



Kevin Esser

DREAM

VARIATIONS

BOY

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**DREAMBOY
VARIATIONS**

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Kevin Esser's *Dreamboy Variations* is not a novel. The monthly installments posted here on the *JPP* site are not chapters. Instead, these *Variations* are a series of interrelated tales or episodes following one man's erotic adventures through the boyscape of modern America. All together, these small stories tell a much larger story of outrage and defiance, of joy and passion, of friendship and love.

The Author, Summer 2005

DREAMBOY VARIATIONS

ONE

This is war, man, this is unholy mayhem. This is hand-to-hand combat down to the last man. This is a gladiatorial free-for-all with nobody escaping in one piece.

Oh hell, forget all that, we already lost the goddamn war. Look around to see the refugees and the ruins. See that kid over there in the Barnum & Bailey drag? No, he's not some clown on his lunch break, he's the new species of Bozo Ignoramus created by American dementia and hip-hop burlesque. He wears baggy short pants and calls them shorts. He wears the same baggy short pants and calls them swimming trunks. He wears baggy everything and then calls himself a real man, you fucker, not some girlie-lookin faggot.

That's where I come into the picture. I'm here to scavenge the war-ravaged landscape for stragglers and fugitives, all of those would-be slouching thugs trained in self-concealment and self-loathing and force-fed on big greasy helpings of distrust and hatred and fear. It's my victory and my revenge to finesse those well-trained macho he-boys out of their clownish costumes right down to their bare skin and their bashful young dicks.

But I was doing this long before the baggy plague brought havoc and dark menace to American boyhood—and then to all boyhood yonder and beyond. Every little victory is won more dearly now, the danger is blacker and

deeper, the boys themselves are depressing eyesores, all of this is true, yes. But shit fire, brother, it's always been a duel with the darkness and it's always been the sweetest kind of subterfuge and one-upmanship to corrupt the sons of my enemy, to debauch them out of their pants and into my bed—and most especially sweet when those young kids are virgin daredevils just testing their skills and their courage for the first time, oh brother, the look in their eyes, the excitement, the nervous thrill of it all, there's nothing better for you or for them, nothing in the world.

If you're shocked by any of this, fuck you, go knit yourself a scarf or buy yourself some more of those ceramic kittens on eBay, I don't have time for your sanctimonious bullshit. OK, listen, I'll be friendly and tell you a story, something that happened last week or last year or maybe back when Reagan was in the White House, don't worry about times or dates or locations, that would just slow us down. See, I had this plan, this project of infiltration and subversion whereby I'd sneak into the lobbies and vestibules of local churches and leave copies of boyporn tucked into the racks of pamphlets and announcements and prayer books. Guerrilla warfare, son, that's what it was, that's what it still is, grass-roots insurgency of the rawest kind. These were dynamite pictures of gorgeous lambkins and striplings all showing off their aroused goodies and having fiendish fun together,

some of them even performing a proud spurt or dribble for the camera's benefit. Imagine Mister Southern Baptist or Miss Roman Catholic or the Reverend Billy Bob Bigot himself finding these pictures alongside the announcements for next week's potluck dinner and bingo game. Shock, disgust, rage, all those things, you're right—but also reality, graphic reality right there in front of them, pictorial evidence of boys being sexually joyful and uninhibited and free. It's reality and it's truth like a kick in the balls, like a slap across the face, this picture right here of a boy masturbating and happily grinning, this is an image unknown to the eyes and the brains and the souls of modern Hetero sapiens, a healthy boy with an erection. So I provide it, like my fist connecting with their jaws, I provide my enemies with bruising shots of reality.

But you're leery, I can tell. You wonder how I could manage something like this without getting caught. Hey, it's not so difficult, just a little caution and common sense are all you need. Wear a cap and sunglasses as a rudimentary precaution. Slip in and out during weekdays when nobody else is around. Take public transportation to that part of town and then walk to and from the church itself, thus guaranteeing that your car and its license plate will never show up on somebody's surveillance video. And you're wearing a cap and shades, don't forget, so you'll always remain a safely anonymous pedestrian in

case of security cameras. Hell, add a fake beard if it'll make you feel better.

