being together with you.

My old friend stands waiting for my answer. I smile up at him and mumble something about another time. He casts a quick, sidelong glance at you, this boy by my side, smiles non-committedly and for the third time gives me a clap on the shoulders.

"We'll see you, then," he says and is gone.

In the event, we don't see him.

Immediately afterwards I suggest we leave, telling you I feel sick. It is quite true. Do you believe me? You don't, at any rate, protest. Good Lord, what *can* you do, other than follow me wherever I go? There is no question about your loyalty. Nor any doubt that you would feel left out when such ghosts from my past turn up. And with that ghost has crept in our difference in age — the abyss which separates us.

The whole situation, of course, is impossible.

Yes, but it is the impossible I want.

THE TOWN GLIDES BY. I sit by you in the streetcar. We will soon have to part. But we have agreed to

meet next noon at the main Station. I'll wait for you in the departure hall snack bar. Everything is arranged. I get off at Liberty Monument.

I remain standing at the stop with hand raised watching you ride off on Tram 6 toward Valby. I have to take the Holte line.

But it's still early. Now if I... No... Yes... That was so long ago. But no!

My body commands me. Not towards the red clock on the station but to the left.

I wander back towards Raadhuspladsen.

The hustler scene....

But I won't stop. Not tonight and never again. I'm an able-bodied man now and quite able to cast myself out in the open sea...

If I can use that metaphor for the Pisserenden, The Urinal, filthiest street of Copenhagen.

The Cancan is jammed. Not a place to sit, hardly a place to stand. I take a deep breath and slip past the doorman — or rather the bouncer — and set about squeezing towards the bar on the right. The air is thick with smoke, body sweat, beer, bad breath blended with piss — and the stench of sperm from the urinals down in the corner where the men's and women's toilets lie, both constantly occupied but neither by what in 'normal' circles would be called real women.

I have always liked dirty bars. Certainly the Cancan fulfils that requirement one hundred percent. The room is low-ceilinged, painted in dark colours, hideous. With its tables and chairs and separate stalls, in its half-empty state, it resembles the last waiting room on the Styx just before the final 'All aboard!'. I don't know what it looks like when it is full. But one can be certain of one thing: the stallion in rut in the photo on the end wall is doomed to perpetual lust and will never enjoy release from his heat — like so many other beings.

I manage to fish up the price of a beer from my pocket and one of the waiters, awake in a flash, responds with an opened bottle across the bar. He comes to life when it is a matter of business. And so I stand with a foaming butch beer in my hand and press my back against one of the pillars while, without moving my head, I examine the scene about me. Everyone else is doing the same thing, except for a little flock of regulars who know the scene and behave accordingly. Otherwise nothing but sad faces looking somehow slightly offended. The atmosphere of a waiting room. The court of death. Absolutely nobody can act as though he's come here to have a good time — and nobody seems to be having one, either. But, even so, it is more pleasant than The Gentlemen's Bar — piss-elegant, red-plush and cosy — where some ten years earlier I made my entrance into our ghetto-world, to the strains of *Secret Love*.

I'll leave my memories to the past and....

...direct my attention instead to a flock of young men in the corner next to the large window which, for once, hasn't been smashed in. Hustlers? It's not obvious. You can't tell. In any case, they're hardly professionals. But many young guys these days go downtown Sundays and earn some easy money street-walking their arses. Thanks to the concern of the police, the media and finally parliament over "male

prostitution" it has become fashionable. It's now something of a sport.

We live our lives in danger, under a grim law.

I empty my bottle and get a new one. I'm getting gradually drunk. You have to get drunk to endure such a place. I also feel better, despite the heat, the noise, the smoke. Little by little I manoeuvre myself in the direction of the door where the bouncer is stationed, into the corner by the window. There is a face there, viewed through my beer-bleary eyes, which draws me: a bright, somewhat ruddy but well-cut face — broad mouth, broad cheekbones, blue eyes under eyebrows that are nearly white. The face of a smithy, or some such tradesman. My type for this sort of evening.

"Danish design."

He is sitting half-way up against the window on the back of the seat. I remain in the corner and eye him. A little later we smile meaningfully at each other and, without knowing how, I suddenly am standing with my hand in his — a large warm paw with strong, supple fingers. I find this enormously pleasant, just what I am seeking.

For I need *something*. After all these weeks, months, half-years. I cannot live just on love lived out short of completion.

"Whew, it's warm in here, eh?" I blurt out, realising how dumb it sounds. But it doesn't matter: all that counts is his answer.

And he makes it.

"Yeah," he says "it's damn warm."

Fantastic. He agrees with me in the bargain!

"And a hell of a lot of people," I continue, emboldened by my luck.

He squeezes my hand. A good handshake. Solid. I hang onto his smithy's paw as though my life were at stake. As if I am drowning in this choppy sea of people. Perhaps I am. But he also holds tight, very nicely tight. Yes, he really might be a blacksmith.

"When you sit here you get fuckin' thirsty," he says after a brief silence.

I agree and tell him that problem can be solved.

When I take out my wallet and we have been set up with a couple of fresh beers, he empties his in one long swallow. Then he belches in an extremely charming manner and looks down at me with an expression which I can only interpret as benevolently curious.

"This fuckin' bar is a good place not to be," he says after another pause, and I have to agree with him a second time.

But so what?

The usual stupid question. The indispensable question. What now? And where?

"Do you know what you...?" he begins, and looks at me probingly with his somewhat drunk but in any case still genuinely blue Danish eyes under those nearly white brows. "...I know a new place."

"Like this one?"

He nods significantly.

"Where is it?"

"In this neighbourhood," he says, over the noise, looking down at me. "Only a few blocks from here. Want to come along?"

Anyhow, I don't want to release my new friend's hand, the hand of salvation. Let him be my life-saver. Tonight. I look up into that broad, fair proletarian face. My type? Yes, here it is. All of this is totally disconnected from the rest of my existence. All thoughts of the school and you are swept away. This is my secret life. Sheer sensation. The sweet itch. Lechery in full flood. I am terribly excited and prepared to follow this man to the end of the earth provided the end of the earth is only a few blocks away.

"So, let's get going!" he says, taking over. I love that. He releases my hand. I try to grasp it again, but we are out on the street before I am even able to get hold of the outer flap of his coatsleeve.

"Hey," I exclaim, "who is he?"

Another big, broad lad has popped up at our side. "Him? He's my mate. He wants to come along too." "Okay, okay," I babble. "How far to we have to go?" "Not very far," my friend answers from in front of me.

"Maybe you don't know the city very well?"

"It's been a long time since I've been here," I admit. "I haven't kept up with the scene."

"It's a bloody good place," he says, and bursts into a loud laugh — seems a little too loud and a bit unmotivated. The other lad says nothing.

"Bloody good!"

We have passed the Metropol Cinema and crossed Strøget, the fashionable shopping street. We go into a dimly lit alley. I think fuzzily that pretty soon I'll have to take a taxi if I want to sleep at my parents' home. Damn, it wouldn't be the first time a trip to the city ended this way — just as things get interesting one has to call a halt in order to catch the last train — or else stay over night in town, as I often did in the old days, those magic days. I was very young then. Now I'm not so young — I'm a school teacher and I earn money. Yes, I think, I have money on me. And instinctively I feel for my wallet in the inside pocket of my jacket under my overcoat. Still there, thank God.

I've only casually kept track of where we were going. I look at the drowsy lights. I listen to the sounds from Strøget. Few people are out at this late hour.

Suddenly the other lad, who until then hasn't uttered a word, exclaims:

"I have to piss."

"Okay," says the fellow I thought I already knew so well, "we'll go in here."

"Wait," I say. All at once I'm afraid. "I don't want to go in there. I don't have to piss."

"Come along," he tells me.

'No!' ' I shout

"Then we'll do it here, mate!" he snarls. His voice is no longer friendly in the least. It is threatening.

"But where's the new..." is all I get out. For I am down on the pavement. The silent lad has tripped me from behind and the other given me a shove. Their hands fumble in my overcoat and jacket. It happens very fast. I try to protect my wallet. No use. One of them has it already. Job complete. He throws it, empty, in my face. Very professional. I roll on the cobblestones and think, 'The hell with the money — that's relatively unimportant'. But I am angry at being robbed. Angry at being disappointed. Angry over having been so stupid as to rely on a hand shake. So cheap, so fraudulent. The violence against my feelings hurts more than the violence against my body. The homosexual's lot: it's so howlingly banal.

Suddenly I feel a kick.

"Stop!" I cry. "You can have the money; don't hurt me, for God sakes!"

The money is already theirs, but it makes no difference. They kick again. They continue with the kicking. I try to protect my head with my arms and hands.

My eyes!

But they go on and on and on, mutely, brutally. Maliciously. It doesn't hurt at the time, but I'm afraid. And why are they doing this? It's all so unnecessary.

A couple of amateurs after all.

"Fucking arsehole!" one of them pants hoarsely, and gives me a final kick. And that *does* hurt.

"Faggot!"

This is fond farewell of the smithy's apprentice, or whatever he is. And then they are gone, running down the street. Darkness swallows them. Along with my money.

I get to my feet slowly, carefully testing my aching limbs. Nothing is broken. I can stand and walk and move everything. But the eye? I feel something warm and sticky and oozing. With a finger I probe around it, let it glide up and around over the eyebrow and down the cheek. I look at my fingertip in the blue-white glow of the street-lamp.

It is red with blood.

Then I look inside my wallet and put it back in my pocket. Decent of them, they'd left me my papers. I start running toward the main railway station. If I am lucky I can still make the last train.

But first I have to find out how badly injured I am. The janitor is busy washing the lavatory floor. I cannot go in. So I walk to a drinking fountain and dab my eye and the skin around it with a handkerchief. The cloth reddens but the bleeding stops. I rush down to the Holtz train platform with my return ticket. My head aches, my body hurts. I feel sorry for myself. I curse myself. I run from the train to the bus, and run all the way home from the bus stop.

"Well, hello," says my father, who's sitting up late. "What's happened? Have you been fighting?"

"Exactly." I answer. "Can you lend me some money?"

"Of course. How much do you need?"

My father thinks my brawl has been over politics. I don't disabuse him of that belief.

TABLEAU!

The next morning I awake with a thundering headache and a gigantic black eye...

Good lord, I have to face the world like this?

My father just grins. My mother doesn't think it's especially funny. I ransack the house and find an old pair of sun-glasses and put them on to cover my misery. They only make it worse. Outside, on that Easter Sunday, it is pouring rain. And in a little while I have to meet you.

At the main station I stand in the snack bar. You come up from the platforms, and I go over and greet you.

"What in the world happened!?" you exclaim, frightened.

I take off the sun-glasses.

"Oh, damn!" you cry. "It's a horrible sight!"

"Wait..." I have to anticipate you. "I'll explain everything."

And I do. Or almost everything, for I avoid mentioning what type of bar I'd been in. There are still things I just cannot tell you.

You are wonderfully sweet and sympathetic. You trust me. This is a whole new situation.

And that I like.

"But I really can't run around in these ridiculous sun-glasses in the rain," I protest. "Everybody's looking at me."

"You must have an eye-patch," you decide. "Come on, let's find a drugstore. My brother got a black eye once, and he went around with one of those things..."

"For how long?" I am full of misgivings.

"Oh, only about ten or fourteen days," you say consolingly.

But it is Easter, and almost everything in that rain-wet city is closed and locked up. At last, however, we find a drugstore down by the canals.

"Why don't you try a leech?" asks the kind druggist. "Isn't a beefsteak better?" I ask in return.

"Too late for that now," he says with regret. "Steak must be laid on soon after, uh, the accident."

"Well, *I'd* like a beefsteak right now," you announce when we are once again out on the street.

"Me, too. Let's find a restaurant. But, wait, you've got to tell me who I look like."

"Nelson, or Christian IV — take your pick," answers the quick-witted Kim.

A LITTLE LATER, over the steaks, I realise I can't show up in school looking as I do. There is absolutely nothing, not even all the ridiculous things that can go on in the bathroom, quite so basically comical as a black eye. It just won't do. Especially not on a younger teacher in a special school in the provinces.

"I'll tell you what," I say. "You go back to school. I'll crawl off to my sister in the country to nurse my poor eye. I'll get her to phone and say I'm down with the flu or something."

You immediately understand. I check the train schedules. We part on the platform. You will be the first back to Funen after our Easter break.

"We *have* seen a black eye before," says my brother-in-law, and grins broadly.

And so everything is arranged.

During the next ten days I wander about vegetating in the wilds of north-west Zealand as my eye heals. I write letter after letter to you. I send you books. You write back. This is our first real correspondence: every day I wait impatiently for the post to arrive.

"Everyone thinks you have been *very* sick," you inform me. "No one has suggested anything different. Come back soon. I miss you. Your affectionate Kim."

But you still address me by my last name.

We'll have to change that.

Yes, I resolve, now is the time to talk about it.

"KIM, THERE IS SOMETHING I have to tell you," I say one evening shortly after my return to school. I hardly know how to begin, but...

Now, will you sit down, again?

Thanks.

Kim, how can I tell you? How can I get it out?

Oh, God, I'm at my wit's end!

Maybe you really ought to start off to bed. It's getting on. What time is it? That late already? Do you think the other students have gone up?

Well, I'm the one who has to make the bed-check tonight.

But, Kim...

No, I can't. I've got to wait. Just go, Kim. That's really the best. Yes, go!

"We'll talk about it in the morning, okay? You come and we'll read as usual during the lunch break..."

"Kim, I say the next day, "do you remember last year when you were helping on the farm and you came and visited me on Easter?"

"Yes," you say and are silent.

"I really meant what I told you that night." Then I, too, am silent.

You don't answer. There is nothing to answer to. But something has to happen. We cannot go on as we have.

The electrically charged silence between us is unbearable.

I perceive it as physical pain.

"Do you understand what I'm saying?" I ask.

You still don't answer.

"I'm telling you I meant what I told you then. And I mean it still."

"I can't remember what you said."

"Of course you can."

You shake your head.

"You can if you want to." I listen, full of fear, to how bitter my voice is becoming.

I don't mean it to sound that way.

"I'm not sure I want to," you answer sulkily.

No, I think, that's probably true.

And I?

Do I know what I want?

Yes, only too well.

But I'm afraid of you.

So I pull myself together and say:

"We've talked about this before, haven't we, Kim? In any case we've talked around it. I brought it up at Vendsyssel. We referred to it when we were together over Easter in Copenhagen. We've talked and talked..."

"*You* have talked," you burst out impetuously.

"Okay, I have talked. And I'll continue to talk until I've got an answer. No, keep standing by the window, just like that — don't turn away. It's easier to say these things when you aren't looking at me."

So I begin again:

"I wouldn't dream of asking you to do something against your will. Are you listening? I don't want to do anything you don't want. Obviously. But... No, that sounds utterly stupid. We understand one another so well, don't we?"

You nod, yes.

"But damnit all, Kim, I've just gotten so completely, horribly fond of you. And that shouldn't be a crime..."

But that's exactly what it is, I think.

I talk and talk. I look out upon the great sloping field through my window. I pace back and forth in my room. I light my pipe. I drink tea. I talk, talk. I seduce you with words. I spin a web of words around you.

I say, "I love you. I can't help it. I love you and I don't know why. I love you. I don't know what I'm going to do. But I do love you. You're a boy. I'm a man. Because of that I shouldn't love you.

"But I *do* love you.

"Hell, there are masses of people who feel as I do. But in itself that's a pretty poor excuse. Even if there were no others, even if I were the only person in this world who felt the way I feel about you, I'd still not betray my love for you.

"Kim, I love you. I've never, never in my life felt about any other person the way I feel about you. Oh, Kim, you're the only one I've ever had these feelings for. I want the very best for you, the most beautiful of everything. If only the two of us can stay together..."

Stay together. What do I really mean? What do I have in mind? He who is infatuated is a fool. I am a fool. Never in my life have I uttered so many banal and foolish words.

And you?

You are silent. Your silence doesn't matter. It is your nearness that's important. Yet I can never get near enough. I am moving onto dangerous ground. I imagine, craftily, that it's your soul I love. But that's a lie! It's far more than that. I want your body, too.

"I love you," I say again and again. "I love you, Kim, and I don't know what to do about it."

You don't answer me. I don't think you have looked at me once. No, I myself asked you not to. So now, twenty years later, I can't see your eyes in my memory. I see your back. I see you quite clearly standing there in front of that big window with the view of the fields. Are there clouds? Is there sun that afternoon? I remember only your back. As usual, you are playing absent-mindedly with something or other on my desk. Perhaps you are also propped up against the swivel chair. Maybe you have a knee on its fluted seat to carry your weight on one leg. I remember the edge of your bright cheek, the light down on the nape of your neck. Your shoulders. My hands burning to take you by those shoulders, press you against me, kiss your neck's nape, your throat...

"Kim," I cry, "I love you!"

So I risk everything. It's now or never. Live or die. Nothing in the world is of greater consequence to me now than that you — a fifteen-year-old boy — say yes to becoming my lover.

Nothing!

I cannot give up. I cannot compromise. I cannot lie to you or to myself. I must sacrifice all my so-called dignity, my laughable authority, all...

I fall down on my knees.

You don't answer right away. I ask you to think over what I've said And rush out of the house and bicycle away. When finally I come home a little note is lying on my desk:

I have thought over what you told me. I think I understand pretty well what you mean. I'm also very fond of you. And I do want what you said.

Your friend for life —

Kim

Good God!

I kiss your letter. I wet it with tears. I dance about, my heart overflowing with gratitude for a good fortune I hardly dare trust.

BUT LOVE HAS ITS PRICE...

The next evening while you're sitting on the floor in front of my chair I bend down to lift you up by your armpits to give you a good night kiss — my first, on the brow, for we have not yet gone any farther — and I feel my back crack. At the same time a pain shoots through my whole body.

But I kiss you lightly — a butterfly kiss — and laugh and forget the pain.

You are to tell me later that, after this first kiss of ours, you went up to your room, climbed in bed and made love to your hand thinking about me.

Thank you. I think that's sweet.

But the next morning I can hardly get out of bed.

I crawl down to the dining hall, and, after breakfast, over to the classroom where I manage, seated, to make it through the first teaching period. But then our shop instructor has to help me up to my house. There is no question of my coming down for lunch.

The doctor is telephoned.

"You strained yourself lifting," he diagnoses — and doesn't know how truly he speaks.

I have, indeed, strained myself lifting — the dearest burden in the world.

I have to laugh.

He gives me an injection.

I laugh...

Carefully.

For it hurts, damnably. I have to lie flat and not move. But already at recess you look in on me — and during the noon break, and every other chance you get. I lie stretched out on my bed of pain — the green sofa — and let myself be waited upon. You run errands for me. I really need the co-op, now. So you come and occupy my room with me. We listen to the radio. We read. We play records. And we never mention what has passed between us. But it is in the air. It fills the space of the room around us.

A warm, calm happiness grows within me.

Now I can wait.

Yes, I can wait. The certainty of your devotion inspires me with patience. For the last year and a half I have nearly burst, with all my soul craving to embrace you, love you, *make love* to you, but now there is time — quite apart from the fact that my temporary disability makes all moves in that direction impossible. I lie on my green bed of pain and look at you.

That is enough.

Yes, I can wait, for now I know it will happen, and continue to happen.

That weekend we're together almost all our waking hours. You bring the food up to me from the kitchen, not to mention the bottle of schnapps from the co-op which I desperately need as analgesic for my pain. And, last but not least, you bring *you*, the half-jubilant ape I certainly cannot do without.

Oh, how I am tortured and martyred!

Outside: the wild storms of spring. Inside: enveloping comfort.

"Well, here you lie suffering stoically," says our principal with a sly grin when he drops in on me Saturday afternoon. Ben Webster is giving tongue to his yearnings with *How long has this been going on?* and the level of schnapps in my bottle slowly sinks.

"Will you have a dram?" I ask in my voice of pain, trying hard to play my new rôle of patient.

"Thanks very much."

You give up your seat. Our principal throws himself down in my armchair. He lights a cheroot while you fetch a glass out of the kitchen cupboard and pour it like a trained little house-boy. It *could* have been awkward, but it isn't. It seems, in fact, quite natural.

Long live my beloved lumbago — or whatever it's called. It's the world's best, solid gold excuse.

We toast, the three of us. You in soda water, our principal and I in schnapps and ale. And so we converse — no, chatter. We are good at that: we just have to put the right record on. And our principal is never too busy for this sort of thing. That's what I like about him. But I have to admit I glance at you secretly to see how you are handling the situation.