So I'm on my way out of St. Anne's Catholic Church on Main Street after planting my latest batch of porn, another successful hit-and-run operation, when suddenly I'm face to face with Robbie Bostanchic, this kid I've known for a while, in fact I went to high school with his older half-brother, now Robbie himself is a freshman at the same school. I called him Goldilocks once because of his long blond hair, remarkable hair, all curly and tangly and sexy, but Robbie didn't like it and called me an asshole or a faggot or something equally belligerent. Know what? I liked his fuck-you spirit, I wasn't offended or put off, not at all. Now here we are in front of St. Anne's and it's a school day but Robbie clearly has other plans. What's he doing? What's going on? "Genius," he says to me, grinning, "it's a teacher institute day, we don't got classes."

Yeah, OK, I'm looking at him, really looking at him good and hard because he's wearing these great bicycle shorts, skintight black spandex shorts, obviously no underwear beneath, this is typical for Robbie. White sneakers with no socks. A sleeveless T-shirt with a pack of cigarettes tucked into the right shoulder making a rectangular bulge in the white fabric just alongside his neck. Damn, he looks fine, I can even see that he's

wearing his dick straight up beneath those black bicycle shorts, a soft twelve o'clock dick above the double swell of his balls. This is the era before hip-hop, folks, savor the memory of it, dig the reality of an actual American boy proud of his own body and dressed to flaunt it. If some kid walked by right now in a big goofy shirt and baggy pants, hell, Robbie and his friends would call him an asshole and a doofus and laugh him off the street.

The kid grins again and shakes his head because he suddenly remembers and realizes what I'm doing here. "With those fuckin pictures," he says, pointing at the bag under my arm. He knows about it, yeah, I first told him a few weeks ago. I was at Fantastic Sam's Comix one day and he was there with a friend who kept calling him by his last name, hey Bostanchic, look at this, hey Bostanchic, you got a dollar I can borrow? Not a real common name, so I figured maybe he was my old classmate's little brother and I asked him and he nodded yes. He was perusing the new *Dreadstar* and I told him that I had all the back issues, every fuckin one of them, back at my apartment. Was he interested? For sure, yeah! He came over with his friend. This other kid's name is Patrick Jenco, same age as Robbie, raggedy jeans and a blue Cubs jacket, reddish hair with untidy bangs, some freckles on his nose and cheeks. Robbie always calls him Jenco or Jenky. They're classmates and neighbors and best friends.

They looked at my comics and shared a Budweiser and then each of them drank a Coke. I had a poster from the movie *Pixote* in my living room and Robbie asked about it. He wanted to know why I had this giant picture of a naked running kid on my wall. “Because,” I told him, “because it’s a cool movie and I like that poster, I like naked kids.”

What? You think I was going to lie to Robbie and his friend? You think I was shy or afraid or worried about their reaction? Go to hell. OK, sorry, I know you have to be cautious and watch your step, I know, I know. And I wouldn’t discuss this shit with their parents or their teachers or the chief of police, but I know boys the way Michelangelo knew marble and I’ve never met a born traitor among them. They’re all conspirators and pranksters and hedonists by nature, tickled by intrigue and attracted to all things forbidden. Then again, maybe I’ve just been lucky. I’m not your guru or your role model. Fight your own battles. Leave me alone.

So I told Robbie and his friend Patrick, I told them that I like naked kids. One of them asked, “Guys? What about girls?”

“Just guys. Naked guys.”

“You don’t like chicks?”

“I’m queer, man, deal with it.”

“You mean gay?”

“Fuck gay. That’s political shit. Parade shit. I’m a queer desperado son of a bitch.”

“But you dig naked guys, right?” This was Robbie talking. He just wanted to understand, to make sure. I was knocked out by him right from that first encounter, right from the very first time I ever saw him, christ, that Botticelli hair, those hazel-almost-green eyes, those impudent cupid lips, everything about him so deliciously pretty and yet nothing girlish, nothing wispy or fey, he was all lean boyish toughness and I wanted to eat him alive. I told him, “This poster is nothing. Look, I’ll show you guys some wild stuff.” That’s when I brought out my porn and explained my plan for making copies and, well, you know the rest. Robbie and his friend kept glancing at each other and laughing and saying this is crazy shit, this is the craziest stupid shit, studying every picture, those images like nothing they’d ever seen or imagined before. “This is my collection of goatboys,” I told them.