You handle it brilliantly — despite the fact that you have been changed by the new atmosphere our principal has brought to my room. It is still cosy in here. In a limited way we can still be ourselves. But at the same time we each have to be constantly on our guard, careful to play our rôles. I as your teacher, you as my pupil. Thus it is, and thus it will remain throughout all the time we move together within the compass of the school.

Anything else is unthinkable.

Yes, our situation is even more absurd than that absurd French play we once amused ourselves reading

aloud to one another...

But this obviously is our reality.

At last our principal retires. We are alone. But, no, not for long. All my colleagues feel they have to pay the poor invalid a call. My house swarms with people. Our Home Economics teacher pops in with coffee and fresh school-kitchen-baked cookies.

It can also be exhausting to be waited upon!

But I enjoy it as long as I can. Then Monday comes and I have to stand up. With the help of a cane I totter back and forth between my house and the school buildings. Like a bent old man, I stagger precariously down the slick path, one small step at a time, left hand pressed against my hip.

Gently, gently...

And you all stand there and laugh at me!

A few days later I can straighten my back again and throw my crutches away.

This ironic interlude has lasted long enough.

And that same night I tell you:

"Kim, while I lay there suffering for my sins I worked out a plan. You and I will go to Aarhus Saturday and stay over till Sunday. In the afternoon you can visit your family in Grenå as you've often told me you intended to do. So you'll have your alibi, so to speak. And you can get your principal to pay for the ticket. I'll make all the other arrangements..."

THE ANXIETY...

This damnable anxiety!

Where does it come from? What causes it? It spreads out from the gut. It's born of fear.

Fear of discovery. Fear of exposure. Fear of being forced to reveal the truth about myself.

We're sitting in the train to Aarhus...

Butterflies in my stomach. I grow irritable. My skin itches. I'm naked, raw, exposed. Here, away from the school's cocoon, I sense that the world is against me. Or I'm against the world.

But we should be so happy, I think. Well, we *have to be* happy! I try to conceal from you my agitation. *You* are happy, I suppose. I am, too, on and off. And if you're not happy it is up to me to make you so. We sit facing each other beside the window in the smoking section. We smile discreetly, exchange trivial but intimate remarks. We have already reached the stage where we only have to hint to each other what we mean.

I feel a light pressure from your knee under the window table.

"Look," you say, pointing, "That's where I worked the summer before I came to school."

We both lean forward at the same time and bump heads.

"Cheese!"

You make a face. I know what you mean. You helped out in a cheese factory. It was a sort of therapy, for you can no longer bear the sight even of cheese spread.

We cross the long bridge to Jutland.

And here we sit on the train lighting each other's cigarettes, exchanging chocolates and small talk. Without once having spoken about it, we are already rather adept at the mummery which both of us know is necessary to disguise our mutual feelings from the world. We are careful not to give the slightest grounds for suspicion. Our voices and gestures are neutral. Our eyes avoid meeting except when absolutely necessary. Touching is minimal. We probably actually touch less than most other people do.

Even so, I feel myself under scrutiny, feel that somehow we are constantly revealing the nature of a relationship which cannot be exposed to the light of day. The fact that this relationship has as yet not been consummated is of no importance. In my heart I have sinned and on my brow is the mark. And although I ought to be happy I know such happiness is forbidden.

We pull into the Aarhus station. The trip is over. We have gone, literally, as far as we can go. We climb off the train, walk up the stairs and out through its dreary gates.

Now for the test.

ON THE TELEPHONE I told them I was a teacher. "Hello, I want to reserve two single rooms," I said. "One for myself and the other for our pupil..."

I'm especially proud of that 'our'. It will put things into proper perspective when I, the teacher, check into the hotel with you. I've assumed a task, a pedagogic duty. It isn't for my pleasure that I have brought this boy along!

The room clerk is my own age. I don't like him at all. But I know how to behave. I'm well dressed. I talk suburban Copenhagen, a sort of emasculated Danish which, in Aarhus at any rate, places me among the supposedly cultured.

Am I overplaying the part?

"Here is your key, Kim. Now, be very careful with it," I admonish, the perfect school-master, and slide it heavily down the counter to my young darling who is standing silently by as I register for the two of us.

My admonition is idiotic, as the key is so huge and heavy one either leaves it behind in one's room or has to parade around with it in his hand. You don't respond.

"Well, is that everything?" I ask, with an attempt at a man-of-the-world smile.

The clerk nods and gives me, a look which in my heightened state I can only interpret as vigilant, if not suspicious. Perhaps it is my imagination, but I *feel* he can see right through us. I grab my own key, take my briefcase in hand and walk over to the lift without waiting for you. Meanwhile, a telephone rings. The clerk picks up the receiver and begins to talk. You follow after me with your key and your travel bag. Silently we stand beside each other waiting for the lift. The clerk laughs. Even with my back to him I feel this officious representative of society casting his professional and disapproving eyes upon us. When the lift finally arrives I turn around and give him a quick look. Elbow on the counter, phone receiver in his ear, he is just staring out through the window at the dismal square.

With his back to me.

"Didn't he give us a funny look?" I ask you half way up in the lift.

"Who?"

"The room clerk."

You shrug and pick up your travel bag as the lift stops at the third floor.

"I didn't notice anything."

"No? Well, maybe I'm just a bit nervous." You stand there on the thick red carpet in the hotel hall looking about you with eager, inquisitive eyes, without a trace of anxiety.

"What way do we go?" you ask.

"No way," I answer. "Our rooms are right here in front of us, next to each other. Isn't that nice?"

You don't answer. You just listen, with your bag in one hand and the hotel key in the other. In your dark blue duffel coat you look like a provincial travelling salesman, but in miniature.

"Let's see what our rooms are like," I suggest.

You are still listening to the silence of this big building. Then you suddenly become aware of me and give me a broad smile. "If you show me your room I'll let you see mine," you say. "But remember to knock!"

You put your key in the lock with a very conscious sense that this is *your* key and *your* room and it is *you* who is letting yourself in.

I think about how long it has been since *I* experienced anything for the first time.

And then I let myself into my own room.

THE HOTEL IS one of the best in town. I didn't want to do this on the cheap. Maybe I also wanted to

impress you. That isn't hard to do, but the sense of wonder is something you hide behind your charming, boyish way of seeming to take everything for granted.

It isn't thirty seconds after I have locked myself in my room and put my briefcase down on the desk that there is a loud knock on the door.

"Yes," I call.

A grinning face appears.

"May I see your room?"

"It's just like yours."

"Oh, can't I see it?"

"Only if you have my permission."

"You are mean!"

"All right, come in," I sigh in happy surrender. Things are going very well indeed.

You throw yourself on the bed with a thud.

"Yours is better than mine," you declare, and for a moment you seem shockingly coquettish.

Then you jump up and go to the window.

"It's raining," you say, with your back to me.

"It is indeed," I say, and cannot help continuing:

"Il pleut sur la Ville

Comme il pleut dans mon coeur...

I have come so far from home, and yet I can find no peace..."

You turn around suddenly.

"You don't mean that, do you?"

"No, I don't think I do. Not now, at any rate. Come and have a glass of sherry."

You shake your head.

"Oh, come on," I insist, and get the package out of my briefcase. I unwrap the bottle and place it on the desk beside the green hotel lamp and the promotional ashtray. "I hope it's as good as they told me in the store. Dry as dust, the man said."

I open the bottle. I've travelled enough to know you always keep a cork-screw in your luggage. I inhale the aroma of this precious liquid and pour. There is only one glass in my room.

"Why don't you get yours?"

You shake your head again.

"Then have some of mine."

I hand you the glass. You take it, sip and make a face.

"Ugh!"

"Dry, isn't it?"

I laugh. Take the glass back. Pour another. Find my cigarettes. Queens. I offer you one. But you smoke the new longs. I light yours. Light mine. Get up. Go to the window where you are again standing, smoking. Go back to the desk. I sit down. Get up again.

Look at you.

"How do you like staying in a hotel?"

You shrug.

"It's very quiet here."

"It's your first time, isn't it?"

You nod.

"But not your last," I say.

You start inspecting the conservative, solidly appointed hotel room. No wild luxury here, but heavy, bourgeois comfort. Thick draperies, thick, soft carpeting, mahogany furniture, a massive, soft bed for good heavy sleep, or whatever. The ceiling is high but the room is narrow. The window opens onto the street. Every so often we hear the long hiss of car tyres on wet asphalt.

You check everything out: lamps, faucets, knobs...

"No," I cry, "not that one, or the chambermaid will come running. Why on earth would I want her when I have you?"

I WANT TO MAKE LOVE to you right away, or I think I want to. Isn't that what one does?

I'm afraid. The world presses. Passion surges through my body, the answer to my fasting and yearning through all those hours, no, days and nights, weeks, months, half-years.

"Come," I say.

You allow yourself to hug me. My nervous hands slip under your light brown corduroy jacket. They clasp your waist, they seek softness, smoothness, elasticity. You're so slender, so young, so close to the end of your physical development and yet so full of potential. My fingers glide lovingly down over your hips, under the belt, climb up along the back of your shirt and hook themselves firmly over its collar to graze the downy skin at the hollow of the nape of your neck. Then in a stimulating and exciting dive they rush down toward your little round arse, supple and smooth, and in a conqueror's grasp hold it finely so that your abdomen presses against mine. But your body is not participating. It lets itself be pawed, groped, but it is somehow remote. It's not aroused, in spite of our standing as close together as we could ever get — so close and yet too far away.

Still too far away.

"Oh, Kim," I mumble into your fluted corduroy shoulder that smells like a teddy-bear, "I'm so happy that we finally... finally..."

We stand in the middle of the hotel room and rock back and forth, back and forth, swaying, pitching in the stillness.

"This is so wonderful," I whisper. "I need to hold you. Let me feel you, yes, like this, let me feel you all over. No, no, you mustn't be afraid. You must relax."

I hold you away from me. I catch your eye. You, my young hart, my faun! But your gaze falls and slips away. I draw you toward the bed. You don't resist. We fall onto the solid hotel mattress. Maybe you are right: perhaps my bed is better than yours. So let's try it out!

My hungry hands are still inside your jacket. They creep, glide, search. Our knees bump together and close the rhomboid space between us which our awkward position on the bedspread has formed. I feel clumsy and stupid.

Something is wrong.

"Kim," I whisper in your ear, "are you there?"

You don't answer but lie with your eyes shut, moist, heavy and warm between my hands.

"Kim," I whisper again, "would it be better to wait?"

I must be out of my mind. With these words I put the kiss of death on any chance of an afternoon quickie. I know it, and for a few smarting seconds feel disappointment settling in like an upset stomach. But I love you. I won't force you into something against your will. It is possible I am an incompetent lover, but I cannot project onto you my lust if you have none of your own, or lack the possibility of responding to mine.

"Shall we wait?" I repeat.

You open your eyes and look at me from very far away, a place I have no knowledge of.

"That's up to you." Then you suddenly laugh loud and giddily, "Your stubble tickles!"

I pull a hand free and feel my chin.

"I gave myself a good close shave this morning," I say, annoyed and momentarily offended.

"It still tickles," you insist.

"All right, all right," I mumble and take hold of you again. I can't help it. I cannot let go of you. I cannot get enough of you. I just want to stay lying with you like this all afternoon in my silent hotel room. I want to be able to hold you in my arms and cradle and rock you, cradle and rock you back and forth for ever and ever...

But your body is heavy and far away.

"Would you rather we wait?" I whisper again into your finely-shaped ear under the edge of your hair. I breathe on the dark down, I nip you in the earlobe. You don't answer. You let me hug you You let me clasp you. But your body answers for you. It answers cautiously. It answers lovingly. Yes, it answers, I would rather we wait, I'm not ready yet.

And I am filled with an all-embracing tenderness for this friendly, warm and sweet-smelling body. I let my anxiety-tainted lust slink back into its dark den and release its hold on me. My hands free themselves from you. They retreat in order to leave you in peace until the moment you yourself feel the urge to reach out toward them. And as I draw back and pull away from that vision of the promise of peace, I feel bubbling up within me a new, cheerful sort of sensuality; perhaps it, too, springs from that obscure source of my passion. No, I won't say an evil word about lust. Long live lechery! It has its own natural language and rights. But this rather more sensual feeling is perhaps in the end more precious.

Like a release!

"Yes," I cry, and spring up from the bed, "we'll wait. Come on, let's go out and paint the town red!"

You look at me with astonishment from under your tousled hair. Then you laugh and point past me out the window.

"That's just what it needs!"

AARHUS IN THE RAIN...

Aarhus on a Saturday afternoon in the rain!

We look up and gape with admiration at the town hall tower. We stop for a moment at Boggild's pig-well in the square under the dripping trees. But we leave the Old Town in peace. "No museums!" you decide.

"Are you hungry?" I ask.

Stupid question. Of course you are hungry. You are always hungry. But why do you have to be hungry now? Oh, I have laid plans. I have carefully thought out the whole project. The programme for this first love-trip of ours was cast in neat stages inside my head. I am author, producer, director and one of the cast. Now, really, isn't it too early to go off and eat?

Of course not!

To hell with my romantic love programme! This is no longer poem and dream; this is now, it's really happening.

Quite apart from the fact that even I cannot live on love and rain-water alone.

I am ravenous.

So, *en avant!*

At a restaurant near the theatre we are lucky enough to get a window-table with a rainy prospect of the Bishop's Market and the cathedral. A pretty but somewhat melancholy view. Instinctively we sit down across from each other, not side by side like lovers but like participants in a debate, two businessmen at lunch. I can look better into your pretty eyes this way, however, and that's nice.

"I'll have steak," I proclaim, "the best. And you? Do you like claret?"

"You know I do," you tell me, offended, looking annoyed.

"Pardon, pardon me," I say hastily. "First let's get a menu and an aperitif. Sherry again?"

"Yes, but sweet!" you answer, appeased.

I signal the waiter and smile at you, my young and very conceited fellow conspirator.

"Choose only what you really want the most," I say.

And you answer, "I'll choose what you choose."

AFTER THAT SPLENDID lunch, topped off with coffee and for me cognac and cigar, for you a double portion of ice-cream, we stroll once again around the Bishop's Market with a couple of side trips to the lighted business streets. Our hair gets wet, we window-shop, pass the time playing tourist in Denmark's mainland capital: two arrogant Copenhagenites in the Jutish provinces. The evening's chief attraction draws near: we go back to the theatre with the comic figures in the gable.

Only once before have you been to a professional play, *The Defeat*, Nordahl Grieg's great drama about the Paris commune which the whole school saw in Odense last winter. Tonight it will be another modern classic, *The Threepenny Opera*.

The ironic parallel strikes me: it isn't just Brecht and Weill's little drama that can be called a modern classic, but my own as well:

The lover offers his beloved the very best!

In my exuberance I have reserved, the most elegant and expensive seats, in the so-called private box right above the stage. The view is not the best — we look *down* on the players — but we have the box to ourselves, and that is just the point. How often have I dreamed of being able to reach cautiously for your hand during some performance and, in the red-plush darkness around us, hold it in mine as the theatrical moon beams down upon us...

"Do you see the moon over Soho?"

"I see it, dear. Listen to my heart, my darling."

"I'm listening to your heart, my beloved."

"I'll follow you to the end of the world."

"And where you are, there will I be, too."

Oh, irony, for with my mind I can easily follow the poet's diabolical dialectic. But in our private box that night the *Verfreindung* disappears, and while the two lovers on the stage sing their acid, teary love duet, I mushily squeeze my little darling's hand.

"And without certificate of our love pact, without music from organ and choir, you without your wedding dress, and no myrtles and flowers in your hair. The plate off which one eats his bread, what does it matter? Throw it away! You only live once in eternity, and happiness may be all too brief."

"WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK?"

I don't need to ask. Your enthusiasm infects me, I can't just act blasé. The critic in me capitulates before your spontaneous joy. I glow with the pleasure of sharing a cultural experience. For the first time we've tried doing things together and being ourselves in the big world outside of the school. It seems we've both passed the test.

The performance still lives in us. Words, verses lie heavy in our minds as we make our way back through the late nighttime streets. We walk to the same rhythm, almost in step — we're getting better at that, now. Although a visible, finite space separates our bodies, we walk in implied embrace, like the loving couple we're in the process of becoming. We walk closely. We walk very near one another. Hardly anyone could see that. In our own reality we're invisible to the world.

"Let's go to some nice quiet place. I think we both could both have something to drink."

What I really want is to take you out on the town, the town I knew back when I travelled around the kingdom preaching peace and friendship between young people in the east and the west, but of course I dare not drag you into a night club. You are, after all, only fifteen, and in the pale light from the street lamps you look like nothing more than a little fellow who needs to go home and sleep. But I'm thirsty — and instinctively I want to stretch the evening out.

We find a little place not far from the hotel, a wine, or rather a beer bar in a deserted side-street — the sort of place which now you can only find in the provinces. Under high wood panelling old men sit and roll dice or play cards. The table-cloth is crumpled, ashtrays unemptied, and the ancient waiter — or maybe it's the owner — flops about in carpet slippers with a dead cigar butt in the corner of his mouth. A not overly happy spot but suited well enough to our modest *nachspiel*. Nobody objects when all we order is a couple of beers.

"Cheers," I say, and chat on about Brecht and Busch and Weill and Weigel and God knows who else.

"Cheers," you say, and yawn.

It's going on to midnight, according to the wall clock over our heads. We stay just long enough to finish our beers, in tobacco smoke and the stale reek of ale and schnapps with Angostura.

So we call it a night.

You no longer try to hide your yawns. I'm tired, too. We were up early and almost constantly on the go. Now the time has come — really has, I think. I feel both unqualified and stirred. The porter with the eyes has been succeeded by an older night clerk who hands us our keys without even looking up. We take the lift to the third floor. We put our keys in our respective keyholes, twist them, open the doors at the same time, look at each other.

It's indeed now, or...

"Are you tired?" I ask. Stupid question!

You nod and yawn. Your strong young jaw cracks.

"So am I. And maybe a wee bit tipsy. But I'm so very happy."

"So'm I," you answer, and hesitate a few seconds. "Thanks for the evening."

"And thank *you* for the evening," I say. "But, Kim..."

I walk the few steps over to your door and with my forefinger touch you lightly on the cheek.

"Like this," I say, and press my finger into the skin, "I have to touch you..."

You shake your head impatiently. I look into your sleep-soaked blue-grey eyes.

"You know how very fond of you I am — that's not so awful, is it?"

You shake your head again and smile vaguely.

"I'll ring you up in the morning early," I say.

"Not too early, okay?"

"No, no, but early enough." I let my finger glide for a moment down your chin and around by way of the shirt collar towards your warm throat. "Good night, sweet prince!"

I tear myself loose and walk to my door. I open it wide and look back over my shoulder. You're already in your room. Now you stick your head out through the doorway like a mischievous little pixie. But your smile is not mischievous. It is big and warm and very sleepy, and for the first time you pronounce that word I've wanted for so long to hear. From now on you can, and will, use it.

You say:

"Good night and sleep well... *Jens!*"

Why don't I go to bed with you tonight?

It certainly has been my intention. It's what I've yearned for and looked forward to. It's what I've carefully planned and prepared.

Has my production failed after all?

Yes and no.

The idea was that we go away from school together, be alone with each other outside the familiar micro environment we move through every day. I just assumed we'd be doing all those things loving couples do nowadays with each other. Yet there's no hurry. It's enough to know you're lying in your bed on the other side of the wall. It's enough to know I *could* go in to you if I wished, sit on the side of your bed and bend over you, kiss you on the mouth, on the brow, on the eyelids. I *could* slip under the covers with you. I know it would be allowed. I know you'd let me do all that.

And yet tonight it's less important that I touch your body than that you've actually called me by my first name.

Your joy over our little feast, your spontaneous enthusiasm about the play, even your sleepiness and persistent yawns, are more precious to me than some hectic forced contact in the dark. It's you in your entirety I want. You as a whole. I don't want you in small bits and pieces, or in little spurts of juvenile lechery, or in fleeting contacts and furtive kisses. I want you from the toes of your feet to your wonderful

dark hair, to hold you...

My Kim!

I can wait now because I'm certain. I can postpone, because the fulfilment of the yearnings of the last year and a half lies at last within reach. I can draw out the delight of expectation as long as is necessary.

Knowing what looms tomorrow and the realisation of its possibilities, I go to bed alone. Night closes in on me. Into the dark, through the walls which separate me from you, I whisper, "I love you. I love you so much I can wait. I love you so much it's no longer a matter of my coming to *make* love to you, now that I know, now that I know, now that I know..."

"OH, MY HEAD, MY POOR HEAD!"