“Goats?”

“Goatboys,” I said. “Horny young beasts. Young satyrs and lechers. I wanna replace all of the Judeo-Christian garbage with the old religion of the forests and the feral gods. I’m serious, man, we don’t need a new religion, we need an old religion, or maybe even let’s call it the ur-religion or the proto-religion of pure nature and

instinct and sex. Boys as fertility demons or avatars, yeah, avatars, embodiments of pure sex and pure libido.”

“What the fuck?”

“I can’t explain it any clearer.”

“But you shouldn’t put these in church,” Patrick told me. “That’s bogus.”

“You’ve been brainwashed, man, that’s all. Church is the perfect place for them. Images of truth and beauty. Sacred images. These boys. Better than saints or prophets or other biblical bullshit.”

“These kids?”

“All kids. All kids with dicks and testicles. These ones here in the pictures. You two guys. All of you. Absolutely.”

And when I said it, staring at Robbie Bostanchic, I meant it. He truly is something extraordinary and rarefied. And I say “is” because that kind of beauty is an elemental constant, each boy is archetype and quintessence and that never changes or ages or decays, it’s like the pulse of eternity in my memory and in your memory, you never lose it. You understand? If you ever saw Robbie Bostanchic in denim cut-offs or bicycle shorts, believe me, you’d understand and you’d sing hallelujah.

What else happened that first day? I told the kids to go ahead and jack off if they wanted, but they just laughed and ended up leaving a few minutes later. Boys always

think you're joking at first, or maybe they know you're not joking but they still have to pretend, they're not quite ready. Sex is like some primal language they know instinctively and genetically but they're timid about speaking it aloud for the first time, they've heard so many scary warnings against it and so much hysterical rubbish, they need a little time to overcome the strangeness and the stage fright. But Robbie returned soon enough, no surprise, he'd borrowed my *Dreadstar* comics and had to bring them back. Then he borrowed a whole new batch of other titles and brought those back a day or two later. Next time, a little bolder, he took not only comics home with him but also a few issues of *Piccolo* and *Joyboy*. And when I once again encouraged him to jack off now, no need to wait, he went as far as rubbing the crotch of his jeans and grinning, almost willing but not quite, no, not quite.

Then about a week later I found both Robbie and his pal Patrick Jenco coming out of Eureka Records, each of them carrying a small bag of tapes, new stuff by Prince and Duran Duran and maybe even Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, I can't remember for sure. Patrick started laughing as soon as he saw me, the goofy queer guy, he thought I was funny. Robbie was chewing gum and wearing a cap with a white bill and a squarish red crown, not a baseball cap, I guess you'd call it a painter's cap—

regardless, it looked killer with his long blond hair. I was at the record shop to buy a cassette of *Abbey Road* to replace my worn-out vinyl copy. I said they should come over to my place and we could listen to their new tapes on my stereo, a great stereo, it had an up-to-date cassette player but the same mammoth and powerful JBL speakers I'd been lugging from apartment to apartment since my college days in the Seventies. The two kids said sure, that'd be radical, let's go!

It was one of those unforgettable days, one of those perfect days when everything meshes in flawless harmony and nothing bad can happen. One of those days that feel removed from time, the same feeling you had as a kid when you truly lived in the eternal moment unaware of the clock's diabolical tick-tock-tick. And it's not just you, it's everybody who seems to share this feeling and this mood, even the weather itself conspiring to delight you with its bright blue skies and softly fragrant warmth. That's the way it was when Robbie and Patrick came over, all of us sharing that mood of boisterous infallibility, every one of our jokes so funny and every one of our comments so bright and so clever—even if not, that's how it seemed. I remember them asking me about my boyporn project, wondering if I was still doing that crazy shit. “Hell yes,” I said, “fighting the good fight. But I've just about run out of churches around here.”

“So then you’ll stop?”

“Fuck no, can’t stop, I’m dedicated to the absolute destruction of the temple, man, metaphorically speaking, mixing my metaphors, temples and churches. I’m talking about Samson here, you understand?”

“That’s in the Bible.”