I awake the next morning with the anvils behind my eyes setting up a terrible clang, because the night before I'd mixed my drinks so wildly: sherry, claret, cognac, ale. By habit I curse, then remember where I am and who lies waiting for me on the other side of the hotel room wall. I spring out of bed and part the curtains on a new day. Rain again. A grey city for the early Sunday risers. Sad. But no matter. I'm full of high spirits despite my former intoxication. I prepare myself carefully. I brush my teeth. I shave. Through the drone of the electric razor I hear again your

complaint: "Your stubble tickles!" I go over my face a second time.

There's still a little sherry left in the bottle. I fill the water glass with it, toast my image in the mirror and toss it down. Now, that *does* chase away the dust! I become a bit high, but not too high. I open the window and let the cobwebs of last night fly away over the rooftops in the wet morning air. All is quiet on the streets below and in the hotel. It's only a little past nine a.m. We still have a couple of hours before we must be out of our rooms, but you have to be on the train to Grenå at 11:30. So I must wake you now if we're going to...

Yes, exactly.

Now the need — I know I can't go back to school without first having held you. That conviction grows stronger and stronger. I allow myself the feel of succulent, swelling sensuality. Sitting on the bed, excitement takes over. My cock rises, my balls tighten. I snatch the telephone receiver and ask the porter to connect me with your room on the other side of the wall.

Let the beggar have his proof that we haven't slept together, I think in a fit of hysterical hypocrisy, and am immediately mad at myself. Would it never end? I am just plain wet. A skulking jackal.

Would our first act of love begin with my disowning it?

Through the wall, with my free ear, I can faintly hear the telephone ringing. It rings and rings. What the hell can be keeping you? I imagine how the bell penetrates your sleep — you come awake frightened, not knowing where you are — this is what happens when you go to a hotel with a strange man!

I've experienced that myself.

"Hello?" says a sleepy and very meek voice.

"Good morning, Mr. Steffensen." I greet you in the jolly comrade-teacher tone I so heartily dislike. "Did I wake you up?"

"Uh, yes," you answer, drunk with sleep and yawning.

"Good," I continue merrily. You must find my sprightliness extremely irritating. "We have to rise and shine. The time is..."

I look at my watch and deliberately lie — the privilege of teachers and lovers.

"It's almost ten, and you must be on the eleven-thirty train, right?"

"Uh, yeah," you answer, still far away.

"Now listen." I mobilise all my authority, "Go over and open your door. I'm coming in."

As soon as I finish speaking I break the connection so you won't have a chance to object. It's essential to keep you from taking a lot of time getting dressed.

I quickly step into my pants, put on my shirt and shoes, letting my socks and underwear lie where they were. A quick glance in the mirror, a stroke of my twice-shaved chin, then bottle to mouth to drain the last drops of sherry, and I rush out into the hallway. I knock smartly on the door and open it...

There you sit.

A revelation in orange-red pyjamas. The pyjamas must be new: at any rate, I've never seen them on my evening rounds at the school. You sit on the edge of the bed with bowed head and look at your long toes — if you're actually seeing anything at all. Your arms hang loosely down, wrists crossed between your knees. You slowly turn your sleep-lined face under your tousled hair towards me. Your eyes are far away. The night won't let go of you. Sleep still has your body in its grip; a single push and you would fall back into its arms. But that's not the embrace I want you to seek!

I lock the door behind me, remembering despite my rising agitation and nervousness to turn the heavy key, then step over the soft carpet to your bed. I kick off my shoes and strip off my shirt and trousers, then sit by your side — you the morning-dazzled little creature still unaware of what's as going on around you. I lift my right arm and rest it cautiously on your shoulder and feel its warmth under the thin pyjama-top.

"Kim?" I say.

And no more.

For between your loose, down-hanging arms and the crossed wrists by your knees, my eyes focus upon something I've fantasised often enough but almost despaired of ever seeing. Out of the open fly, between the mother-of-pearl buttons in the slightly over-large orange-red pyjama-bottoms, rises a fully adult, slightly curved penis which, like your other limbs — hands, fingers, feet, toes — seems almost too big in comparison with your still-growing boy-body. In my amorous, lust-dazzled eyes it possesses a beauty unattained in even my most lecherous fantasies. I know that I would have loved you no matter how you

were hung, but why not admit my gratitude and joy that life every now and then can manifest its surplus in so gorgeous, swelling and lovely a manner?

My heart fills with happiness, my eyes with tears. I must embrace your sleep-heavy body. I have to conquer your body, love it, own it, possess it...

Then I calm down. I become inwardly mild, remember who and where I am and who you are. Not just a body. Not just a sexual organ, a cute and curved prick, but Kim, and for me *the other*, the only, *the* Kim. I grasp your shoulders and turn you cautiously toward me. I set my mouth to your cheek. I breathe against your head. I searchingly nibble at your pretty ear lobes. I inhale the scent of your hair. I press with infinite affection a kiss on your throat. I open two buttons of your pyjama-top and bury my nose in your still-hairless armpit. With the tip of my tongue I lick a drop of your salty sweat. And I take your face in my hands and raise it up against mine so that with my lips I can caress your soft nose, your faintly quivering eyelids, your prominent cheekbones, your lightly cleft chin. At last, very gently and very cautiously — alas, also all too awkwardly, incompetently — I slide my mouth to yours in a temporarily unsuccessful attempt at separating your lips.

At that moment you open your fallow-deer's eyes and look at me. If, indeed, you see anything, I can't tell and don't care. I'm too excited. I have no time for reflection, for caution, for calm enjoyment. Now I simply cannot wait any longer. Lust overwhelms me. Lechery rushes through me in dark rolling waves. Rising, rising. You obediently follow my movements. You let my hands do what they please. In one swift motion I bring you back onto the bed, put your feet on top of the quilt and half lie upon you while my over-zealous fingers open all the remaining buttons on your pyjama-top and strip it off, then the net undershirt which is too small for you now and too short below the navel: my fingernails catch in its meshes. Now, now I have to rush. All that's left is this monstrosity of an orange-red two-legged piece of pyjama which conceals the ultimate secrets of a body which, until this final moment, has remained almost unknown to me. At last the bottoms are pulled off and lie crumpled at the foot of the bed.

You are naked.

And I cannot hold myself back. I throw myself down on you, cover you completely and feel against my skin that harmonious contradiction of the hard with the soft, the soft with the hard, that miraculous paradox of the bodies of boys and young men.

I lie still. You don't stir at all beneath me. Perhaps you aren't yet really awake. Perhaps you think you're still dreaming. It's just at this moment that I should take my time. It's right now that I should be the mature and experienced lover. But I fail — or I'm in no state to give myself time to succeed. Images, thoughts, feelings fly through my head. I see both of us, you and me, a boy and a man, a pupil and a teacher, in a bed in a hotel room in Aarhus. I remember it's Sunday morning. I know it's raining outside. I feel the porter's eyes on me. And it's clear I'm about to commit a criminal act.

No doubt about that.

And I begin to move, gently, cautiously, so it won't hurt. I certainly wouldn't harm you. But your skin is so young and new and tender and my hands so big, rough and old. I let them explore you. You don't resist. Your eyes are closed. You hardly stir. You're in another place, deep under me. No, you are close, close, close. I inhale the odours of your head, your sweat, your hair. I feel your prick against my belly: maybe it's only a morning erection, a piss-hardon. No matter. The hardness of your cock is a symbol of our love

— my lust is echoed. My wish has come true. It *has* to be like this. I *want* it this way. And suddenly I can no longer hold back. The lust tenses and tightens, it aches in my loins and thighs, muscles contract, sinews are stretched snapping tight, first in my feet but immediately afterwards in my throat and arms as well. Tears come to my eyes. A groaning rattle makes its way up through my throat. And in a pyrotechnic explosion of rut, dread, dream, lightness, darkness, nothingness, I come in a far too hasty, far too early but powerfully and painfully convulsive spray between your thighs and on your abdomen, and I sink exhausted upon you. I smell you anew: different, now, stronger, now. I feel your sticky sweat.

And I love you for it.

Instead of the cruelty of the little, lonely death, there is now hope of togetherness and life.

It wasn't really a good act of love. From a technical point of view it was downright bad. A wretched morning make-out, where only one partner, thanks to his ungovernable selfishness, got his release and a certain modicum of momentary pleasure. A flop, the consequence of which, taken at its worst, might be a quick descent for both of us down into hell's hottest pit — or, in any case for me, a walk through the prison gates.

No, I have to admit it's been no huge success. But it happened, and, after all, it was only a first time. Like a well-meant but awkward and too sloppy kiss, I think, and in spite of everything a loving kiss.

You are so sweet.

So quiet, almost unconcerned. So damned natural and soothing and brotherly to me in whom headlong reaction now sets in: sweat on the brow and over my whole body, impelling me, all too soon, to jump off the bed and into my clothes. My belly turns. Fear starts lapping within it. I'm overcome with claustrophobia.

I have to get out. I have to get away.

"Kim," I say breathlessly, "I'm going on down ahead of you and will settle the bill. I'll wait for you over by the station."

I the cowardly jackal!

And you actually put up with it!

The porter with the eyes collects my payment for the two single rooms. I carefully place the receipt in my wallet — as if I could get the amount refunded! — lift my briefcase from the floor between my feet, nod an aloof farewell and leave with a clear conviction that the X-ray eyes of this uniformed clerk of Society will be on my back forever.

When I have propped up my spirits with an ice-cold beer in the train station, I step out of the mouldy waiting room onto the street. And there you come hurrying out of the hotel and over the station square. Your dark blue duffel coat is open, your travel bag hangs from your hand. I step from between the pillars on the stairs and lift my hand in signal. You wave back, smile and come on toward me.

"I took a bath," you say, and shake your dark, still-wet hair.

"Good idea," I reply. "I should have done that, too. Come on, let's go in and have some breakfast. Your train leaves in three-quarter of an hour."

"I wish I didn't have to go there!" you sigh.

"You must," I say. "That's the real reason for your trip, isn't it?"

You look at me.

"Is it?" you ask.

And we both laugh.

I WAIT FOR YOU. I can hardly do otherwise. I sit in my house and listen to the darkness. I sit motionless in front of the typewriter under the lamp on my work table and simply wait. But you don't come on the bus we had agreed you'd take. I become more and more worried. The students have long since gone to bed. The lights have gone out all over the school. I jump up every time there's even the faintest sound in the darkness. What in hell can be keeping you? At last I hear quick footfalls on the gravel walk, then on the steps and the terrace. The door opens...

"Excuse me — I had to come by way of Nyborg and transfer. But here I am at last!"

You let the travel bag fall with a thump on the floor. And there in the middle of the room we embrace, really embrace, for the first time. We've both had a chance to think over what happened. We've both discovered how much we missed and needed each other. It's been twelve hours since we parted on the station platform in Aarhus. Twelve hours too long to be apart. We stand quite still and sense each other through our clothing. We've never been as close as now.

Your hair and face are wet from the rain. Your cheeks are chilly. Your lips are hot. We kiss each other on the mouth. I rest my head on your shoulder and in a long, soothing moment let my tears blend with the sweet raindrops of spring on your duffel-coat...

We tear ourselves apart.

"Up to bed with you!" I say merrily, and you spring out the door. I remain sitting in front of the typewriter under the lamp on my work table and think our embrace of reunion was worth the whole trip.

WELL, NOW YOU RESPOND...

Just after breakfast you come running up to my house. That gives us fifteen minutes before morning hymns and the first class of the day. Doesn't anybody notice anything? No, we're crafty, the two of us. We have so much that must be done. At lunch break we study English and German. In the hour after dinner, and the half-hour before lights-out, we chat and love. You always, always come running up to my house. In my ears your footfalls sound like young, strong hooves.

You have been awakened; you are blossoming. Eros colours our life together. Each day is filled with intimacies, teasing, hominess, warmth. But also of waiting and moments of irritation, lacunae, and not least by fear of discovery.

I'm constantly amazed that nobody notices anything. But we are good actors, you and I.

You learn quickly.

You come bounding up the stairs to the terrace, open the door and shout my name. You have begun to call me by my first name when we are alone. It gets around, though. Your tongue must have slipped and somebody caught on. It couldn't go unnoticed. We get a bit of ribbing. A few boys even follow your example — good naturedly. That's nice, in a way, but it's a frightening reminder. We live on an island. Do others sense something after all? Have I put a noose around my neck?

How could they *not* see that you occupy a favoured position?

Meanwhile, plans for your future have helped us. Everybody knows you want to go on with your education. So it's only natural: you're coming to me so often so I can coach you.

Yes, we're cunning. We're wily, we're conspirators. We're unscrupulous.

We're in love.

We transform my house into a fortress, a castle keep against the world. The wooden walls become thick ramparts, the stone steps up to my terrace a drawbridge, the terrace itself is a bulwark, a defensive redoubt, the door a portcullis, the unbleached linen curtains at my large window an impenetrable mesh of bars.

We simply *must* believe we're secure in our castle of love.

I rush to lock the door after you, pull you through the room, past my beloved Braque's two elegant fish and into my bedroom where Picasso's boy with the horse observes us moodily but without disapproval from his position over the head of my bed. I let my hands find their way inside your coat — not the velvet coat but the other one of dark blue, the coat you wear every day — and in under your sweater — not the light blue one, for you have outgrown that, but a new red sweater or a thinner one of grey wool. I take you about the waist, enjoy the feeling of slimness, smoothness, elasticity, hug you to myself, lay my ear to your heart, rub my nose against your throat, inhale your scent of boy. You rest your forehead on my shoulder, your arms on my neck. Damn it, you're getting to be taller than I am! Soon I'll have to stand on tiptoe to kiss you.

Provided I can get you to take the pipe out of your mouth when we make love!

We grin. We fool around.

You're frightfully ticklish.

Love is comic.

"I suppose you thought I didn't know how to kiss?" you say shamelessly after I've fully parted your lips

and forced my way to your palate with my tongue.

"You always seemed so innocent," I mumble, "so pure and chaste and terribly naive."

You laugh.

"Then you don't know my past."

"Do you have one?"

"I sure do!" you boast, and have no inkling of how jealous you are making me.

And here, in this safe, warm, reciprocal hug, I love you most of all. Here in this moment of intense nearness, before desire overwhelms us, before lust makes us frantic, my feelings for you are the strongest. In this friendly, brotherly nearness of body, in the not-quite-glowing yet melting embrace, during these gentle but edged, soft-hard, small, flexible movements of our two masculine bodies I love you the most. Perhaps it's because you haven't yet really knocked your head against the outside world. Perhaps because I feel that, through you, I might somehow embrace and accept that world which, deep in my heart, I love. Perhaps it's because in these preliminary caresses we haven't yet overstepped the arbitrary limits which would, in the world's biased and absurdly disapproving eyes, turn our relationship into something exceptional, which, on my part, I still label *abnormal*, but which I wouldn't dream of so labelling in you.

For in my heart I yearn to be accepted as I am. As *we are*. I dream that the world might accept our happiness. I want the eyes of all outsiders to sparkle as cleanly and brightly as our own do at the prospect of our love. Good God, all lovers want to gambol in the broadest light of day — nothing new in that: I'm as vain as the next man.

But the grace of peace cannot last. Tenderness gives way to hunger, hectic motions and hasty, furtive caresses. We're always in a hurry. We must listen for approaching footsteps, voices calling us, knuckles that rap, hands on the door-knob. There's always danger. Did we remember to turn the lock? Have we drawn the curtains tight? We flee to one another in fear whenever the cats under my house begin to howl and fight. I stamp peevishly on the floor — damnit, shut up! And then that moment of pure panic when one day around noon I straighten up from having just touched your nose with a kiss to find our principal's wife standing in the door. Did she *see*? Apparently not. But danger is everywhere. Always fear in my breast. A feeling of loss. Uneasiness. Anxiety.

And we hurry. We grow agitated. We have to be quick. My thigh tightens against yours. Our lower halves meet. We excite each other. We pant into each other's ears. Our fingers unlock, move lower.

And with all those movements, by now familiar to both of us, we find ourselves drawing away from each other. We should be left in peace.

But it happens every day.

And every day there's school. And the school takes its toll.

I gradually realise that my thinking about our school has altered. My relationship with you has changed my mind about many things. It's impossible now for me to see our school as the same institution and authority you must. My loyalty is divided. I am more and more split. I drift into discord between two

worlds. My love for you makes me a potential traitor to my place of work and my colleagues.

If my love for you, and especially the actions which result from it, come to light, I'll be perceived as a molester by all the friendly people about me. But I'm not a molester. I'm an amorous fool. Blind, foolish, yes — but inside strong, and full of joy and goodness. In fact, I've become a better teacher, a more cheerful colleague. I write better. I rise every morning filled with fresh, new energy. I whistle in joy on my way down to breakfast. I meet the dull and sleepy faces at the table with a cheerful 'Good morning'. I smile at the girls in the kitchen. I laugh uproariously at our pathetic pastor who, as usual, comes in fifteen minutes late to his weekly morning class. I pretend to flirt with the clever, uncommunicative girl with the blue smock in the co-op; I listen patiently to her boss's chatter. I exude good will on visits to my friends. I send sparkingly happy letters to my family. And in my free hours I race off to Kerteminde on my old bike to go shopping. I buy gifts for my darling: chocolates, cigarettes, records, books — heaps of books. I prosper as I have never prospered in all my thirty years.

Yes, when you, this new *other* person, this wondrous boy, burst into my life and, so to speak, conquered it, I was ready to surrender myself and heap upon you all my pent-up feelings. I overflowed with affection. I regained that peculiar strength I had, off and on, as a boy and never since: that giddy, bright, entirely pure sensation that I can rule the whole world. The sun shines because I want it to shine, the rain falls because I order it to, the clouds grow heavy because I, in sweet melancholy, desire them thus, so that darkness can be scattered by a clearer light than ever.

It seems as if, for a while at least, nature and I, in my infatuation, have become one. I am intoxicated.

How arrogant the lover is!

He challenges the gods.

He forgets all about *hubris*.

The moment I bend over you, the moment our eyes sink into each other's and our vision gives way to colours deeper than the sea, darker than the earth, stronger than the sun, I know — oh, thou, my so-young beloved — that, despite all, it can be done, we can live, plant, reap, go on. I am in you and you are in me. Inviolable, a moment, an eternity.

Well, don't you ever irritate me?

I don't think so, not yet.

You suck like a sponge. All that I do or say seems marvellous. You are wax in my hands, but, in return, my heart is wax in yours. We do things together. We make plans together. We dream dreams together. And that's probably the most important element of our relationship in this, its first or second phase: working together, every day — time...

"We have enough time," I think rashly. "We have an eternity of time before us."

It wouldn't be true to say you're the first I've fallen in love with. There had been others before you, but those infatuations were superficial and transitory. They had no depth. I gave them no chance to develop. And so they didn't hurt when they came to an end. Now, looking back, it seems I simply didn't dare fall in

love. You, on the other hand, came to me at just the right moment, when I needed it. You were the first one I fell in love with in this universal, all-embracing way. I express myself badly, of course — banalities and clichés lie in wait. But let me say it briefly as best I can:

My falling in love with you has grown as lightning into a huge and warm absorbing love that permeates my whole existence and has radically changed my life. It isn't just an affair. It's an earthquake. And I discover unsuspected powers within me. I find courage to struggle. I find strength to hold out. I get energy and resistance, will to endure humiliation, disappointment, defeat.

The ecstasy transforms itself into a passionate love that goes on and on...

But it's also a love which makes demands.

Yes, I need to be *loved* by you, not just love you. I have to know you have as much need of me as I of you. I have to be as necessary for you as you are for me. I want you to blaze and burn for me just as I blaze and burn for you. I want you to be as strong a support for me as I am for you. I want you to feel as good and beautiful because of me as I do because of you.

I want our love to become a cherished, inalienable gift we can always give each other.

THEN COMES THE REACTION....

"Good lord, what's the matter?" you ask.

"I'm afraid, really afraid."

"Afraid of what, Jens?"

"That they might find out about us."

"I'll never tell. Never!"

You are so serious and so vehement I can't help but be touched.

"Oh, I know, I know," I say quickly "It isn't that at all."

"What is it, then?"

"How can they not see?" I exclaim. "I mean, you run in and out of this house every day of the week. You're here almost all the time."

"Should I stop coming so often?" you ask, quite without suspicion.

"No, no, for God's sake!" I answer passionately. "I can't live without you, not for a single moment. I — I can't stand it when you're not here. But, Kim — don't you realise they can see what's happening?"

You consider this a moment, and then you say,

"I don't think they can."

"Perhaps it's just me, seeing ghosts. Go ahead, smile, but I do see them. I see them everywhere. On the other hand, what we have together is so completely unimaginable that maybe they simply haven't the imagination to conceive of it. Maybe people are blind to what they don't care to see, or am I oversimplifying?"

"Lucky for, us anyhow," you drily observe.

"Yes," I say hesitantly, "right now, certainly."