“Sure, ironic, biblical shit as inspiration in my struggle against the Judeo-Christian Leviathan. But I’ll stick with Samson, that’s my point, I’ll bring down the whole festering mess even if it’s onto my own head.”

We kept talking while the music played, the TV was probably on at the same time, all the windows of my second-floor apartment open to the April sun and breeze, Robbie and Patrick eating cherry Popsicles and Eskimo Pies from my freezer while I smoked a joint and drank a beer and enjoyed the sound of my own voice. The boys shared a few hits of the weed to go with their Popsicles and ice cream and were having an excellent time listening to their new tapes and laughing at my weirdness, even volunteering ideas to help me out. Patrick suggested some kind of obscene graffiti. Robbie wondered about planting some of my pictures in places other than churches, maybe like schools or libraries. I said yeah, fuckin right, but even better if the pictures are, let’s say, personalized. Now *that* would be a powerful escalation of tactics, man, something to unleash real panic and distress among the enemy forces.

Not just old pictures of anonymous kids from anywhere, no, but new pictures of kids from right here, pictures of their own hometown boys, their own sons and brothers, Polaroids, the real deal, you'd have to hide your eyes with some kind of mask but that's all, maybe show the front page of the newspaper to prove the local connection, holy shit, what a brilliant idea! Almost in unison, both kids laughed and said what? you mean us? Among others, I said. But you could be the first. All we need is a Polaroid camera and some masks for your eyes, like Lone Ranger masks, or maybe full ski masks would be better, maybe that would be the safest technique, covering your whole face. The kids listened and laughed some more but never disagreed with me or said no.

Now it's several days later and here's Robbie Bostanchic in front of St. Anne's, wearing those black bicycle shorts and smuggling that pack of cigarettes inside the shoulder of his sleeveless white T-shirt. He points at the bag I'm carrying and chuckles in recognition. Then I point at the pack of cigarettes. "You smoke? What brand?"

"Marlboro. I just got 'em from Travis. Want one?"

"Sure, I'm out right now, thanks."

Travis? I don't know anybody named Travis. I move away from the church and Robbie follows. We smoke our cigarettes in a tiny park called the Village Green, which

seems strangely deserted for a day with no school. Robbie smiles and admits that it's not really a teacher institute day, he's just ditching school and happened to run into me while he was out wandering and killing time. "They'll send a note home to my mom but she don't even care, long as I don't flunk out, which I won't ever do 'cause I'm too smart and wonderful." He blows a plume of smoke and then cocks his head smugly and bares his teeth in a big show-off grin.

He points once more at my bag and wonders if I have any new pictures. I say no, same ones you've already seen, and today I did my last church so it's time to escalate, man. He interrupts to say oh, by the way, I can return your magazines today if you want, if we go to my house, there's nobody home. I know by now that he lives on Spruce Street, not far away, an easy walk from the Village Green. We're sitting together on a wooden bench and he's turned slightly toward me with one leg up on the seat and his free hand resting limply on his upraised knee, a position that opens his crotch and stretches the black spandex extra tight over the plump bulge of his balls. He sees me staring down at him and flicks his cigarette ashes at me and calls me a perv. "Fuck, we need to buy a Polaroid," I say.

"You didn't buy one yet?"

"I was waiting for my unemployment check."

“Which is when?”

“Couple more days. And we need some ski masks too.”

“Yeah,” Robbie chuckles, “the ski masks.”

We finish our cigarettes and walk the six or seven blocks to his house, which is just as empty as he promised, his divorced mother at work and his older half-brother long gone and moved away. He shows me around and we end up in his bedroom at the back. The whole room smells like a dirty gym locker. He digs through the mess in his closet until he finds the plastic Jewel Foods bag containing my comic books and my *Piccolo* and *Joyboy* magazines. “So,” I say, “you’re finished beating off to these?”

“Don’t be gross.”

“Nothing to be ashamed of, man. Perfectly natural. These kids are hot.”

“I’m not gay.”

“Hey, great, neither am I.”

“Fine, think what you want, fucker, but I’m not.”

“I believe you. Because I know what that word means to you. I told you once before, Robbie, you should forget about the whole gay thing. It’s political horseshit. Those goddamn labels, gay and straight, they’re responsible for crippling the sexual psyche of the entire fuckin planet.”

The kid listens and then responds with a cryptic little sniff of laughter before leaving the room to take a pee. I look around while he's gone, noticing for the first time that his walls are covered with posters of wrestlers from the WWF. Hulk Hogan and Randy "Macho Man" Savage and Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka. Typical décor for the room of a fourteen-year-old boy. Even his bed sheets have World Wrestling Federation slogans and pictures on them. Big wrestling fan, this kid. Then he's back and we discuss the whole pro wrestling concept and how I consider it an amusing sort of vaudeville, nothing more, which irritates Robbie into a vehement defense of his favorite entertainment. He's one of those otherwise intelligent kids who believe sincerely in the legitimacy of pro wrestling as a real sport and not just some riotous exhibition. OK, OK, I tell him, whatever makes you happy. "What about your friend Patrick? Is he a big fan like you?"

"For sure! Everybody who's cool loves the WWF. Get real."

"So where is he today, anyway?"

"Who? Jenco?"

"Yeah. Didn't he ditch with you?"

"No, man, he don't ever ditch. He had like a big algebra test or something."

"D'you guys jack off together?"

“No way,” Robbie says, actually blushing a little red in the face, first time I’ve ever seen him embarrassed. “And I’ll tell you a secret, Jake, he thinks you’re kinda nuts. Jenco does. He thinks you could get us all into trouble.”

“He might be right.”

“That’s what he says, I’m just letting you know.”

“Are you scared? You think I’m trouble?”

“Probably, I dunno, maybe not,” the boy shrugs, still looking slightly flustered and red-faced but keeping his eyes steadily on mine. I grin at him and step close enough to nudge him on the shoulder. The pack of Marlboros is gone. He took it out a few minutes ago and put it on his desk next to an old *Star Wars* cup and an empty Twinkies box. I nudge him again until he grins back and mutters “you asshole” at me under his breath. “Look at you, Robbie, no shit, what a killer stud you are.”

“Shut up.”

“You’re unbelievable.”

“Perv.”

“You drive me wild,” I say to him, trying to capture him in a hug, not easy to do, like trying to get your arms around a squirming puppy, finally I have him but even now he keeps wriggling and punching playfully at my ribs and midsection and ducking his head when I try to kiss his hair or his cheek. I laugh and call him a little bastard as I brush back his long tangles of blond hair to find and kiss

the pink perfection of his ear. I already have one hand inside the back of his T-shirt and now I slip it down and into the back of his bicycle shorts, into the stretchy spandex where I can hold and feel the bare left cheek of his butt. This makes him squirm and poke at me even harder, but then the squirming and the poking change from something playfully resistant to something playfully reciprocal, Robbie's way of being intimate now, of rubbing against me, of digging his fist against my crotch. Suddenly he's more than cooperative, suddenly he's almost trembling with impatience and he starts to pull down his own bicycle shorts, they're so tight and clingy that he has to work his way out of them, shimmying and bending as he peels them all the way down and off. His cock is up hard and wickedly alive above those plump balls finally freed from their spandex, he keeps his sleeveless white T-shirt on and his dirty sneakers with no socks but everything else is free and natural and looking sweet, those smooth bare legs and that pale succulent ass turned in my direction now as he crosses to the bed and sits on the edge, on his rumpled WWF sheets. He sits there and leans back against one elbow and uses his other hand to masturbate while I lower my own jeans and start to do the same, just watching each other, that's what both of us choose to do this first time, like using each other as a dirty movie while we jack off, Robbie staring at me as I

stare at him, from about four feet away you can barely see the wispy blond frizz at the base of his boner as he pumps and pumps, he's one of those teenage boys with nicely ripened equipment and a sacful of juice but almost no pubes. I spill onto the carpet near my feet and then Robbie's legs start flexing and quivering and he pulls his T-shirt up and out of the way to bare his belly for the cum suddenly oozing and then squirting onto it, once and then twice and he's finished. He doesn't say anything when I kneel beside him and clean him with my tongue. He's still erect so I start sucking him, giving him his first blowjob I'm sure, this is heaven on Spruce Street and Robbie is digging it, he's completely into it, but after about fifteen minutes he reminds me that his mom will be home pretty soon and we should probably stop for today because this will take too long, that's what he tells me, he says he can't sperm again right now, not yet, it's too quick.