IT IS ABOUT THIS TIME that your principal, on one of his visits, speaks about another boy in the welfare programme:

"We simply had to send him away," he says. "We couldn't keep him."

"Yes, thank heavens we've been spared getting that type here."

"Where did you put him?" I ask.

"In a boys' home for special treatment," your principal answers.

"Can that sort really be treated?" asks our principal's wife.

"I doubt it," says your principal. "But we could hardly have him going around seducing all the other youngsters, could we?"

"They're poor, sick people," says our principal with a sigh. "We had such a case in my home town, an old bachelor..."

He turns to me.

"Do you remember my telling you about him?"

I nod.

"Yes. If only they'd leave the young alone," says our principal. "But a lot of them simply can't. Just look at this unpleasant affair in Odense!"

"Oh, there've been warnings about that on radio and television," says our principal's wife and rises to pour more coffee.

"In that case it was one of the youths who was the problem," says our principal. "And it was boys his own age he couldn't keep his hands off of."

Our principal's wife pours more coffee. "Have a biscuit, Mr. Eisenhardt," she says, and hands me the crystal bowl with vanilla-garland, Finnish bread and God knows what all. I succeed in holding the bowl

without my hands trembling. I put a biscuit in my mouth, chew it, swallow it and stand quite still.

A little later we're talking about something else.

IF THEY CATCH on to us, I'm lost.

At best I would have to leave the school.

At worst...

You would be packed off to a "home" — in your dossier you would forever be branded as a pervert. All I have to do is recall what your principal said about the homosexual boy: "We simply had to send him away. We couldn't keep him."

I once met a young fellow who told me how at the age of thirteen or fourteen he'd been torn out of his family and sent to a boy's home because he'd 'messed around', as he put it, with some friends his own age in the neighbourhood and in his school.

And that was just the place where you'd end up!

I'm afraid. On and off I'm terribly afraid. It gets so bad I think I should give you up. That I *must* give you up. That I should take steps to leave.

"What in heaven's name can I do with that boy?" I think.

I am thirty years old. I will write. I will create. I never committed myself to stay long at this jumped-up little school in the provinces. I have ambitions. I have big plans. Lots of projects. Stories, novels, plays...

Today, twenty years later, I can see I am persuading myself that *this affair* was not going to ruin my life. I feel I have to face the fact that I cannot hold on to you forever. In ten years I will have changed my mind completely, but now you are only fifteen years old. Now it seems I simply have to live one day at a time...

So I resign in advance and adopt a kind of moderation completely foreign to my nature. But it is generally assumed at the time that people like me can not be, ought not to be, are simply not *allowed* to be happy.

It is unnatural.

And all this self-pity — so richly supported by what bits of literature comes my way, and among the half-dead old crows I've encountered during my passages through the ghetto world— appeals in some way to the melancholic side of my temperament, a taste for decadence and lavender.

Or did...

Before my infatuation.

Before my love.

Before you.

"HIM! THAT GERMAN FRIEND OF YOURS..."

You've come bounding up at top speed over the terrace, barged through my door, which now stands open and rattling in your wake.

"Shut it behind you!" I shout from the bedroom. I'm pulling the smooth, crackling laundry wrappers off my newly starched, properly ironed and clean-smelling white shirts. You brought them back from Kerteminde yesterday, and so I've received an unexpected visit.

"Did you hear me?"

"I can hardly help it when you holler like that," I answer, and step out into the living-room with a shirt over my arm.

You stamp on the floor. "I'll be damned if I like him!" "I assume you mean Wolfgang."

"Yes," you hiss. "Your German friend — Wolfgang or Amadeus or whatever he calls himself."

"He's very smart," I say quietly and return to the bedroom to put my shirt away.

"Smart!" you exclaim, scandalized. "He's an arsehole, that's what he is!"

"Well, did you know..." I begin, but you furiously interrupt me:

"He rushes up here to Denmark in his super-advantaged sports car, comes through that door and roars 'Guten Tag, guten Tag...' "

I laugh. "What else would you expect him to say?"

"...to you," you continue, much more exasperated, "and without so much as a look in my direction..."

"Well, it was me he'd come to visit."

"He is one big piece of shit, is what he is. Did you notice how he looked right through me, as if... as if..."

"As if you were only a little schoolboy," I complete for you. "But that's really what you are."

"I am not!" you shout and hammer a fist upon the wall so that my beloved Braque's two fish waggle their tails and the big window-pane rattles.

"Calm down," I say, and look at you in, all your anger. "What is he supposed to believe? Here I am teaching in a school for youths and I'm with you reading extra German..."

"We were reading English!"

"Okay, English, then. In any case, here I am sitting with a student..."

"A student!" you repeat, scandalized all over again. "It was *me* you were reading with!"

"Sweet friend, you're still my pupil."

"So can't he at least have the common courtesy to say hello to a pupil of yours?"

"He just didn't notice you."

"Disgusting creature!" you say.

"Easy, Kim."

"Damned Nazi swine!"

"No, in any case, you can't accuse him of *that*. He was hardly born when Hitler came to power and only twelve when the Nazi Reich was in ruins."

You suck in your cheeks and tighten your lips.

"Moreover, he's been one of the leaders of the S.S.D..."

You turn your head away from me. "What's that?"

"Socialist Students. Wolfgang studied at the Free University in Berlin."

"Oh," you say.

"Furthermore, I got to know him during a youth congress in Moscow."

"Oh," you repeat.

"To be precise, I met him the afternoon of August sixth, the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. In the morning I had been on a boat trip for young writers— Jan Myrdal was there too, as I recall. But I can't remember much of anything else. *Za zdarovje!*"

"What does that mean?"

"Prost — cheers." I fall silent for a moment, remembering, in fact, quite a bit, and then I laugh. "I woke up in the back seat of a car in front of the hotel where we had our international press centre. God knows how I got there. But I had my blue admission card and I could go in. That card opened a lot of doors..."

"So were you some kind of V.I.P.?" you ask, a bit more interested.

"I was a youth-leader careerist, a young careerist. I worked on the international festival committee — but that's another story. Up in the bar I wanted the windows closed: that Hiroshima meeting made a hell of a lot of noise. *Mir i drusba! Mir i drusba!* But my request was denied."

"Request for what?"

"That they close the windows. Well, I complained — rather loudly, I suppose. In any case, Wolfgang immediately came over to my table..."

"As if it was any of his business!"

"Actually, he thought I was a fellow-German. And for a whole lot of reasons the West Germans in particular are very sensitive about behaving correctly to the Russians."

"They should feel the same way about behaving correctly to the Danes."

"In any case, I rose to the occasion: I couldn't let myself be told by a bloody Prussian how to act in Moscow, could I?"

"Of course not," you say with conviction.

"So a little while later we all ended up drinking champagne at Wolfgang's table."

"Champagne?" you exclaim in open-eyed wonder. "Crimean effervescent hock," I explain. "Russian champagne. Quite delicious when one drinks it ice-cold.

You can buy it in restaurants everywhere in Moscow."

"It sounds wonderful," you say.

"And it was."

You knit your brows. "Even so, he's a shit."

"Forget about him."

"If that isn't just typical!"

"Typical of what?"

"You grown-ups."

"Nonsense."

"You piss on us. You treat us any way you damn well please. You only see us when you feel like seeing us."

"Tell me, are you cross?"

"Yes, I am!"

"But not at me, I hope?"

"No. Maybe a little."

"Well, my widdle fwiend..." I say, lapsing into the awful baby-talk certain adults inflict on small

children.

You laugh, then grow serious again. "It's only when we're alone that you're not as bad as the rest. When there are other people around I might just as well not exist, as far as everybody's concerned. Like him, that dumb kraut."

"You exist for me," I object.

"And you looked right through me, then."

"Now that's not fair."

"Grown people are stuck-up shits."

"Not all of them," I protest.

"Well, I'm not going to stand there and let people treat me that way," you declare, and with such pride that it makes me, in turn, proud of the love I feel for you.

"No, you won't," I say.

"And that goes for *all* of your old buddies from Berlin and Moscow and who knows where else — like those we met in Montmartre, do you remember?"

"That was my fault," I answer in shame.

"Because I, too, can be jealous!" you say with a sudden big smile.

"Now, that's very nice to hear!" I mean it, too. "Let's get some English read..."

"Deutsch," you say. "It's Deutsch today. You *know* that, meiner Herr!"

"Mein Herr."

"What?"

"It's *mein* Herr, not *meiner* Herr."

"Scheisse!"

"AN EXPERIENCE..."

Our principal pauses briefly so the sound can sink and remain for a while darkly glowing in our minds.

"An experience in living..."

Each oblate sound in this last word is rounded off with a luminous, holy glow. Then comes the expected switch back to the voice of the experienced schoolmaster.

"That is what we have sought to give you!"

In our principal's voice, still touched with a faint north Jutish accent, this completely meaningless statement resonates like a fanfare. It has splendour, richness — whatever else may have been its intent, it comes across as the goal of all our strivings, a triumphant manifesto...

I cringe with embarrassment. Our principal continues: "When Christen Kold was once asked what he wanted a school for older students to be, he answered, 'I will stir them up so they will never stand still again'."

Another a pause. Time for us to think.

"And so in the last ten months we here have sought, through play and work, to give you young people an experience in living..."

There it comes again. Well, certainly *you*, Kim, are up to your ears in the experience of living!

I'm not being entirely fair to our principal. He's certainly not the worst of the pedagogues of the time in his use of orotund outpourings: it takes a special occasion to coax them out.

And one of those occasions is certainly today, at the commencement ceremony for our first ten-month session.

"Of course we have also tried to give you a measure of technical and factual information during this school year," says our principal, "and, hopefully, you have also learned a number of practical skills. One day you will surely participate fruitfully in our community. But I hope, then, that all of you will realise that there is a difference between existing and living. I hope you will have absorbed the full significance of community, that the happiness of the individual is so inextricably dependent upon the happiness of others..."

Once again a theatrical pause, this time so our principal can coax his upper denture into place with a discreet nudge of the tongue-tip.

"Yes," he says at last, and with a benevolent smile on his furrowed farmer's face which rises above a bright red shirt-collar and green necktie, "yes, you all are clearly aware that it is the sun which nourishes all life, but it will not hurt you, once in a while, to think about what nourishes the soul.

"For, as our poet has said,

"Strange as my heath is the man's craving,

"He does not live by bread alone;

"Glut him with gold; before you know it,

"His heart trembles sighing after — stone.

"And, so, let's have some coffee."

The mumbling and scraping of chairs rises to the ceiling in the public school's gym — we are still waiting on the building permit — where all the students, parents, members of the school board and, of course, we teachers, sit at long tables decked with paper table-cloths, muffins, pretzels, layer cakes and, last but not least, sweet cookies, fruit of our Home Economics teacher's last great endeavour in the school kitchen. There is the smell of freshly-brewed coffee and lilacs. The windows behind the upper bars open on the June day. Afternoon sun slants in and dances merrily upon our reverend pastor's balding pate. Our principal's wife feverishly tidies up the papers over by the piano. Our principal looks vigilantly out over the crowd, now nodding to a garrulous parent. The mood of festival and melancholy idyll. The hour of departure approaches. Bags have been packed. Lumps have gathered in throats. Our kitchen maids, otherwise so cheerful, go round and serve with dull eyes and sob-choked smiles, often drying their noses on an apron corner.

Your principal is here, too.

You sit with him, obliquely in front of me at another table. You hand him the cream pitcher and sugar bowl. You smile pointedly and benevolently. You're the good boy, the smart student. You know the rules of the game. You're the alert and attentive young man at the side of Authority, your legal guardian and, most importantly, the man who holds the purse strings.

You have far outgrown the little joker of that first winter, the boy with the quicksilver bottom, as your principal used to say. You're no longer the Copenhagen punk, the Kim Steffensen from Valby with the ugly ducktail and your shirttail hanging out over your pants, the comic, the clown, the Thankster standing slantwise in the glass door forever calling my last name when I cross the schoolyard...

You're the exceptional boy, now. One of the rare instances when the welfare people actually took one of their charges under their wing, and so have given you the chance you wanted for an education suited to your abilities.

My intrigues have born fruit. My plans for you have succeeded. I can look back with satisfaction — and jointly we can look forward to more time together. And long ago I've decided to stay through the next season at school to be as near to you as possible.

I glance in your direction but dare not smile at you. Your principal intercepts the glance and gives me an amiable nod. I nod back, shuddering inwardly, but we are in agreement, you, your principal and I. He has several times expressed his gratitude for the interest I've taken in you.

You never look in my direction.

Wise of you.

Life is absurd:

Here I sit caught up in school life which so closely mirrors society around us. And like everyone else, I'm a product of that society. Yet ever since I was a boy I've revolted against it. But no one in this coffee and lilac scented gym, no one except you, can imagine that only a few years earlier I've demonstrated in the streets of Copenhagen. Now I play the game.

I play on the student body as though it were a keyboard — and the keys, our students, submit to me.

And yet, I think, I can set some things in motion.

How can I, within the anachronistic framework of the school system, fit the pieces together: pedagogy, my revolutionary consciousness, the yearning for change, that vision from my earliest youth: socialism in Denmark within twenty years?

I content myself with making a grimace.

My revolt limits itself to childishly small sins of omission. On those rare occasions when our principal is absent, I omit the morning prayers, for example.

I wonder if our Lord has the last laugh on me.

Why am I content to play the rôle of a resigned fool? Because...

Because you appeared.

Because I found love.

Because my love for you has also opened my eyes to the double standard of small community life.

Because I now know I'm only a guest.

Because I now know that there's really no place here for a person like me.

Because I now know this is only a short respite.

Just as our school exploits my labour, I exploit the school in order to shelter my love — and survive. I deceive it.

From the moment I fell in love with you I became a traitor to this microcosm of the outside world.

And it's a good question whether any sort of passion wouldn't be considered treason against the norms of society, and thus against those of the school.

There is no place here for lust.

All the bubbling and effervescing of sensuality is overlooked, hushed up or swept under the carpet.

We never talk about those things, or if we do it's in terms so general they mean nothing.

We adhere to conventional, and miserable, public morals.

Well, did I really expect anything else?

If I want to preserve and protect my love for you I, of necessity, must play the game invented by others and follow its rules. Without realising it, they are the ones who set the limits to your development, and mine. It is they who force our love inside the thin walls of my little house. It is they who transform it in my mind into an impregnable fort. I personally have no desire to live in a fortress under siege.

And then I have to realise that the only chance I have left is to run away while I still have time. Yes...

Go, then, freely

Each his way

Trusting God's grace!

Happiness and delight

Spring from usefulness,

As God has willed.

We sing and take leave of each other. But not you and I. We still have half a year before you will move on to the care of my teacher friends in Odense. Your principal shakes my hand in farewell. Amiably, gratefully.

And, for the moment, it's summer...

EARLIER IN THE YEAR I suggested to our principal that it might be nice if we could take you on our school trip to Poland.

He agreed. "Kim deserves it," he said. "And we can economise by you and me sharing accommodations."

Naturally, you were delighted.

The day before we leave my mother comes over to Funen to vacation in my house. I introduce you as just one of my students.

How absurd not to be able to say, "He is the human being I love!"

And how I look forward to showing you about the country which, after Hungary, has played the most important rôle in my political evolution! I've travelled all over it. I still have friends there. Like Hungary, Poland is in my blood.

Yet the trip is not a success.

Not for me, at any rate. Two years before it was simple enough: I was promoter, co-leader — not to mention interpreter. This time it's very different.

I'm travelling with my young lover.

It is through your eyes alone that I see everything, through your mind I experience it. To me, the others

might as well not exist — and yet they're there all the same.

I'm inhibited.

I become inattentive. I grow unsociable and antisocial. Once I'm even hostile and rude in front of my fellow travellers. The whole time I have only one obsessive desire: to be as near you as possible, which is a problem in a bus full of lively and noisy youngsters.

But you take the seat right in back of me and, as a little message that you're still there, from time to time you surreptitiously sneak a finger forward to touch my side.

In Poznan we gather as a flock in front of the city hall and await the stroke of noon when two Billy goats come out of the clock tower and butt each other. And there I get into a testy verbal slinging match with our principal.

A teacher fight in public.

Ludicrous and trivial.

Unfortunate.

Neither of us wants that.

I have to translate, and feel, not for the first time, that what I come out with sounds altogether foolish.

I'm irritated over the difficulty I have playing the rôle of teacher-guide.

When what I am, in fact, is a lover.

And in a group the lover is a fool. He's out of place there, especially when he must hide the fact that he's in love.

One morning in Warsaw, when we are scheduled for a city tour, you and I get up early and cheat on the others in order to be alone together for a few minutes. We put as much distance as we can between ourselves and the hotel. We meet under the shade of the great trees lining one of the boulevards. The day is warm. Water trucks nightly wash and cool down the streets, but already, early in the morning, the coolness has evaporated into the hot shimmering air. The people of Warsaw are on the way to work in crowded trams and on foot. Fruit drink vendors are out with their little white carts. We walk back and forth under the trees, sit down occasionally on the benches, moving together discreetly, as if by accident.

When we finally have to return, we part to make our separate entrances to the dining hall so it will seem quite by chance that we were both away from our flock at the same time. What ingenuity and invention we have to exercise not to attract attention! It's more difficult for you, because your fellow students are always dragging you along with them. I can find more believable pretexts to go my own way. Still, during the whole trip I feel hunted and nervous.

When we are with the others I make it a rule never to look directly at you or talk with you.

But that, too, might seem rather strange...

Like all lovers, we constantly long to be alone together. Like all lovers who find themselves in a crowd, we seek to be alone together there — and in vain.

We finally succeed in slipping away one afternoon for a couple of hours. I want to show you the real Warsaw I knew. Walking the streets I look at the young men and say, "You could easily be taken for a Polish boy."

You feel flattered.

And justifiably.

We find a popular café not far from Nowy Swiat. We start talking with the people. You try a vodka. I down a whole lot of vodka.

When we came back to the hotel we're rather late, and more than a little drunk.

I'm full of anguish.

In Krakow — of all Polish cities I love Krakow the best — every hope I have of being alone with you is dashed.

In Zakopane, it's not until the second night, after a trip to the mountains, that we succeed in slipping away. My conscience is the same colour as the black Polish porter which comes in plump bottles with corks that pull out with a pop.

I want to show you the places I've been. The houses where I lived. The odours, sounds, colours which make me remember. I want to show it all to you, and tell you about it. But we have to be careful not to run into the others in this tourist nest of hotels, restaurants and cafés. Your fellow students can't understand why you don't want to rush out with them and have fun.

At last we find the kind of night-club — ugly, large, noisy — that's guaranteed to be so frightening that neither student nor teacher would venture in.

There we're left in peace.

I drink steadily.

I sit and dream of what it was like six years ago. Your eyes get sleepier and sleepier — mountain air and the drinks are taking their toll.

At last I must put an end to the outing.

Frightfully late.

And we nearly have a disaster that night...

In my insanity, I want to touch you. For eight days, by God, we've gone about without so much as exchanging a kiss, and now I boldly drag you down to the riverside behind the hotel. There in the dark we're stopped by a policeman with an Alsatian dog. It isn't until I explain to him who we are and where

we're staying that we're allowed to go our way.

At the hotel I pull you into the first men's room we pass and begin to grope you. Just then the door flies open. It *could* be one of our party. It isn't. It's a Pole who mumbles something or other in shock and bounds out of there and away, looking back over his shoulder as he goes...

So that's the end.

At Auschwitz... No, I can't write or speak any more about Auschwitz. This visit is my fourth.

At Auschwitz one must be silent.

At Katowice, however, I get up early, for it's your birthday and I've carried a present for you in my suitcase all the way from Funen, nicely wrapped up and inscribed. I want to give it to you now, but you're not in your room. So I start searching for you. I ask everyone I run into if they've seen you, but no one knows where you are. It's a large building. Finally I end up in the basement, in the shower area.

And there you stand, naked and soaping down in one of the shower stalls. Your body is half-turned before me. I stand staring at the back and arse I've so longed to embrace and caress throughout our trip. Water splashes all about us. Laughter and shouts from the other stalls. The water steams, gurgles, fizzes. A little later you and I are alone in the shower room. I call your name. You don't hear me. You've turned on the spigot again and let the warm water stream down over your lengthening body. You reach up into the air with your arms, turn around and with lifted head adore the luxuriant flood while your legs dance in place.

You're rejoicing in yourself on this, your sixteenth birthday.

Then you turn off the water.

I know a cold final shower is not for you; in that respect you're a sissy. You grope blindly for the towel which hangs on a hook outside the stall. As you pull it to you and bend forward to dry yourself between the legs with short, brisk strokes, I go up to you and touch your arm. You jump, raise your head and look straight into my laughing eyes.