So that's how we started, that was our initial tryst and Robbie's first sexplay with another guy. That's what made it so special, that's what always makes a day like that so special and satisfying, remember I explained to you earlier, the phenomenon of the virgin daredevil just testing his skills and his courage, the look in his eyes, the excitement of that very first time, the indecent thrill of it. But now I can hear you saying damn, this guy is a real psycho, he's a totally sex-obsessed wacko. Well, OK, fair

enough. I am. And so are you. Otherwise you wouldn't be reading this. I mean, seriously, you're free to stop at any point. Go find a *People* magazine and read about some Hollywood skank's latest boob job. We won't miss you.

Now here's what Robbie said, don't forget, he told me that "we should probably stop for today." That's right. For today. So I knew we were just getting started, I knew he wasn't pissed off or upset or going to disappear after just our one forbidden rendezvous. Sure enough, he's back two days later when I cash my unemployment check and go to K-Mart for a new Polaroid camera and a few cartridges of film. It's funny how this kid has become my ally and my partner in decadence and disruption. But it's his decision, you have to admit. I presented the same schemes and offered the same opportunities to both Robbie and Patrick. One of them accepted and the other didn't. Listen to me, think about it, if I make an effort to interest and involve a boy in music or sports or playing chess, hooray, I'm praised as a good citizen and community activist, a fine Big Brother, a wonderful mentor. But if I make an effort to interest and involve the same boy in sex and the delights of his own body, oh horror, I'm condemned as a monster, a seducer of innocent children, an evil pedophile. No matter that wrestling or football can break the kid's neck, it's OK, any sport or dangerous activity is just fine even if you

have to force the kid to do it, don't be a sissy, get out there and be a man, we know what's best for you. No matter that masturbation or a blowjob can result in nothing but orgasms and pure pleasure, it's not OK, it's unspeakably harmful even if the kid chooses eagerly to do it, even if he loves it and comes to your house expressly for the joyful reward of it, he's actually the victim of abuse, poor helpless child, yes oh yes, we know what's best for him.

But, but, but. . . I can hear my enemies and even my more simple-minded supporters stammering and sputtering their objections. Because, of course, we all know that sex is unique and demands its own set of rules and prohibitions. Right? But why? Who says? That's just your culture and your religion speaking. Ask nature and the universe if sex is somehow special and sacred among all other functions of the body. Ask nature and the universe if sex truly requires such an elaborate superstructure of sin and shame and taboo. Know what? Nature and the universe will call you a moron and laugh in your face.

All right, don't be so impatient, I'm telling you about Robbie and our trip to K-Mart. We take the new camera and the film back to my apartment and then remember that we forgot to buy the ski masks. Robbie says it's no big deal, there must be other ways to cover up somebody's face. He hasn't come right out and said so, but he seems

ready to volunteer as the first Polaroid Boy for our project. Earlier I asked him about Patrick maybe joining us and he said no, Jenco won't be here, he's not coming. So it's just me and Robbie today—and that's OK for now, better than OK, it's great, but we're definitely going to need a few more young hedonists and troublemakers for this campaign. Maybe Patrick will change his mind. Maybe Robbie has other friends who might be interested. I'll have to ask him. Later. But now I'm too busy loading film into the camera and Robbie himself is putting music on the stereo, it's his own Prince cassette, he must have brought it with him in one of his pockets. He's wearing jeans today because of cooler weather, plus a shirt that resembles a sports jersey but which has no name or number, just a white body and long maroon sleeves. He's also wearing that cute painter's cap tipped back at a nonchalant angle, holy jesus, look at him, he deserves more than a Polaroid, he should be a bronze by Rodin, a painting by Caravaggio, he's a flesh-and-blood masterpiece. He turns the music up loud, then louder. "Hey, is this OK? Should I turn it down?"

"No, it's early, it won't bother anybody," I tell him. The music is perfect, to be honest, an excellent choice, Prince sounding all funky and raunchy and caterwauling like the very muse of illicit sex. Did Robbie bring it and play it for that reason? Is he putting himself into the

proper mood for what we're about to do? He takes off his cap and gives his hair a quick comb with his fingers, that hair, that seraphic mane of golden hair. "Well," he says, "here goes," as if he's about to dive off the high board at the pool. We were just watching each other masturbate a couple of days ago, and he even had his dick in my mouth for several minutes, but this is different, this is less spontaneous and more calculated, what we're doing here today is like some kind of pact or commitment, it's so forthright and open and so frankly queer. I can see his unusual nervousness as he takes off his sneakers and then pauses to have one of my cigarettes, a new pack of Kools sitting atop the television—which he now turns on while he's standing there, no volume, just the picture. He lights the cigarette and wanders in slow circles around the living room and tells me that my Kools taste like shit. I hold up the camera, I aim it at him, I say we're all ready to go here, you're gonna do this, right? He says don't be so pushy. I say I'm excited, man, this'll be righteous, let's see that studly bod of yours. Pushy fucker, Robbie accuses me once more, then he sneaks a little grin and looks for an ashtray and finally gives me his half-smoked cigarette to free his hands, to pull off his shirt and then his pants. He's in white Jockey briefs and white socks and I can easily see that he already has an erection. Again he uses his fingers to comb his hair. "Now what?"

“Keep going. Get naked.”

“All the way?”

“Of course. That’s the point, man, you know that.”

“Yeah,” Robbie says, grabbing his cigarette for one more drag, too fast, he coughs a little on the smoke. “But like. . . where? In here?”

“Maybe on the couch. That sounds good. You ready?”

The kid says oh yeah, no problem, handing me his cigarette butt before crossing to the couch and taking a seat. He pulls off one sock and tosses it at me, then the other one, each of his legs banded reddish just above the ankle where his socks were tightest. Suddenly he’s up again, nervous as a rabbit, up and moving from window to window to yank down all the shades. Just in case, he says. The funk-and-grind music is still pounding from the speakers. Halfway back across the room he pushes down his underpants and lets them drop, there he is, naked as a wild boy, naked as a pagan angel, he turns himself and faces me with a happily defiant leer and a nasty boner, he’s starting to enjoy this, forget about the couch, he has his own ideas now and tells me to go ahead and take the pictures, posing, grinning, rotating his hips to make his cock waggle and bounce, turning to show his ass, bending, mooning. Then both of us remember that his face is still uncovered and we laugh and say fuck it, wait a minute, we need to start over.

It's Robbie who comes up with the idea of using his own underpants as a mask. Worn sideways, with the big leg hole exposing everything above the nose but nothing below, the Jockey briefs actually resemble a loose white ski mask or maybe even a type of Muslim veil. The kid is in front of my bedroom mirror to make the necessary adjustments and to appraise the effect. "Most excellent," he decides, nodding at himself, then he removes the undies and gives his entire nude form a thorough look in the mirror, admiring his reflection and the sight of his own stiffened cock. He's even inspired now to do a brief rehearsal for a handjob, giving his thing a few whacks just to watch himself do it, fascinated by this obscene twin of himself in the glass. He's so excited by all of this mischief that he practically dances back to the living room and says show me the pictures you already took, so excited, yes, past his nervousness now and into sheer enjoyment and sheer liberation, frisky goatboy light on his feet and bright-eyed and reveling in the shameless freedom of his own nakedness. He scrutinizes the Polaroids and does some low chuckling at what he sees, pleased by the images of himself, holding up this one or that one and saying "look at this dick" or "that's a really hard-core boner, man, check this out."

Then he's too aroused and achy for any more waiting and he says let's go, let's finish, I'm ready for sure. He

dons his improvised Jockey mask and does the same kind of posing as before—but even more energetic and aggressive this time, bolder this time, shoving his hips forward to flaunt his erection right in your face, cupping his balls to show them off, turning and mooning and then spreading the cheeks to make sure you can see his asshole. A few more shots and then he's on the couch where he can sit and relax and finish jacking off for real, I think he's actually forgotten about me and the camera by this time, he whacks and whacks for about five minutes with his unmasked eyes half shut, I'm taking picture after picture of him doing this, now more pictures as he shuts his eyes completely and starts ejaculating, now just a few more to get some good close-ups of that spent red cock and the lovely mess on his belly. Perfect.