"Happy birthday, Kim!"

I show you the package.

You're still rather startled at having been taken by surprise in the middle of your bath.

"Thanks," you say. "Thanks a lot."

"Well, I found you at last." I set your gift down on the bench beside your clothes. "Now I have to go upstairs and sort out the hotel bill."

You step forward. Water drips from your hair and face and glistens on your torso. You toss the towel away, spring to the middle of the floor and throw your arms around me.

"Thanks a million, Jens!"

"Are you crazy?!" I exclaim in horror and tear myself loose. But you manage to place a big, fat, wet kiss on my mouth.

Then you grin.

"Look," you say in your still light but gradually thickening adolescent voice, with obvious pride. "Your little Kim is getting really big."

And I look down at your body.

And blush.

They say the sexual urge in young men reaches its peak at the age of seventeen. If that's true, my sixteen-year-old Kim Steffensen from Valby is ahead of schedule.

I flee, with your wanton laughter ringing in my ears, as fast as I can out of the shower room, run up the stairs to resume my duties as trip leader.

But throughout the homeward journey I hear voices.

I sit in that old rattling bus and hear them — *the others* — talking about us. Actually I can't really make out what they say, but I'm sure it's about us. I listen. I hear words. Names. Our names. Yours and mine.

Do they know everything? Have they spied on us? Have they tailed us on our secret sojourns? I listen and listen. I become more and more certain of what they're saying. It's slander, malicious slander.

No, it's the truth!

And now they laugh. A hideous laughter. I can feel their enmity seeping through the bus towards me in the back seat like an evil-smelling fart. Their gloating malice sifts into my body through every pore, poisoning it. My thoughts circle: the same names again and again: you, me, Kim, Eisenhardt, Kim *and* Eisenhardt, those two!

Their laughter makes the bus shake even harder. I have to warn you.

When the bus finally stops in a town in a forest so we can get a bite to eat, I signal you away from the others. "They know," I whisper.

"What do you mean?" You are quite bewildered. "They know everything."

"Everything about what?"

"About us." I'm almost weeping.

"Nonsense!" you say with complete assurance. "You're seeing ghosts, you're hearing voices. You're worn out, Jens."

"Listen to how they laugh."

"Well? So what?"

"They're laughing at *us!*"

In Celle I give everyone the slip — you included, you the traitor who refuses to back me up in my war against our enemies. With my usual sixth sense for smelling out pubs, I quickly find a bierstube where I toss down a pick-me-up and chase it with good German beer. That helps. It helps a bit. So I stagger back amid the stage scenery and props of this gingerbread medieval town and collapse on a bench in front of the yellow castle where poor Caroline Mathilde wept over her lover's tragic death. Here I calm down. I return to the bus, bold, arrogant, and wade into the enemy's camp. And they don't look the least surprised when I crack a few bad jokes and get them laughing.

There is no slander-riddled malice in that laughter.

The malice is in myself. The poison from the poisoned world around us has slowly, over the years, seeped into my body.

The poison is anguish.

And from time to time it erupts.

"IT WORKED," I shout from the terrace, even before I see you inside the room.

"Good," you answer. "What did she say?"

"Nobody's going to interrupt us now. She's out there sunning herself on the lawn behind the dining hall with some of the new girls."

I'm talking about our Home Economics teacher. She has guard duty this weekend. It's the end of September; our new ten-months class has already been in session for a couple of weeks. But not all the students have gone home this Saturday.

The weather is beautiful.

"I told her I was going for a bicycle ride so I'd be out if anybody called. And if someone still comes by, all we have to do is lay low and be quiet and let them think we're not here."

You grin.

"I suppose one has a right to live one's private life in peace," I say, locking the door and pulling the unbleached linen curtains over the large window. "And now we're alone and we can do anything we want."

I look at you. You look at me.

We stare at each other for a long, long time.

Well, it isn't often we have such a chance to spend a whole afternoon alone together.

"Yes?" you say.

"Yes?" I say.

"What do you think?"

"Yes, what do you think?"

"Oh, Kim, you idiot!"

You grin.

I grin.

You say, "We'll haul the mattress down on the floor as usual, right?"

Afterwards you say, "What do you like most about me?"

"Everything," I answer.

"Come on, Jens, tell me."

"Mmmm, let me see now," I say slowly, as though hunting for the right words, letting a finger-tip gently glide down your back.

"Out with it."

"Your arse, I think."

"That's naughty. What about my hair?"

"It's neater than it was before," I answer. "I like it best when it's a bit long like this, but not as long as those... what do they call those boys from Liverpool?"

"Beatles," you say.

"Well, then... No, stay still..."

"And because it hides my low brow," you say.

"I love your low brow."

"Then kiss it."

"Yes," I say, obeying, "and I love your ears and I love your nose and I love your front tooth with a chip in it, and I love your throat and I love your collar-bone and I love your small hard nipples and I love your shell-like navel, and I love your..."

"Ouch! Stop it, get out of there!" you howl.

"You like that. You know you like that."

"Yes, go on, go on. I want to try *everything!*"

I awake with your elbow in my eye.

Why in hell can't we have a double bed? Why must we put up with that miserable school mattress on my bedroom floor?

You snore contentedly through your nose with your mouth open, taking up all the room lying on your back.

God, how I love you, and God how delightful it is to lie like two spoons together and sleep this way, and yet...

I free myself of your arm, get up from the mattress and go into my living room. It's filled with late summer golden twilight gentled as it filters through the bleached linen curtains. I light a cigarette, walk to the kitchen and fetch a beer from the cupboard. Like everything else in my little wooden house when the sun's out, the beer is warm. I put the bottle in the bathroom sink and run cold water over it. When the label comes loose the temperature will be just right. As back-up I put a couple more bottles in the sink.

I sit in my armchair and look in at you through the open doorway. You've kicked off the quilt and lie naked on the mattress, your body dimly, almost bluishly, gleaming in the milk-white light. The bedroom window lies in the shadow of the school building: only in the earliest hours after dawn is the sun able to shine through the elderberry bush outside and the linen curtains.

I luxuriate in the stillness and let you sleep. No student noises; even the cats under my house hold their peace today. I listen to your breathing. You sleep deeply and soundly, under Picasso's boy with the horse. I can't see him through the door, but I know that boy at least as well as I know you. A Spanish or perhaps a French boy. A dream boy. A myth about a boy. I recall one of Paul Eluard's lines:

The word boy like a little island.

And, watching you sleep, I confide in you:

I wouldn't, my darling, claim the two of us are the best lovers in the world. You are too immature, childlike for that. Not to mention your damnable ticklishness! And I, in return, am far too gentle. It occurs to me now that maybe you wish I was less so. But is that all? No, I don't think so, but I'm still convinced we're not the greatest lovers in the world. Yet, for the time being, at any rate, we're right for each other.

The new and wonderful thing about you is that after I make love to you I never feel shame or loathing.

Before... before our love, before you came into my life... I often felt it as a degradation; when I had sex with people I didn't love it seemed almost a betrayal of my own body.

Such physical conjugation doesn't mean much at the time — and nothing afterwards. It's humiliating when you don't really care for your partner.

I freely admit I felt disgust. I stank. With lust sated, depression settled in.

The little death.

All I wanted to do was slink away.

For what is there to say to a virtual stranger you have just balled? What is left but a pair of limp cocks which in all their absurdity seem ugly and ridiculous?

Loneliness, that's all that remains.

But I never feel that way with you. And it doesn't matter whether we have just had a good screw or a bad screw.

I feel just the opposite.

It's as if we constantly renew ourselves; as if we're continuously shedding our old skin and budding out, so that everything becomes new and beautiful, and all inhibitions vanish, and all suggestions of loathsomeness disappear.

Nothing about you is alien to me.

Nothing about you is hostile to me.

Nothing about you disgusts me.

And it doesn't matter what state your large curved prick is in at the moment; it is always pretty to me because I love you. And I'm not speaking about your sexual organ *as such*.

I mean *you!*

When we lie on the mattress on the floor in the bedroom in my little house and fool around with each other, we form, all things considered, an odd chaos of arms, legs, fingers, toes, backs, throats, mouths, noses, eyes, hair, sweat, saliva, sperm; a friendly struggle, a tumult. If someone surprised us, or observed us secretly, we would look rather ridiculous, maybe hideous, abominable. Yes, repulsive. But, thank God, nobody walks in on us — I really have remembered to lock the door!— and it is to be hoped that nobody is secretly observing us — I really have drawn the curtains! — and we ourselves don't feel our act of love to be laughable, ugly, abominable, repulsive. It's a fire that flares up and burns down; it's a blossom that unfolds and then withers; it's a few eternal moments of lingering in an earthly paradise. And oblivion, affection, warmth, childlike play and bliss.

My soul, what more do you want?

When I say I love your living body I mean that I love all of you, you as a totality.

I love everything outside and inside of you.

Everything you do seems to me worth loving; I could never imagine it being done in another way. As now, when you sleep and I sit there and ask, How can a human body be so incredibly beautiful?

You sleep...

And I wonder what you're dreaming.

Is it of something or someone I don't know about? Do you dream of happenings without me, places I've never been to? I look at you. You lie on the mattress, so near and so remote. You are inscrutable. I think I know you, yet you're an undiscovered universe. When you dream, come to think of it, you become a stranger. I sit here making myself jealous over your dreams.

For a second I feel like getting up and bending down to you, shaking you awake so you can share your dreams with me, tell me about them. All, all you must tell me. I have to know everything about you. All, all, all!

I want to creep down onto you, believing I could then follow you into your dreamland. I could visit places only you know. I could share your ultimate secrets.

It seems so possible.

But I don't get up. No, I don't wake you. Perhaps I'm still a bit afraid.

Can this happiness continue?

Yes. So I stay where I am and contemplate you.

Pleasant melancholy.

During the course of that long summer — I think of it as our lucky summer — we talk a great deal about our childhoods. Like all lovers, we feel the urge to tell each other about ourselves. But your childhood is so close to you, it's still so molten. You burn your fingers on it. So you turn your back on it and believe, in a moment of exhilaration, that it's behind you forever. How wrong you are. How cruelly wrong. I haven't the heart to tell you that. You're still too immature to appreciate your own childhood. You still have its scent. You only want to free yourself from it, to rinse from yourself its smell of milk and sleep and chastity. You still fully and firmly believe that growing up is completely different from being a child.

You're so sweet.

For example, after one of our very first intimacies, I put the obligatory question to you, "Haven't you ever done this before?"

"Done what?" you ask.

"Gone to bed with someone."

"No," you answer, and look modestly up at the ceiling. "Well, there was this one girl..."

"A girl?" I exclaim in horror and raise myself on an elbow so as to scrutinise you carefully. O, Eros

Uranos, that has just been my secret but never articulated fear: suddenly one day you would reveal yourself as fundamentally directed toward females!

"We weren't very old. Just little kids. We didn't do anything right — like this. But then there was a boy, Brian..." ,

"Brian?" I repeat, a bit relieved. "Well, that sounds better. Tell me about him."

And you do.

I remember how ardently I dreamed as a child and teenager of meeting a boy or a man I could love. I dreamed so much I actually let myself be the seduced. But it was just a matter of sex, not of love. I remember how I wrote poems. How I lost myself in reveries. How I fell in love with the wrong people and how I wept and suffered under the impossibility of my yearnings. Now I know those dreams, those experiences, those vague infatuations, some stronger than others, were not wasted. That they were a sort of accumulated hoard of affection to be coined later when I fell truly and deeply in love with you. All that time I'd been practising, so to speak. I'd been apprenticed to myself. And my boy-dreams of boys, my searching, yearning, my attacks of anxiety, my disappointments and defeats, my good and bad experiences and adventures — all were building up, stone by stone, the staircase in the tower I now ascend in my outreach toward you...

My darling!

I admire your loveliness despite the fact that I'd never been taught to admire the physical beauty of my own sex. Nobody taught us that. Quite the contrary, every such expression was ridiculed. And when we were told about earlier cultures with other customs, the truth was suppressed, or our teachers apologised for these ancient peoples and explained that their behaviour was alien and unnatural — and most regrettable.

Why are we not yet allowed to love the boy in each other? It is the boy in you I love, and not anything else.

You are not a substitute for a girl or a woman, as some people prefer to believe.

You are not a surrogate person for me.

You don't fill the place of a son or a brother or a friend or a comrade.

It's all so very simple that most people became mildly confused when I dare tell them:

You are simply *you*.

You are *the other* in my life.

The only one.

The Kim.

Not some image of some other person, not a substitute for any other being in the whole world!

Nevertheless when we are together with other people I have to act as if you hardly even exist. Although I am there you aren't. I cannot get up from my chair and kiss you on the nose because suddenly you look very funny. I can't stroke your tousled hair. I can neither pat you on the cheek nor hold your hand. And I cannot shout to the world with the lover's blind enthusiasm, "Isn't he beautiful?!" Not to speak of patting you on the bottom or giving you one of those glances that say everything without words the way other lovers can — men, women, children — without further thought. I must always be on my guard. I always have to force myself to be content with a comradely clap on the shoulder and with my comradely teasing teacher's tone. Yes, just distantly affectionate...

But I'm not your damned comrade.

I'm your lover.

The affection is important. And the lechery, the sensuality is important. And not the least important is what we call love. And so many other things are important. Money, for example. And a place to be. And to know who you are. And, of course, your work. And to get along or not to get along together in bed and at all odd hours of the twenty-four.

But all things considered...

Each of these things is terribly important, just as for every other couple of every other sort. But for us there's always that pressure. For us anxiety always lurks somewhere. The pressure finds a haven on the other side of those unbleached linen curtains, beyond the thin walls, the locked door. In our village street I cannot hold the hand of my darling. I can't glow with the same instantaneous happiness as the boy and the girl sitting next to me on the Odense bus, or kiss my darling in the back row of the Kerteminde movie theatre— not with the same peace of mind, at any rate, not with the same naturalness. And if one day I steel myself to dare do such a thing, for me, with my background and upbringing, it would come off as a protest, a conscious provocation, not as something one simply does.

Of course, we are happy, you and I, right now, here. But we are happy in defiance. We are happy because we damned well *demand* to be happy. Because we've chosen to be happy. And when I think of how our love has been able to blossom and grow in the small space of freedom we've been able to make for ourselves, without anxiety, I get quite angry over the perfect absurdity that we cannot show it to the world, which is what I long to do. I've been raised to be honest, faithful, to trust other people. Nevertheless by necessity I have to lie, cheat and deceive.

The dichotomy is painful. One can grow embittered. But one can also go beyond that and become so filled with rage that you do something about it.

I haven't yet come that far. It hasn't even occurred to me. I still can't see the connection between my private and political lives. My indignation extends no farther than making a defence. No offensives. What I crave is to be able to shout my love from the rooftops. I'm filled with this enormous longing to confirm before others the great and beautiful experience I'm caught up in. I want to show off the object of my love. I want to tell them that now, right now, I'm experiencing something unique and preciously beautiful. Yes, I want my love for you, and your love for me, to materialise for the whole world to see.

It is too soon...

YOU AWAKE AND CALL OUT:

"Why is it so dark in here? Why isn't the light on?"

"I've just been sitting here and dreaming," I answer.

You're silent. I hear you yawn and stretch. I feel you slowly coming into consciousness, realising where you are. I have gradually got to know your way of waking up. And I hope you feel secure.

You call again.

"I'm right here," I answer.

"I'm hungry," you say. "And I have to take a shit."

"One thing at a time," I laugh. You spring up from the mattress and come into view standing in the doorway, heavy with sleep, hair tousled. Then, with teeny steps, squeezing your buttocks together, holding the tip of your pee-pee down with a couple of fingers, you toddle forth.

"Kim has to shit," you repeat. "Kim has to go potty!"

Those bodily intimacies. Everything about you I love. Even the thought of your shit. There's nothing about your body I don't like. I love the silky hair in your arse, the sprouting hair in your armpits, the snot in your nose, the wax in your ears, the cheese between your toes — yes, even your dandruff is pleasing to me. No, here I exaggerate, for you're painfully clean. That isn't something I've taught you; you brought it from home. But just as I can enjoy the secretions and odours of my own body, so I enjoy yours.

"Aren't you coming in here?" you shout. "I'm bored."

"Get ready first," I answer.

"I am ready!"

"Want me to come in and wipe you?"

"You can flush it."

"Thanks very much."

I get up and go into the hall which gives onto the bathroom. You've finished, I see. As usual you're standing before the mirror fooling around with your hair. You thrust your chin close up to the glass to inspect it if there's any beginning of a beard you cannot find it. Not even a blackhead, for that matter. Your skin is smooth and clear. But maybe you're searching for something else. How would I know? You make a grimace. I pull out another beer from the wash basin. I know from experience you will be a long time dealing with your reflection.

"Tell me," you say a moment later, turning your head towards me, "do you think I'm nice looking?"

"No," I answer and take a swing of beer.

"You mean it?"

"No," I say.

You turn back to the mirror, so I'm now looking at your profile.

"My nose is too big," you say meditatively. "And my mouth is too big."

"Your ears are cute," I put in.

Your cute ears hear that and you continue, "And my brow..."

"...is too low."

"Yes," you say zealously and bare your teeth with a self-critical grimace. "That's why I comb my hair down."

"It becomes you," I say.

"Do you think so?"

You turn to me again. I meet your eyes. You return to the mirror.

It's when I lower the bottle again from my mouth and stare at your reflection that I see you're sticking your tongue out at me.

You wrinkle your nose and pull the corners of your mouth down.

"Aren't you sort of stupid?" you say.

"DOES THE LAD REALLY have to lounge around here all the time? It's *you* I've come to see!" My father is visiting.

I have the afternoon free and have excused myself from supper. It isn't very often that my father comes by. The plan is that we will later go up to Kerteminde for dinner at Thomke's hotel where my father is staying overnight.

But you're here, too.

I want you to meet my father. And deep in my heart I also want my father to meet you. But he hardly notices you — to begin with, at any rate. He chats and tells stories. He's good at that. I've filled you in beforehand about my father's stock of tales from all over the world. And, at my cue, he begins to tell them, using you as his politely attentive but mute audience. I've heard the stories countless times before. It doesn't occur to me that my father might have grown weary of telling them.

He is retired now. So he has time to travel around and look in on his offspring. I like my father, as a matter of fact. I'm glad to see him. And we've never had difficulty talking with each other, my father and I. We've talked politics; we're good at that. In our agreement that society is rotten to the core, there's always something or someone we can run down. We confirm each other's sceptical views of the world. As for our utopian visions, our dreams, our yearnings, we remain silent — our agreement doesn't extend that far.

"It's oil," says my father. "It's oil that steers the world. After forty years on the seas, I know what I'm talking about."

My father is always going on about oil and the multinational capital interests behind it. I nod in assent, confirming him now in his belief in the power of oil. To be perfectly honest, it seems to me he exaggerates a bit...

At this time.

I really enjoy my father's company, but I don't know him. It could hardly have been otherwise with him away most of the time I was growing up. We wrote letters, many letters. I was trained to do that. But, of course, one writes letters for one's own sake, and the letters I wrote to my father on my years of travel were a sort of duplicate of my diary from London, Paris, Budapest, Moscow... They were well-written and totally impersonal. They dealt with what I'd seen and sensed. They told nothing personal about myself. For I knew perfectly well what my father thought about people like me. I wasn't very old before I understood there were some things you shouldn't discuss when my father was present. That didn't particularly bother me. There were so many other things we didn't talk about in our home.

But now here is my father sitting in my little house at school, old and grey and wasted after a long illness.

At first it goes well enough. We drink sherry, the co-op's best. You, too, have a glass or two. Later in the afternoon when the bottle is empty I send *my clever student* down to the co-op for a replacement. It's only later I realise how much my father relaxes now that you're gone. I've told him in the meantime that I'm giving you extra tutoring so you can advance to gymnasium. That doesn't interest him in the least.

And why should it?

And that's when I make my blunder.

When you have to slip away for supper at six I tell you to come right back afterwards.

"Why did you say that?" asks my father.

"Say what?"

"Ask him to return?"

I answer that it must be very interesting for such a young person to hear what an old sea-farer like my father has to tell.

"Does the lad really have to lounge around here all the time? It's *you* I've come to see!"

"He is such a nice boy," I say soothingly.

"He still doesn't have to perpetually hang about," repeats my father sharply.

No, I think, you don't have to. But that's precisely what you are doing. I realise I don't feel like visiting with my father if you're not with us too, that my father only interests me if I can look at him through your young eyes. And at the same time I realise that what has bit by bit become natural to me isn't to others. A student with his teacher who has his father visiting him: all right, let it go on for an hour or two and then out you go! Off, now, and do your homework! But a boy who *all day long* is allowed to sit and listen without saying a word, and whom, in the bargain, I invite to return, *that is* too much. It looks suspicious. It isn't *natural*.

Did my father ever invite his cabin-boy in when I visited him on shipboard?

No — unfortunately!

And I can't just say to my father, or to anyone else in the world,

"This is Kim. I love him. That's why he's here!"

"TELL ME, in your own words, something about the sagas."

"They were men," you say.

I laugh.

"The sagas?"

"No, him. Njal and all those others."

"What do you mean by that?"

"They didn't just talk. They did things."

You look up at me with a pair of very serious blue-grey eyes. Is there a sort of challenge there?

"Well, yes," I say lightly. "At any rate that's the way the stories are told. We don't get to know very much about those people's feelings."

"They were men of action," you say stubbornly.

These long autumn evenings. We're always together now. I have no free time at all.

And that's fine, of course.

But I don't get much writing done. My book has come out. I'm thinking about the next one, but for the moment it has to remain in my mind for, although by now I can teach almost by rote, most of the rest of my

waking hours I spend studying with you. We're going all out to get you into gymnasium so you can go on with your education; right now you're cramming to enter the tenth grade at my teacher friends' school in Odense. You study Latin with the neighbourhood priest, mathematics with our principal and foreign languages, Danish and some history with me. There are many large gaps and we're busy filling them in before July, when you will move into town and take up residence in your own welfare-financed room.

We work very hard that autumn; still we find time both to love and to chat.

By now we're quite good at both.

And in three-quarters of a year I'll be free of my teaching obligations. I shall go to Hungary for research on my new book. And afterwards... yes, afterwards, I'll conquer the world...

Together with you!

In any case, that's what I hope.

That's what I long for and dream about.

During those autumn months I also show you the poems I had written when I was fifteen, sixteen, seventeen. There are many poems and they are very poor. Lyrical junk food, as the editor of a literary journal once wrote when, in a fit of megalomania, I had sent some to him.

But nevertheless...

At the time lyrics flowed from me like nocturnal emissions and I read my poems aloud to myself and was moved. It doesn't occur to me to betray the young, albeit poor, lyric poet I then was. It was derivative poetry on life and death and loneliness and the war in Korea. There was a lot of tree bark and wood in them. They teemed with birds greater than the wind, birds that could find no place to rest their wings. They swarmed with Korean children killed with napalm, blind coxswains, deaf skippers, the globe in flames and water in my mouth.

And now when I show you my poems, and drawings and whatever else I created when I was fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, it's as if the difference in our ages disappears and we're coevals, equals. We can grasp and love each other, yes make love with each other, in a new and totally different, congenial way.

It's the work, the thinking, the joint everyday endeavour that form the fertile soil in which our love can grow.

I teach you how to break the back of a book in the middle and carve it from the covers inward toward the middle. I teach you how to drink sherry — although still not dry sherry. I teach you it's necessary to participate actively in politics — without seeing myself in a position to live up to this demand. But we don't forget the outside world. We transform my house into a stage and play dramas of life and death. We give incendiary speeches to each other. We laugh a lot, too. And, alone, we can be bloody vicious, quite shameless in our sarcasm and satire. Here at last we find an outlet for the energy pent up in us while we play out our mute clown rôles of others. And now I teach you how to read poetry. You learn fast, and by heart. How your face blazes with deep indignation, moving your hand with almost Russian fervour, while you declaim in your still light, slightly hoarse Danish voice Mayakovsky's harsh poem to his colleague

Sergei Esenin upon his suicide:

You have,

as they call it,

gone away.

Void...

out in the stars you flee.

Nothing more,

no advances,

grotty pubs, cards.

Matter of fact

No,

Esenin,

I shall not slander.

With a lump in the throat,

I see

you grasping

With a bloody hand

the rope

before you let

the bag of bones

swing

in its noose.

Wait,

hold up!

Are you crazy?

Will you really

let death whiten your cheek?

You

who more than any other

Always

had a ready

answer.

I love the way you cast the book from you and, lashing out with your arms, shout, "I'm a poet!" I love the way you toss yourself on the sofa, hold out your arms towards me and call, "Come here!" I love the way you convulse under me because you're so ticklish I can hardly touch your skin without your bursting into howls of laughter. I love the natural way you ask, "Why don't you get rid of all those nasty clothes?" I love the way, afterwards, you hug me before you dress, while I grumble about how slow you always are. I love the way you lean over to tie the laces of your shoes, which steadily grow bigger and bigger. I love the way you shower me with tiny hard kisses when I have just shaved, and the way you rub the palms of your hands together and say, "Oh, I'm absolutely starved!" You're always starved. I love the way, during the course of a few seconds, you wolf down the food I've spent hours preparing for you, and the way the chocolate bars I can never resist buying for you in the co-op disappear. I love the way you sit bent over the table under the lamp in your room down in the village while I stop for a moment outside in order to register your image on my retina — the real purpose of my evening walk. I love the way you ask if I think your new cap is smart: I don't think it is, actually, but I nevertheless agree with you and answer yes; and the way you spend hours fussing with your hair before the mirror so it will cover your small forehead. I love the way in which you...

In short, I love the way you're my beloved.

And during that happy autumn you don't need to be present in a purely physical way. Just the awareness that you're somewhere around in my vicinity, always within reach, is enough. Perhaps the most magical moments of all are when you aren't actually in sight but will soon arrive. Then, in anticipation, I can imagine how wonderful we will have it together. Then I can abandon myself to day-dreams, half yearning, half reality, that sweet melancholy twilight-world— or rather dawn-world — between fiction and fact: landscapes of infinite beauty and extent, horizons that continually roll back revealing space beyond space, opening, expanding before us. I look at the clouds through my large window. I follow their flight across the sky while the trees labour under the wind and the cove beyond the black fields is streaming with seafoam: they chase each other, they flee. I follow them, travel with them into this infinity, this eternity, this ever-flowing river the source of which is my heart and your heart — our hearts...

What bliss!

And what terrible banality!

Although today I can admit that I never really understood that fear of the banal, the shrinking from it, shared by all the sages and arbiters of taste of the time — a fear and shrinking I, too suffered from, brought up in sad puritanism as I was.

But it should be understood...

I have neither in life nor in art been able to find anyone or anything I could identify with.

Where could I, in the early 1960s, find it in my own profession, in literature? Everywhere there was only sickness and death. Everywhere despondency and fatalism. Tragedy is built into every story that touches on what in those days I call my problem but really is only a problem because it is made into a problem — by me, too. Frost spreads on the window panes. Death lurks in Venice. The heart is in exile. The friendships are too special to last. Everything ends at the land's end, Finisterre. No joy, no laughter. The German writer sees his protagonist's ecstasy over a beautiful boy as a sign of disease, a fall. The English writer lets his infatuated protagonist take his own life out of fear of the world's verdict. The French author lets a very young boy swallow poison after the exposure of a tender love affair with a slightly older schoolmate. And the American writer has his youth end his life in the waves of the Atlantic Ocean because he can't cope with being an exception and so could never be honest and sincere with those dearest to him. How awful it all is! Where in literature, where in art, was there the slightest hint that love between a man and a boy could be a blessing, a source of joy and inspiration for both partners — as I, no you and I, are experiencing it?

Actually, Gide dared but I don't know that at the time. And there are others — many of them — but they are still all inaccessible to me.

A closed land.

A taboo maintained by our loveless culture's rulers and commissars.

Only on the stage does a Danish playwright in those years have the courage to portray a gay young man in a way sympathetic to a reluctant audience. But in *The Bright Northern Night* his love remains unrequited.

Of course...

I almost said.

And so from all sides I am informed that I'm one of the unfortunates, sick, handicapped, abnormal, perverse — one of *those people* dealt with in false and misunderstood tolerance by professionals who write books that ask *Why are they that way?*

Or gather statistics, carry out sociological investigations, make radio and TV interviews, films, write sensationalistic articles, participate in parliamentary debates...

A sexual minority — What do they want?

What the devil has that to do with what is happening to me — in me, with me — when you suddenly

appear in my life and the heavens split and the ground shakes and a cloudburst slakes my thirsting soul in the wilderness?

What before was ugly becomes beautiful.

What before seemed shameful now fills me with joy. What before I denied I now must affirm.

"CALM DOWN, JENS" you say when finally, after the Christmas holiday, we've managed to meet in the station restaurant in Odense. "Don't cry!"

"I'm sorry," I begin. Then I can't go on. It's too violent, too intense.

The sudden absence.

"You have to forgive me, but I just can't help it. I bloody well can't do without you, Kim. It's ridiculous; I know it's ridiculous."

"But I *am* here," you say.

"Yes, Kim, I know that very well," I answer, still hiccuping and snuffling as the tears run down my cheeks. "But you can imagine what it's like. At noon today... We always sat at the table in my house, getting ready to eat. Today I *saw* you the whole time. You were there and you weren't. Not only that, I felt your knee under the table. It was pressed against mine as it had been all last year when we sat together. Do you realise how long we have sat beside each other at that table? A year and a half, Kim! And so today, when suddenly, for the first time, you weren't there..."

"I'll come out to you Saturday," you say, and attempt to cheer me up.

I nod and try to pull myself together. It dawns on me now that your whole situation is completely different from mine. Of course you don't feel our separation the way I do. You've suddenly been thrown into something new and exciting. You're at the critical beginning of a new period in your life. I'm left behind, back where I've always been.

You can't possibly feel the privation I do.

"Yes, you'll come on Saturday," I say and smile through my tears of self-pity. "And we'll write each other, won't we? I've brought some envelopes for you. See, I've return-addressed them differently, so they won't start to wonder at school about all those identical communications from Odense — all right, I know that's ridiculous, but we can't be cautious enough."

"I'll be very careful," you say. "And you know what?"

"No," I look into your face that is now approaching mine across the table.

"I.L.Y." you whisper. (I love you.)

"Thanks, Latinist," I sniff.

"And now drink your beer," you say.

I CALM DOWN AGAIN. After all, it's the future that matters. Our common future. But how far can I see? How far *dare* I see?

Throughout the spring I prepare for my visit to Hungary. I will leave right after school lets out — and that will be the end of my guest rôle as teacher. From then on I'll be a serious writer. You give me courage. And you will join me in Hungary — for a while, at any rate. We've long ago decided that.

But the very fact that you're no longer in my immediate vicinity at school proves that nothing is guaranteed, nothing is static, everything evolves. We're all growing. You in particular are growing. For the present all I can do is dream and yearn and make plans.

I put up a large map of Hungary on my wall — and long for you every hour of the day and night. I live for your short, hectic visits which are always over far too soon. My thoughts and feelings focus upon you. As teacher I fall back on old tried-and-true procedures. In your absence you dominate my existence far more than when I had you nearby.

I live, we live, in our many letters.

We write each other every other day. I camouflage the envelopes. We invent a sort of code — I don't remember how we decided to do so. Lovers have never had difficulty devising their own special languages. With us the word 'latin' becomes a synonym for love.

In my letters I call you 'Latinist.'

No one who intercepted our letters or snooped into them would be in the slightest doubt for even a moment about their real nature. They smoulder with love, they swell with emotion. They stink, so to speak, of the happiness of union and infatuation. They're beautiful letters. They no longer exist. Actually one has survived. Obviously out of vanity, I'd made a copy. We burn all the others a year later in a cabin in Hemsedal in Norway. Later I regret it. Today I'm not quite sure...

I remember their contents but not their exact words. Except for that appellation 'latinist'.

EVERY SATURDAY AFTERNOON you arrive on the bus. Nobody at the school knows: you sneak in under cover of winter darkness. Sometimes, for appearance sake, I have to go down and eat supper in the dining hall, while you hide alone in my house. Sometimes we lock the door and draw the unbleached linen curtains in front of the big window and pretended the house is empty.

But the house is far from empty.

The house is full of love.

Before you even get your coat off I kiss you. You set your briefcase on the floor. It's heavy with all your new books. And you, yourself, are heavy with lots of new words. Your cheeks are cool. Your lips slowly

warm.

You visit faithfully, but sometimes I have to tell you not to come. That's when I have weekend duty — fortunately by now only every fourth week. Otherwise we're together Saturdays and Sundays — and when we aren't together we write every other day.

I prepare our meals on the cooker in the kitchenette in my entry, or I bring something from the school kitchen.

Meanwhile you sit and read or write or listen to the radio. You sleep on the small green sofa in the sitting-room or on a mattress on the floor in my bedroom, or in my bed under Picasso's tender brown picture of the nude boy with the horse.

Sunday mornings you run naked around the house.

That spring we wallow in jazz and modern poetry. You write and paint and imitate me everywhere, even in my way of speaking. I've succeeded. The future looks bright. But there's anxiety too. Occasionally, with good reason, I'm scared out of my wits when a car suddenly drives into the school yard. Any moment we might be discovered. You could make some blunder in Odense, or letters could be intercepted and opened — there are so many opportunities for disaster. We're still living under the old, grim law, and you won't be seventeen until July.

In my house we're conspirators against the world. I'm very happy, and always very afraid.

Why can't I remember whether I even considered what all of this might mean to you?

MY

I write that one word and the poem is finished.

Maybe you're right: I can't write poetry. Even so, I put no full stop at the end. I let the word stand. My mood is blue. I take a book from the shelf, open it at random, seize upon a word, a sentence, another writer's poem, and let the whole thing fall...

The sun is shining. It's horrible.

But you're here.

Yes, I'm a picture gallery. Portrait after portrait. Whose, I wonder? Happening after happening. Only still-lives. Indeed, there *is* motion in art.

I love these pictures. I walk among them, all the time. It is half-past-two on this Shrovetide Sunday and the sun is shining so brutally, and a great tit has settled on a bough right before my window, and in a little while I must pull myself together, take off the sweater (which is yours), change shirts and put my mask on. And then down to the traditional Shrovetide observances. Can I endure it?

The time is five minutes after two-thirty. What are you doing? Are you writing? Are you reading? Are

you taking a walk?

There may be some truth in Erik Knudsen's wise words: It can't be endured if one doesn't endure. We'll try. So smile. (That's to myself.) I'm turning into a ridiculous old sentimentalist, a dusty custodian of my museum (are the pictures any good?) full of words and yearnings and a little beer and a some akvavit but still not enough — I must go on a penitential pilgrimage to the co-op supplicating a new supply. Oh, oh, suddenly I remember last year. A sherry-blurred picture: jazz concert from Broadcast House, I myself tipsy, we had to go down, and then, by God, you won the Shrovetide games or something. Ridiculous? Perhaps. Now the time is ten minutes past two-thirty and darned if a whole mass of old students from last year haven't arrived.

We are lucky enough!

And you are also here.

But I'm only partly here.

Now I have to take that sweater off!

I must write it down:

The most beautiful, the best, the most crucial thing for me is that you exist.

But words are so dead.

I want to cry a little. I mustn't. That sweater! They've already started to go in for the Shrovetide muffins. The sun is still brutally shining. The time is five minutes to three. I'll be back in a moment. Wait for me...

My

Yes, it was doomed. Now it's Monday. I thought I could have written an epic to you yesterday. It was impossible. It also seemed impossible simply to get the letter posted. I could have given it to one of yesterday's visitors, but I wouldn't do that. Now I'm in the same situation as you were last week. I know you're expecting a letter today, Monday. You won't get it until tomorrow. Oh, Kim, my Latinist, yesterday was hopeless. My house was full of people all afternoon and evening. Fortunately I was so full of what was in my bottles of beer I could actually endure the crowd. Those beers proved indispensable!

Now more time has passed. We have eaten. People are changing for the procession. A thousand thanks for your letter. It meant so much to feel you. By the way, some of them ask (yes, they are still here, I'm afraid!) why you haven't come up for our banquet. Obviously they didn't know where you were. Well, I must post this. Tomorrow is a normal day again — thank God. So, till Saturday. I close in Latin: *Vale bene* — and all the rest.

Yours...

AT LAST YOU COME...

I've been waiting and waiting. All afternoon I've been waiting. Now it's almost twilight. Our arrangement was clear enough: you would arrive on the bus about three o'clock. As usual. As you always do. Why, then, aren't you here? I sit at the window in front of the typewriter and grow more and more hysterical.

I'm still not used to waiting for you.

But finally...

I hear your steps on the gravel in front. I see your capped head and your shoulders approaching. But I cannot yet show the relief and joy I feel. I'm still bitter and full of self-pity. As I open the door I bark:

"Why in the world..."

Even before you get your duffel coat off and set down the heavy briefcase, you spot the glass by my typewriter.

"Have you been sitting here drinking?"

You go to the table, smelling and sniffing. There are drops of rain in your hair. The light from the fields outside is still reflecting in your eyes.

"Of course not. It's just grape-tonic."

I want to get rid of the glass. I go on the offensive.

"Why in the world are you so late?"

I could bite off my tongue. That isn't what I want to say at all. I don't wish to reproach you for anything. I just want an explanation. No, not even that. I want to tell you how glad I am to see you at last.

But you don't answer my question. Before I can move my hand, you bend over the table and stick your nose in my glass.

"Grape-tonic!" you sheer. "Grape-tonic *and* akvavit. You're sitting here getting soused in the middle of the fucking afternoon."

From here on everything goes wrong.

"I couldn't stand the waiting for you," I say, and again feel the tears of uncertainty rise. Boozy tears, to be sure, but still...

"I don't feel like hanging around here with you half-drunk. It's a fucking bore."

You sound both angry and sad.

"So, why didn't you come when you were supposed to?"

But my counter-attack gets nowhere.

"Because..." you say.

"Because what?"

"None of your Goddamned business."

"Please, Kim, stop it!"

I hear how frightened I sound.

"I'll be damned if I will," you snarl. "I don't have to answer to you for what I do.

"But we'd agreed..."

"Well, I'm here, aren't I?"

You turn your back to me while you pull off your gloves. Your back is defiant and terribly young. I doesn't occur to me that you, too, could be having a rough time.

"Oh, damnit, Kim, you don't know what it felt like waiting for you. It's been a nightmare. I can't take much more of it."

"Well, neither can I," you tell the wall in front of you. "All this whining! I'm sick to death of it!"

I get up, glass in hand.

"Let's try to have a good time, shall we?"

"Leave the akvavit alone!" you answer harshly. Your back is still turned.

"Okay, okay," I mutter and squeeze the greasy glass with my fingers. How naive you are, I think. But how can you be otherwise? You know nothing about drinking. Leave the bottle alone — that's exactly what I can't do. At this stage of my afternoon high I must go on drinking if I am to create a reasonably pleasant atmosphere here. And that's what I'm supposed to do, right? We're going to have a good time — a nice time — together. That's how it always is. Weekend after weekend...

The oasis in this weary desert trek.

I edge past you without touching you. For the first time our bodies radiate real enmity toward each other. It's a new and hideous sensation. It hurts, physically. My arms ache to embrace you, to soften you, to love you. But I don't dare. For the first time since we began making love to each other I don't dare touch you for fear of being rejected. At least not before I have a bracer.

"So, come on, take your coat off," I say as evenly as possible from the kitchenette. In a flash I bend down, get the cork out of the hidden bottle and pour a shot of liquor into the already heavily fortified grape soda. With a little luck you won't discover what I'd done, and, pretty soon everything will be fine.

"You know what?"

You turn towards me.

"No, Kim," I answer, contented, removing the glass from my lips. I am cheered up by the liquor and my success as a secret drinker.

You stare at me and say:

"I think I'm leaving."

"What do you mean?"

"What I said. I'm leaving."

"You don't mean that."

"Oh, yes I do!" you shout in my face. "I'm not coming all the way out here to be with a drunken bum who just sits around spewing vomit! I've had enough of your bullshit."

Now I stare at you.

"Do you know..." I say slowly and extremely quietly, while I smilingly lift my glass to my mouth and turn it between my fingers so that my lips barely touch its sticky edge. "Do you know how beautiful you are when you get mad?"

Finally our eyes meet. We look into each other. Or does each of us see only himself? Something happens, in any case.

It is pure desperation.

"I'm leaving," you say, and start pulling your gloves on again. I don't answer you. I drink. I'm silent.

"Did you hear that? I said I was leaving."

I sit down at the table. You are still working on your gloves.

Suddenly I explode:

"All right, then, go, damnit!"

"I will."

I drink. I am silent. I look out of the window seeing nothing but the clouds moving across the sky. The light is fading, but it is still day. You're still fumbling with your gloves.

"Goodbye," you say.

I don't answer.

"Goodbye," you say again.

I still don't answer you.

You bend down to pick up your briefcase. You've finally got your gloves on, it seems.

"Goodbye," I say.

"Yes," you say, "goodbye, then."

"Go to hell!" I shout.

I see your back disappear out the door and down the steps from the terrace. I see your capped head go by and turn the corner. Then you are gone. I get up. Through the other window above the couch I can see you stalking away on your long legs. You swing your briefcase wildly. The nape of your neck is white beneath the cap. Damn it. You really meant it? There is no bus at this hour. You turn right. Down the lane towards the highway. I suppose you'll try to hitch-hike. It's Saturday afternoon. Well, maybe you'll be lucky...

God be with you!

I empty my glass and go to get the bottle hidden in the cupboard. I pour. I drink. I glare out the window at the big dumb field swelling towards the sky. I follow the movements of the clouds and consider that I could always get some writing done. Spend the weekend alone. When had I last had a weekend to myself? Not in the past year, certainly. Then I hear voices outside the house. Laughter. Running feet. They vanish again. Thank God there are almost no students left at school. It is quiet. I can work.

Jesus — what the hell am I thinking?

This is all wrong. We quarrelled. This is terrible. We don't usually fight, at least not in this spiteful way. What was that look in your face? There must be something very wrong. It can't be just my akvavit.

What am I *doing*?

I must be insane!

In no time I'm out of the house, pumping hard on the pedals of my old bike. Quick, quick, quick it goes — past our principal's house — did they see us? Then around the corner and up the hill past the grove and the pond and down again past the County Council house with the water pump and the kids with the perpetually runny noses and the perpetually yapping dog — and uphill again, tough, hard, till I finally reach, standing on the pedals, the sunken lane and, to the right, the long descent toward the highway. Now I can coast.

I catch my breath and yell:

"Kim, Kim!"

You have gone far. I can see you almost all the way down to the bottom of the hill. You are walking as though you have to catch something.

"Kim!" I yell again.

Speed and wind make my eyes overflow. It's not just alcohol making me weep now.

I catch up with you. Brake. Overshoot. Jump off and drag the bike back.

"Kim," I say, in as conciliatory and ingratiating a voice as I can manage. "Let's stop this nonsense."

You don't answer. You march on, gaze fixed ahead, without for a moment slackening your pace.

"Kim, damnit! Can't we stop this?"

"Stop what?"

Your voice sounds strained.

"*This!*" I squeak, out of breath, running along side of you with my bike. "It's really idiotic, don't you think? I grew hysterical, from waiting. It was my fault. I'm sorry. Forgive me, Kim."

"Go fuck yourself!"

"Let's stop this, please. It's terrible. You don't plan on walking all the way to Odense, do you?"

"That's my business."

I get on my bike again and ride beside you. I put my hand on your shoulder, for balance. You shake it off. "Leave me alone!"

"Listen, Kim. This is no reason to quarrel. It was my fault. I've already apologised, haven't I? Now, come back with me. I've looked forward so much to being with you today. I bought food and all sorts of things."

"Sure — akvavit!"

"Not just akvavit," I say in a vain attempt at sounding cheerful. "Also beer and claret and a whole lot of food."

"Eat it yourself!"

"You're not hungry, then?"

"Just leave me alone."

"Kim, you don't mean that. For God's sake, let's stop. We never quarrel like this."

We're almost at the highway. Cars are rushing by in both directions. Weekend traffic. In the mink farm to the right two men in blue overalls and long rubber boots stand in front of a red tractor, staring at us.

I turn the bike to block you with the front wheel. You stop and turn your face away. Even though I can't see them very well, it is obvious your eyes are moist. The muscles in your cheek quiver. Your mouth is tight.

Silence.

At last you turn your head. Our eyes meet.

We look into each other. What do we see? What do we want? What is it we wish to tell one another?

Neither of us can keep it up any longer. We yield at the same moment.

We laugh.

"Okay," you say. "But *I* decide what we're going to do."

"Of course, Kim."

"And no more sitting there getting yourself pissed."

"Of course not, Kim."

We turn around and slowly walk back towards the school. You put your heavy briefcase on the luggage carrier. A little later you place your left hand on my handle-bar. Together we push the bike up the long, steep hill. Our hands creep closer. Eventually we reach the top and stop a moment to catch our breath, your left hand and my right meet in the middle of the handle-bar, where a long time ago the bakelite peeled off.

I'm happy again, so happy that I momentarily forget how deeply I have been shaken.

For, in fact, I'd never thought this could happen.

"NOW I'M GOING TO READ you a bedtime story," I say and walk over to the bookshelf and retrieve a thin little volume tucked among the others.

"Yes, go ahead, do it!" you say and wrap your arms around me and kiss me on the nape of my neck when I sit down again on the edge of the sofa where you've settled yourself for the night.

"It's a story by the Roman writer Petronius, who lived in the time of Nero."

studies and teach him, and above all I commanded that nobody who wanted to ruin his body be allowed access to the house.' Are you paying attention?"

"I think you offended my ears," you say. "And what does he mean, 'to ruin his body'?"

"What do you think?" I answer. "Now listen. 'Once when we had gone to bed in the dining room, because it was during the holidays and the school had closed early and the late night feasting had made us too lazy to return to our chambers, I noticed, around midnight, that the boy was lying awake. So I mumbled a fervid prayer: "Venus, my mistress, if I can kiss this boy without his noticing it, tomorrow I will give him a pair of doves." ' "

You make a very improper labial sound. I pretend not to hear and continue: " 'Hardly had the boy heard how his compliance would be rewarded than he commenced to snore. I approached him and kissed him several times while he pretended to sleep. Content with this beginning, I arose early and chose a pair of doves, which I brought to the waiting boy, and in this way I fulfilled my vow.' "

You have shut your eyes and given yourself over to making some enormous snoring sounds.

"What is this?" I ask.

You grin and open your eyes.

"You don't have to offer *me* doves," you laugh. "In any case, they'd better be cooked."

"Then you give away your kisses?"

"Of course!"

And I get a free kiss.

"Tell me more about the boy," you say, and lick your lips. "He sounds like a sly little bastard."

"I will," I say, and continue reading aloud: " 'When the same opportunity offered itself the next night, I altered my prayer and said, "If I now can stroke him with a lascivious hand and he not notice it, for his compliance I will give him two very pugnacious cockerels." When the boy heard of my wish, he approached me of his own will, and I was certain he was afraid that I would be the one to fall asleep. Soon I luxuriated in contact with his body and stilled my passions without, however, obtaining from him the highest pleasure...'

"What's that?" you ask.

"Quiet!" I answer, and continue: " 'When dawn came I pleased him with what I had promised him...'

"Well," you mumble, "now I understand."

" 'When on the third night I again had the freedom to do as I pleased, I whispered into his ear while he pretended to sleep, "Ye immortal gods, if I, while he slumbers, can steal a complete and blissful fuck from

him, I will, for this blessing, give him tomorrow the best Macedonian horse — but only on condition that he not notice it." Never had the youth rested in deeper sleep. First I filled my hands with his tender breast, then I kissed him passionately, and at last I gathered all my craving in a lascivious embrace. In the morning he was sitting in his room waiting for the usual gift. But I now realised it is far easier to buy doves and cockerels than a horse, and, moreover, I was afraid that so great a gift would awaken suspicions. So I walked about the city for some hours and returned home. I was content to kiss the boy, but he looked at me courteously and asked, with his arms around my neck, "Sir, where is the horse?" "The difficulty of finding a proper steed compels me to delay my gift, but in a few days I shall fulfil my promise." The boy understood well what this would mean, and his expression betrayed his secret displeasure.' "

"That I can bloody well understand," you mumble. "What an old cheat!"

" 'Although I knew this dishonesty had closed to me access to that favour I had just obtained, I ventured yet a new attempt. When, after the lapse of a few days, chance brought us both into the same circumstance, I began, as soon as I heard the father snoring, to beg the boy to be good friends with me. That is to say, let me gratify myself with him and do whatever else my swelling lust suggested, but he was obviously angry and said, "Go to sleep, now, or I'll tell my father." ' "

"Good for him!" you grin.

I place the hand that isn't holding the book on a certain spot on top of the quilt in order to make you quiet, and thus I continue: " 'Yet nothing is so difficult that perseverance won't ultimately bring victory. When he said, "I will wake my father," I crept over to his side and forced my pleasure, and he didn't put up much resistance. He wasn't angry at my boldness, but he was sorry I had tricked him, for he was made ridiculous before his school friends to whom he had boasted of my lavish gift. "But you shall see I'm not like you. If you want to do it again, just go ahead!" So he forgot his grudge and looked kindly upon me once more, and after I had enjoyed again his favour I fell asleep. But he, who was a fully ripe youth and just at that age when one desires the lusts of the flesh...' "

"What was that?" you interrupt. "A fully ripe youth — and what else?"

" 'And just at that age when one desires the lusts of the flesh,' " I repeat.

You sigh deeply and sink back on the pillows.

"Go on," you mumble. "It sounds fascinating."

"Well," I say, and repeat once more, " 'But he, who was a fully ripe youth and just at that age when one desires the lusts of the flesh, was not content with only the one repetition. He soon awakened me, drowsy as I was, and said, "Let's do it again!" Now my gift was, to him, no trouble at all. Sweating and breathless, I hugged him and did with him everything he wanted, and, exhausted with pleasure, I fell back to sleep. Hardly had an hour passed before he began to pinch me in the hand and said, "Let's do it again!" And after I had been disturbed this way time after time, I gave him his own words back: "Go to sleep, now, or I'll tell your father!" ' "

You gape at me. Then you burst out in a howl of laughter.

"That was a good bedtime story!" You laugh until the tears trickle from your evening-clear eyes.

I close the book and move my hand from the quilt. You grasp it, pinch it and hold it fast in place.

"Notice," you say. And I notice what I have noticed all along.

"Now come in with me," you whisper. "Take off all those lousy clothes and come on under my quilt. Remember, I am a fully ripe youth and just at that age when one desires the lusts of the flesh..."

"And you won't tell a soul?"

"Not if I get a fiery horse."

"You can be a saddle-horse yourself."

"Okay, then ride me!" you say.

COMMENCEMENT DAY — my last. Your principal is in my house.

He sits in my easy chair and smokes one of my cigarettes and drinks one of my beers, after first having refused my sherry.

Your principal sits in front of me and looks at me. He contemplates me.

There has always been a certain understanding between your principal and me. I actually like the man quite well. I think I would think well of him even if he wasn't what he is —

Your principal!

He's not a bureaucrat. He's a moralist, and certainly not a puritan. On the contrary, he's a somewhat flighty gentleman who, via a teaching job, ended up in one of Child Welfare's more progressive enclaves.

But he is my potential enemy.

I'm perfectly aware of that. And I feel he sees through me. I feel he knows far more about me than our own nice, unsuspecting principal who, above all things, *would* rely on his co-worker and, indeed, has no reason at all to do otherwise — except in my case. Our principal always thinks the best of people. Your principal always believes the worst.

And, in his work, he certainly has reason to.

There's still a half-hour before the ceremony itself begins and the last big coffee-table party in the municipal gym, so your principal and I have time for a good chat.

We talk about everything except school: books, travel, quite harmless subjects.

My coming trip to Hungary, for example.

But I feel he has an errand.

You aren't mentioned.

He puts out his cigarette, empties the beer and gets up from my easy chair. He thanks me for the drink. He goes to the door, puts his hand on the doorknob. I have risen.

He says:

"Kim needs to concentrate very hard on his work. He really has a lot to catch up on. We have been glad for your interest in him. We appreciate it. But now he must have peace in order to apply himself to his schooling."

He gives me a friendly smile and nods farewell.

"Goodbye," I mumble and see his back disappear down the steps. I sit down heavily.

And then for the first time I realise what it is the man has said.

LAST EVENING AT SCHOOL...

I'm alone in my house. The students have departed, the teachers — my former colleagues — too. Only in our principal's residence and in our kitchen girls' windows is there light.

And you are in Copenhagen with your family.

We will see each other again in about ten days...

In Budapest.

I am sitting in my house, as empty as it. But empty? I'm half-loaded — my throat, far down in my throat, sticky with sherry. A beer might help. I go to the cupboard in the kitchenette and squat. No more beer. Of course, your principal got the very last one.

And, I think ruefully, the last word!

So I console myself with my sweet sherry.

I sit in my easy chair which is not mine at all but belongs to our principal's family and so will remain where it is. I look through the large window. The hill outside stands black against the sky. The willow-trees to the south are blue; between them gleams, as always, the strip of water that isn't the fjord but is locally called the cove. The fjord lies on the other side, to the north-west. From the stone wall along the road the fields slope toward it, stretch out and became flat just before the sea dike. The sea was once there. Behind the sea dike is the shore, green at the farthest end and black on the edge with seaweed and speckled with bright, shining shells. That's by day. But now, in evening, it cannot be seen from our school and from my house. The beach is hidden in mist. Water and sky flow into one. The trees and poles wave. Only the lighthouse beam out by The Gap presses through the mist: sharp, regular, from the rust-red

western horizon.

The doors in my house stand open: the door from the sitting-room to the little entry with the kitchenette, the door from the entry to the terrace. The day has been warm.

The night is mild and friendly. In the straw mats over the terrace insects swarm. They burst against the window-pane. They seek the light, fall exhausted to the ground or find their way through the doors and circle the lamp over my writing table. I'm always irritated by them, chase them. Tonight I let them fly as they wish, die as they will, the moths, the carpet moths, the beetles, the spiders, the summer's scaly nocturnal creatures on pallid wings.

In front of the house grow stinging nettles, dandelions, hemlocks, bindweeds, bedstraws. On the other side of the house red currant bushes and pink wild roses, too. Out in the corn field behind the elder bush and the slender cherry trees lies a pile of old brushwood: birds and mice rustle among its boughs.

A cat streaks past.

I pick a thumbtack out of the wall from the spot where my map of Hungary hung all winter with its red boundaries around the country of light green. Now it lies in my suitcase. I go out on the terrace and come in again. I sit down by my former work table and rise again. My typewriter is on the floor beside my suitcase. I sit in the chair and get up again. I pour a glass of sherry, drink up and pour again. It's the cop's sherry, naturally, the one with the yellow label, the cheap, the miserable, sweet paste on the tongue. "But we only have the yellow," claimed the clever but taciturn girl in the blue smock. Yes, she is still there...

And the night is so tranquil.

Too friendly, and damned still.

Music!

But I have sold my radio. I have sold my gramophone. Our Home Economics teacher got both apparatus and records far too cheaply.

Books!

But I packed my books, my manuscripts, my odds and ends. Everything I own I packed in large chests and sent on to my parents, who have no use for any of it.

But my father will be able to spend many days building bookcases.

I go out of the house and let the doors stay open. There's no need to lock them tonight. My house is naked walls, empty shelves, cabinets, drawers. My house is open doors, open windows. What remains back there—.. a table, a bed, a chair — is not mine. My house has been emptied and is no longer mine. Over the bed only a pale square remains of Picasso's brown gentle naked boy with the horse.

I cut across the old kitchen garden, now a building site: workmen's sheds, boards, mixer, iron. The basement of the new school building has just been completed. I follow the rutted truck tracks in the clay to the asphalt road. The street lamps are extinguished. It's past midnight. I stop by our old school building, open the glass door: the closer is broken and it slams harshly, echoing in the corridor and on the stairs. I walk into the classroom, don't turn on the light but remain standing for a moment to accustom myself to the darkness.

My place of work...

I know the way to the lectern. For five years I have crossed to it. For five years I've stood with my back to the blackboard afraid that those old education pioneers with their chin-beards and mutton-chops would tumble down on my head. Year after year for five years, hour after hour, short hour, long hour, good hour, bad hour, while the second hand on my watch went round and round...

And I?

What have I stood here and said? What have I imagined you students to be?

You have gone. Names, faces. I will forget you. You will remember me for a time. The parish clerk on his dais is not forgotten immediately. You will remember some words, some lacunae, which is better. Once I got you to laugh. Once I picked my nose. Once I... oh, shut up!

That's over, all over, my guest performance.

Parting. Hand-sweat. You are gone: students, teachers. Years. Stillness. Emptiness. My steps in the school building. The floors are a mess with exercise books, crayons, sewing needles, lost property, junk, dead things. Go on, I have to go on: one-two-one-two, stretch your feet, forward, on with dauntless heart! But I can't march to that rhythm. It's not my melody. It never was my melody. Nor, really, was it ever yours. We prefer Carl Nielsen and Miles Davis...

I open the piano, strike a chord, play some notes. Morning song, evening song. An echo: the familiar songs that we heard a hundreds times before in the Danish...

No!

The rhythm is impossible.

I let the piano lid fall. I turn towards the class. Did somebody laugh?

There are only the chairs on the desks. Black chair legs against the dimmest light of the night summer sky outside of the window panes.

I must find another melody, another rhythm. It's high time. It's the last chance. The chairs on the desk. The icy chill. And the voice in the darkness:

"Sir, you must go!"

I go.

I go across the gravel school-yard and farther, by the road past the cabinet-maker's workshop, the lilac hedge, the sewer ditch, the new houses, the churchyard wall, the chestnut tree whose flowering time is over. The church lies to the right, whitewashed, heavy; and to the left but a little further down by the hill, we have our co-op store, dark in the bend of the road, only one gable window lit.

Music. Elvis? Tommy? Those new Beatles? She lives up there, the girl of the blue smock and nimble hands, clever, taciturn. I stop by the gas pump. Inside the co-op burns a little red lamp: the deep freeze — a new acquisition. Deep-frozen welfare for the parish. In the windows retail glass, the ordinary ones a krone apiece, soap powders, plastic pails, sun-glasses, dust, summer drinks, summer sandals, summer frills. An advertising poster: everything for the holiday! And dust. In the window pane myself. I turn my back on it. My co-op account has been settled, my dividend paid out.

A man comes wheeling his bicycle up the long, steep hill.

I go in the opposite direction, faster so we will pass quickly. We greet each other, a night-mumbling — might just as well have said asshole.

Now, what is his name, that man?

I continue down through the town, past the close-lying farms with low coach-sheds, limed white and yellow squares between the half-timbering, past the gardens that smell sweetly, past the open windows in the rooms where the farm folks sleep behind bright, light curtains, past the place where you lived last autumn and where I often paused so as to look secretly at you as you sat by the window under the lamp and read. I know these people, their faces, hands, voices, their children, cars, stables, sitting rooms. What do they say to each other? Something is said, that I know. And maybe it's important. Perhaps what is said behind those curtains has immense meaning. But I go on. Past the parish council's old house, past the water works, past the municipal school, past the monument, past the playing field with the beautiful poplar hedge. Here the village street flows into a wider road. The signposts in the grassy triangle point toward the east and the north.

I turn back.

I go back slowly. I remember the man's name and what was said about him, remember things about all those people sleeping in the farms. But now all that is meaningless to me: it's too late. It's a lovely night, very friendly, very bright and Danish and exuberant in this parish smelling of pig shit and pale, nearly withered lilacs. But the night lacks people. They have concealed themselves from me — or I have concealed myself from them. A man came wheeling his bike up the hill. He mumbled something, that was all. But what do I know about him? What does he know about me? Do I care to know anything about him?

Do I care whether he knows anything about me?

And so I arrive home. No, I arrive back at the house that is no longer mine.

I take leave of it...

And turn towards you.

KIM, I LOVE YOU.

Still as much as I did then.

And now, twenty years later, I have tried to write my way back to that moment when you suddenly walked into my life.

I was twenty-eight. You were fourteen. And, to make matters worse, I was your teacher and you were my pupil. It ought to have ended in catastrophe.

Instead it became the beginning of a relationship which endured twelve years.

That's longer than many marriages.

Of course, we needed each other. But no such statement really gets to the root of what happened between us. I don't mean anything mystical by that. Luck was with us, it's clear. But there was also my — no *our joint* — will to love, and your — no *our joint* — need for affection and security.

If I believed in the stars I would have spoken about propitious constellations. But I don't believe celestial bodies influence human relationships.

What do you do, by the way, with an Aquarius and a Crab?

I met you on the path and fell in love...

What have I just written? It's a lie from beginning to end. In any case, a crude exaggeration.

Forgive me, I am an incorrigible romantic!

Over the years I have crafted this image of you as the boy who came walking to meet me to enter my life. It is this image that dominates my memory. Probably it is distorted. Yes, a lot can be said for its being the product of my imagination. A fiction, if not a lie. But the past becomes what we make it.

And so does love.

I like to think I fell in love with you at first sight.

And from this eternal moment, the one image swiftly replaces the other. You were so graceful, so nimble. I found it difficult to hold on to you. You slipped from me. Only sleeping were you more or less at

rest. And while I looked at you...

No, while now, after all these many years, I sit here and write my way back to that time, my memory is filled with other and much later images of you. They blend, they press forward. They're not to be shut out. Some are clear and sharply outlined, others hazy, grainy, shadowy. Still others are the images of dream.

Do I dare believe in them?

Does it matter?

When I think of you today I see a little fellow of fourteen walking towards me on the garden path along the end of the student building with a quilt under one arm and a cardboard box wrapped with string under the other, Copenhagen-bold and impudent, insecure, troubled, nervous, and very, very sweet...

When I think of you today I see a tall, serious university alumnus of thirty-four with a black briefcase, standing on the seat beside you in a cheap little red Citroen, polite and reserved, and very, very nice...

The first Kim I think I know quite well.

The other?

You are for me first and foremost what we call *love* in concrete form.

You are past and the past's images.

I see:

You in your light blue sweater in the "B" English class, third desk, second row. I can barely restrain myself from touching your shoulder.

You on the sofa beside me in my house when we read German and English. And we *do* read German and English — between times. (Later you will say, "That was when you always sat there and pawed me...") We go into the bedroom. I embrace you, feel you. You still have the pipe in your mouth. It drives me crazy. I want to kiss you. (Later you will say, "We'd always stand there like a couple of horny dogs...") I lick a drop of sweat off your upper lip. I kiss your sticky fingers. And then we go out and made tea and prepare some cheese sandwiches.

Now, over the radio, I hear Menuhin's recording of Carl Nielsen's violin concerto, and remember (in the second movement, when there came from you those awful sounds) you sleeping in my easy-chair late one Saturday night I thought you were listening with closed eyes — and your waking up with that self-conscious, courteous smile (my heart cries a little), and our Home Economics teacher and I, like indulgent grown-ups, laugh to each other across *the student* — good lord — while all the while I know it's you I love.

Why do I suddenly remember your light brown velvet jacket, the one you were so proud of, for now you also go about in velvet, your white frizzy shirt, the pearl-grey tie I loaned you, your new hair style, the bangs, that suited you so well?

Why do I continue to remember these things?

Why do I remember your sweat, your warm skin, your front tooth with the chip in it, your toes that with the years grow long, ugly and crooked?

Do you ever remember me, I wonder, from that time?

You are the blue-boy at Kullen. You're dressed all in blue and are fantastically sweet and frisky as you leap about like a gazelle among the rocks...

(But this image and those that follow don't really belong in this first book about you and me. They belong to the time *after* we leave the school. They belong to the next book. Still, they crowd in here pulled by the earlier ones!)

At Kullen I kiss you on your cheek. It is cold from the wind and tastes deliciously salty from the autumn sea mist. And you are all blue, far in front of me between the tree trunks, *The Blue Boy*, not Gainsborough's little blue silken darling, not that at all. *My boy* is blue, hard, gentle, clothed in homespun, denim or something like that — blue, dark blue, and with a blue cap on your head like chauffeurs wear, and we sit down way out on the rock-bound shore and look over the Kattegat and quote to each other Gelsted's poem we both like so much — that is to say, I begin it and you finish, for I have never been able to remember more than the first lines of anything.

Sun over sea! And the sun song

rings and celebrates

far over fields and houses

and church steeples.

The sun god steers his team

over the crowds of people

sets life on fire

on the mountain shelves.

Does a secret shudder

run over rock and sea?

The days were never so bright

and today's a good day to die.

(But it wasn't in Sweden, or in Kullen in Skania: it would only be six years later, in Greece, that we would first really understand that poem.)

And one more thing:

When we have eaten sardines and *korvar* and *pâté de foie gras* and drunk Swedish beer (ugh), you lie down on the bed... I remember it as a bunk bed, but that just cannot be true — I must be confusing it with some other, one of the many, many beds on our long journey through the world... and you say, "Now, you have to incite me!" And we laugh over this perfectly silly word, incite... invite... polite. We tell each other to be quiet, because of *her*, Mrs. Andersson on the other side of the wall, who calls me "the author" with every other breath and who is servile and rough under her matronly hair-do. And I *incite* you, and it is good and beautiful. But you are still a bit passive. You are still not properly incited, still not awake and wild (that first happens in Norway the summer you turn eighteen). And I have told Mrs. Andersson you're my cousin, my *kusin*, — what the devil shall I do with a boy of seventeen? My *kusin!* Or did I say nephew? It is screamingly funny and we laugh a lot, but, still, all the time we're a bit afraid: only occasionally do we achieve real tranquillity.

You go down the gangway of the Oslo boat that summer you turn eighteen and we burn all our letters in the electric stove in the cabin in Hemsedal. You cross the beach under our house high on the rock in the middle of the village of Kokari on Samos in Greece, and I follow you with my eyes and love you simply because you're just what you are. You sleep in a bed in the Utca Académie in Budapest on the left bank of the Danube, and I watch you and think, how long can this good luck last? Kim, my Kim, I see you everywhere. White with suppressed rage in a hotel room in Taragona, drunk and on roller-skates in the Cathedral in Rijeka, with your arse up in the air on the beach by Langør one summer day on Samsø. Resurrected in Munich, more beautiful than ever before, after I believed you were dead for a couple of months. Yes, I see you everywhere. In Ohrid in Macedonia in those fine long days when we swim every morning out to sea towards the sun and the mountains of Albania. I see you and hear you in Copenhagen. In Athens. In Svendborg. In Hamburg. In Aarhus. In Barcelona. In Odense. In Sarajevo. On the telephone. In your letters. In your body. In your skin. In your fallow-deer's eyes. You in my heart. You in the dark, in the bed, in the sun, in the clouds, in our heaven. You who want to try *everything!* I wait for you. I am possessed by you. I need you. You with all your virtues and vices. I see your faults, and I love you for them. We turn our backs on the world we know all too well and try to create another and better one on our own terms. And at last... no, I will not think about at last. Not yet. Our trip has really hardly begun. We will still be together for a long time yet, you and I. It is too early to answer questions and come to conclusions.

So, rather:

You, my beloved, in a profusion of flowers of white-clad cadets and young girls. It is the Great Sexual Confusion: the girls look at you, you look at the cadets, the cadets look at the girls, and I — I look at all of you — the observers, the eavesdroppers, the spies.

Kim, Kim, Kim...

How shall I write about our relationship without vomiting great clots of sentimental verbiage that don't tell anyone anything?

I hesitate...

When I try to describe you clichés leap from the keys. To everyone but the lover the image of the beloved is banal, trivial, flat.

I must sneak up on our love in the hope of being able to pounce upon it unawares.

Yes, I write about 'love'. What can you do with such a trite word? But I know of no other that can better describe the relationship between you and me.

Love!

I have — no, *we* — have just as much right to this word as anyone else, even if, in the legal sense, ours is an educator's criminal contact with an under-age student.

And it's true, I made use of every trick, every connivance, to protect and preserve what was growing between us. I became strong, damned strong. I found strength within me I hadn't guessed even existed. No one would touch my love for you. No one would maul our feelings.

Absolutely no one.

But at the same time I am mortally afraid. I tremble with anxiety at every confrontation with the world around us. Externally ice-cold, internally trembling. The price for this I am permitted to pay later, but it's really only a continuation, an extension of the Janus state of my childhood and youth, this unbearable and absurd masquerade in which I have to play the fool's double rôle, always expecting and fearing the fatal cue:

Now we've got him!

I am a nostalgist, a sentimentalist. I enjoy weeping as I remember all of this. And I'm convinced that the need for tears is genuine. There *are* things that are worth defending. Worth remembering. Worth treasuring. Worth sharing with others.

As Polly Grimwade, my wise American friend, told me in Ireland, "Oh, Jens, you melancholy Dane, you are, too, quite able to love!"

Yes, I can love. And I *will* love. I loved you for twelve years and I love you still. But is it the boy you were whom I love? Or the man you became? Or is it really something entirely different?

Tell me, you wise people who read this book, can one be in love with his own affection? And if that is so, can one be satisfied?

"TOO LESS MONEY" I read in the panicky telegram you send me a couple of days after I reach Budapest and three days before you yourself are due to arrive.

And I'm supposed to have taught you English!

It's too late to do anything about it now. I can only wait. You must solve your own money problems, my boy. But you make me damned nervous.

I begin to realise what it means to take responsibility. Oh, but we're cunning, you and I. Officially we have nothing to do with one another. You're neither my pupil nor my protégé any longer. I've abdicated my old rôle as your teacher.

I'm a free-lance writer now

And, strangely enough, now that we're officially unconnected, we become closer than ever before.

I wait for you, my beloved.

I wait in my friends' house in Budapest, listening to all the noises which rise within it as from a dark cave. My home and country — and, in a couple of days, your headquarters at the Akadémia Utca, in Pest, on the left bank of the Danube.

I arrive late at night. I awaken the *hazmester*, the porter who after 11 p.m. is charged with letting people in. He comes to the door in his dressing gown. I give him ten forint — too much, but hazmesters in Budapest must be treated with caution. This one, with his large, nasty Alsatian, is always finding pretexts to prowl around grumbling about control and the police.

"Nem erten'," (I don't understand) I say and smile cautiously.

"Kontrolle,' ' he says, "viele Kontrolle!"

"Yes, yes," I say.

"Dollars," he says. "Du hast?"

"Nem," I say.

"Ach," he says, "Was tun? Mein Sohn West-Deutschland gehen. Kein Geld, kein Dollars. Du hast?"

"Nem," I say again.

"Ach," he says, "Viele Kontrolle, viele Polizei. Alles Staat. Nicht gut!"

He shakes his head.

So do I.

We stand there together shaking our heads.

"Ich komme," he says, and leaves me. I smile. And now I'm alone and restless in my friends' odd apartment: they're in Scandinavia so I can do what I want.

I open the inner shutters onto the street, but the sun never reaches this far down and in. I spy in my friends' closets and drawers, but I soon grow tired of that. I absent mindedly browse in some of their

books, but I can't concentrate. I wander restlessly about this old cave of a Hungarian writer's den — an old office fixed over into a flat, with doors thickly padded in leather tacked in place by brass studs. The doorknobs are also of brass.

A place in Budapest: by inviting myself I've saved money. In the sitting room there's a sofa that converts into a bed with more than enough room for two.

Our first double bed.

O Joy!

Then I flee to the city and walk around waiting for you, registering all its colours, sounds, smells. I buy a note-pad. I jot down impressions of everything.

I walk through streets, through parks, across plazas. I walk in circles. I pass the Palace Hotel, my old lodging. I cross the Dza Plain — Stalin Plain in my day, but now only the plinth is left after the statue was hauled away. I go into Vadam Park, the local Tivoli, Benczur Utca, my old place of work...

I walk and walk, and think about how I will show you *everything!*

I stroll about in Buda among the old houses. I think, here there had once been war. I cautiously cross the bridges over the Danube, longing for you to comfort me in my increasing fear of heights. And I walk under the old royal palace, Vár Castle, now almost completely transformed into the new Temple of Culture. I move along the quay, registering the lovers on the steps, riverboats gliding past. The Danube is yellow and brown and black. I've never seen it blue...

I walk everywhere: in Buda's gardens, on Pest's stones, amid Csepel's steel, with its machines and fire — the old places. Yes, here I once stood, and there, too. The university quarter. The square in front of Parliament. Stadium. And Géllert Castle, the Isle of Margit, the baths. I prefer Lukács...

And know you would like it.

I walk all over the city. The days are long; the nights hurt. Why do I always go to pieces around midnight? Rain falls on nocturnal Budapest. I'm infiltrating myself into the town, or so I believe. I want to penetrate farther, deeper. I walk along the river. And I register the lovers, the *other* lovers, scurrying off in the gentle rain, seeking cover in stacked lumber, logs, sheds, under canvas. Those other lovers become shadows, invisible, inaudible: fluttering wings among the stones. I turn up my, face toward the sky and drink. The rain is silver in the light of the street lamps...

Oh, this town of night!

I die of yearning.

Before you — before love — I used to hunt in this city with eyes open, nostrils sensing: odour of iron, soot, sperm, blood, the rotten stench of the market halls, leaves in mulch. I brush against it. But can I recognise it now? Dirt. Something isn't there, something's hidden, something has gone forever. I cannot hate or love it. I cannot roll in it. Maybe it's also lost its significance...

Come! Hurry! Take my hand!

I walk beside the Parliament building. The sentries on the balustrade glide into the wall. The red stars shine. Everything in its proper place. A gigantic square, statues, flowers, trees, now a streetcar stop. Now no people...

But then?

Who fired the first shot?

Does it matter, now?

Who hanged whom on the trees of the boulevard? Whom did we talk about when we talked?

Comrades? Fascists? Freedom fighters? Rebels? Counter-revolutionaries? CIA agents? Provocateurs?

The people in Budapest...

In this book I have only marginally touched on what we call politics. But I *know* that the world, the whole world, perhaps especially the political world, is with us in our story. That the concrete truth is with us wherever we travel, you and I. That the outer world is in us when we love, when we quarrel, when we talk, when we laugh, when we kiss each other, when we sleep close together, when we awake to new days, new possibilities; always, always, it is in us and exactly on account of my love for you and your love for me, the world as we see and know it becomes total and far more transparent and amenable to change than before.

The waiter in the night restaurant remembers me: "How are you, sir?" He ran away in 1956, hence the English. Sometimes the beer is called Delibab (mirage). I sit squeezed at a corner table. Music. Hungary's authentic violins? Not at all. Accordion, piano. It's *schrammelmuzik*. The policeman at the door is waiting for his fight. "Too much drink" says the waiter. I make a note. I write down everything. I fill my note-pad. I'm a leech. I suck blood, need blood, Magyars', proletarians' blood; I need them and their blood, to go in between their bodies, thighs, arses, licking sweat from warm muscles, sucking blood from red arteries — I, the Danish leech...

But tomorrow you will come!

And soon the restaurant will close. I will get up and go. The waiter will say, in English, "Good night, sir." The fountain in the square will be turned off. But dawn will come...

You will come.

And when you come, my beloved, we will eat gulyás, drink wine and pálinka, eat our way through soup cooked with chicken, with fat carp; we will pile the bones on the table, the chickens' the crabs', grab toothpicks and clean our teeth before the next course: pörkölt which we will mistake for gulyás, paprikás with thick sour cream, pigs in abundance, sheep in flocks, fish in shoals, mountains of pancakes, large and round and baked in seething grease, wine on the table, water in the siphon, stewed fruit and cakes, fruits from the garden and water-melons in large red slices...

We will go to the country among flowers and grain. The villages: we'll visit them: dust and sun and grain and yellow churches, caves, stones and people who greet us, and a lonely Hungarian cow. We'll lift our feet among ducks, geese and children and those insane turkey-chicks with tail-feathers that bristle. We

will hear pigeons coo, cocks crow. And flies will be everywhere — in the toilets, on us, in the kitchen tureens.

We will visit the apricot growers in the orchards, melon farmers in the fields. We will put to them our foolish questions about apricots, socialism and melons. And the boys and the girls will hand us the sweetest, the reddest, because we're called Kim and Jens and have come all the way from Denmark.

But first, my beloved, I will take an early morning tram to the Keleti train station, and the tram will smell foul and it will rain. A man with a note-pad in his pocket and high hopes in his heart will hop off the tram and spring over a puddle and run, and I will laugh because he's ridiculous. And it will be morning, I will have a headache, a stomach ache, that's the price of the night before, it will be morning and a cognac always helps, and there I will stand on the platform when the train comes in...

"Kim, Kim!"

I see you first. You hang out the window squinting. Now you see me and spread out both of your arms.

Beckoning. Yelling

Smiling hugely.

Laughing.

Yes, you've arrived. We've arrived.

Finally.

"WELL, WHAT DID YOU tell them at home?" I ask, somewhat anxiously from old habit, having settled into the expensive hotel room we've been forced to pay for in advance in order to get you into the country.

"I told them I was going on a trip to Germany with a friend," you answer.

"You're sure they didn't suspect anything?"

"Absolutely."

"And what about your principal? Didn't he say any thing?"

You grin. "Well, he did warn me about you."

"What!?" I exclaim, scared.

"He advised me not to become too attached to someone like you."

"What do you *mean*?"

"Well, I don't think he was referring to *that*," you answer. "He just said that as author and artist you had

to go your own way and it would be dangerous for me to think I could follow you if I wanted to get a decent education."

I take a deep breath of relief.

"That was all?"

"What were you thinking?"

"The worst," I sigh, but catch myself.

Why summon up the devil — or for that matter your principal — from hundreds of kilometres away?

Instead I laugh and say, "In any case, here you are sitting in the Béke Hotel in Budapest. Do you know what Béke means?"

"Nope. And I'm not sitting, I'm dancing — look!"

"What's that supposed to be?"

"The czárdás," you shout and hop like a madman around the swank hotel room.

"Béke means peace," I explain. "But I suppose peace for me is over, now."

"Yes, it's all over because I am so glad, so glad, so glad to be with my Jens in Budapest!" you howl.

"Stop! You're off key!"

"In Budapest there'll be no rest...!"

And you dance, or whatever one might call it, in front of me and throw your arms around me and give me a kiss.

"Tomorrow you'll move over with me to the Akadémia Utca. And then we'll have two whole weeks together."

"Does that mean I've got to sleep alone tonight?" you ask, looking extremely offended.

"We'll find a way, Kim," I answer, then add, "Come. I'll show you the town."

"Yes," you say eagerly, and give me another kiss, this one on the nose. "Let's go out on the town and have shit-fun!"

And we do go out on the town, you and I. We go out on the town, out in the world, Kim, my beloved, to have shit-fun- but also, and most importantly, to see if our love can endure...

Even in exile.

If you enjoyed this book:

SINGULARITIES, BOOK ONE

by Robert Campbell

A collection of short stories which Gore Vidal calls "Interesting enough to be banned in Texas!"

Robert Campbell, whose name will be familiar to readers of the *Panthology* and *Acolyte Reader* volumes, had a most varied talent. He could the adopt voice of a redneck preacher, a small-town embittered cynic, a naive Caribbean Island boy, a middle class Midwestern American teenager. He was as at ease writing about East Africa as about his own American Middle South.

In *Singularities* you will meet two boys struggling with their gay consciousness, observe the formalised dance of courtship and power politics at a Southern military school, get to know two American black boys, one in East Africa, one in Texas, and a 14-year-old psychopath as beautiful as he is deadly.

Perhaps Campbell's most amusing achievement is Ruth van Miller, a wonderfully liberal bleeding hearts columnist who actually gives the kind of good, sensible advice to sexually troubled teenagers they hunger for but which cuts completely cross-grain to the modern purveyors of the Freudeo-Christian sex ethic. The letters she receives and the way she deals with them make up a sort of footnote that runs throughout this original and entertaining book.

Robert Campbell died in a plane crash in June 1989. The Acolyte Press hopes to bring out another volume of his stories soon.

ST. MATTHEWS PASSION

by Jared Bunda

Bobby is a neglected 14-year-old, packed off to boarding schools by his improvident mother— and just as quickly returned when the bills aren't paid. Anthony is a scion of the English aristocracy. They end up as roommates in St. Matthews, and at that distinguished old British public school, they fall in love.

This is the tale of that love, of Bobby's struggles, as an American lad, to find acceptance with his English classmates, of "candy striping" and other brutal games played by the older boys on the younger. Jared Bunda writes about boys are they really are, how they talk, how they deal with the great storms of happiness, sadness, anger, love and lust which sweep through their growing bodies and minds.

But behind all the exuberant rough talk and play, this is an intensely romantic tale. "At school, friendship is a passion," wrote Benjamin Disraeli. "What earthquakes of the heart and whirlwinds of the soul are combined in that simple phrase, a schoolboy's friendship!" Jared Bunda, with remarkable

delicacy and sensitivity, explores these passions in all their glory and grief, their sensuality, their sexuality, in one of the most moving, warmhearted books about love between boys to appear in the last decade.

DANCE OF THE WARRIORS

by Kevin Esser

The middle of the 21st Century. Medieval Christian militarism has reduced America to a dispirited province of failing crops and decaying cities. Gays and boy-lovers are packed off to the Camps in Utah, never to return. The only rebels are 'vags', young male members of a warrior cult living in such wastelands as the abandoned reaches of North Chicago.

This is the ultimately uplifting odyssey of two boys, 13-year-old Teddy and his great Chicano friend Cisco, who must fight their way through epic battles toward freedom.

"Kevin Esser's *Dance of the Warriors* is totally hot. It *kicks ass*, and should be treasured as one of the very few members of that gorgeous hybrid set of radical porno queer SF novels, an exclusive genre presided over by Uncle Bill Burroughs and including Sam Delaney and myself... and that's about it. All *right! VAG POWER!*" — Hakim Bey, author of *Crowstone*

"I suspect this book will become *the* man-boy love statement and a sort of rallying cry to the masses. I've certainly been feeling the urge to scrawl 'VAG POWER' on every wall I see." — Camilla