Need I mention that I jerked off myself by now as I stood there in front of Robbie? Do you care? No, I didn't think so. Anyway, Robbie is a little groggy and quiet afterwards, he stays on the couch and lies on his side to listen to the music and stare at the mute TV. But this post-coital funk lasts only a few minutes and then he's up and regarding me with one of his smug grins and telling me to show him the Polaroids, he says let's see those crazy fuckin things. We agree that they're great, very successful, as stunningly dirty as any pictures can be. Solo pictures, at least. Robbie finally takes a break from

admiring them and puts on his underpants, which he's been wearing on his head like a stocking cap until now. I quickly say wait, stop, don't get dressed yet, we can watch some TV and have some snacks and rest for about an hour and then I'll give you a blowjob, a really good one this time, you'll dig it, man, believe me. The kid glances at the clock above the television and then nods yeah, OK, that sounds cool.

An hour later, after sharing a box of Jeno's pizza rolls, we're ready. Off come those Jockey underpants one more time and then I proceed to give young Robbie Bostanchic some Fellatio Deluxe as he sprawls naked on the couch. It takes a while but every lingering moment is bliss and finally the kid manages a very juicy and very tasty discharge that leaves him grinning dopily and shaking his head, exhausted, amazed.

The question later is what to do with all of those Polaroids. I label them along the bottom with messages that say "YOUR HOMETOWN PORN STAR" or "LOCAL BOY MAKES CUM" or other similar provocations, a lot of the shots are nearly duplicates and those are the ones I decide to sacrifice, the only ones I can force myself to give away, maybe I'll photocopy some of the others for dispersal, fuck, I'm not sure. So I take that one sacrificial batch over to the public library and furtively insert each photo, maybe ten of them altogether,

into the middle of books on the “Best Sellers” rack near the entrance. Success. Discord and dismay planted among my enemies. But then next day I see a story in the local newspaper about a “wave of vandalism” afflicting area “institutions” since early spring, reports of “criminal obscenity” and a police investigation, any information leading to an arrest would be appreciated. My reaction is ambivalent, both a sense of satisfaction and a prickle of fear, a feeling of “mission accomplished” and a feeling of “it’s the *Federales*, run for the hills!” What I know for sure is that my little guerrilla operation is finished, this particular battle has ended, time to hide in the bush and regroup.

Even so, I confess that I never bother to discuss the newspaper article with Robbie, and he never notices it or mentions it to me. Why should he? He doesn’t read the paper. So I let him believe that we’re still dedicated to our project, which means we continue to need more and more pictures of him performing whatever lewd and vulgar freakiness he can dream up. And which also means we continue to do more and more stuff together after the camera is put away. Robbie is an eager young tomcat who always has devilment in his eyes and cum in his nuts. He’s quickly and happily into mutual handjobs, no problem, that happens the first week. And then it’s not long before he’s learning to suck dick, he’s comfortable with it by the

time school ends for summer vacation, you should see that boy get down and get busy, now we always do sixty-nining and Robbie always has creative ideas for new positions, he's definitely not timid, he'll climb right onto your face this way or that way or any way you want, go ahead and enjoy his balls, go ahead and feast on his ass. Only full anal intercourse remains out of bounds. Robbie isn't interested yet, maybe he never will be, I even invited him once to fuck me if he wanted, I said go for it, man, I won't do it to you because I know you don't want it, but you can fuck me, you can have some fun. But he said no, his attitude was like quit wasting our time, he's so crazy for the oral stuff, so in love with it, I don't think he's even curious about anything else right now.

But let's not drift away entirely and lose sight of the Polaroids and our project—an aborted and phantom project by this time, of course—because our pal Robbie hasn't forgotten about it and he actually seems determined to enlist some fresh talent for my benefit, or maybe I should say for our benefit since he's having as much fun these days as I am. But it's a difficult assignment. His friend Patrick comes over now and then, sometimes we all go to Fantastic Sam's or Eureka Records or to the mall. That boy named Travis also shows up a few times, he's the one who smokes Marlboros, I thought he'd be older than Robbie but in reality he's a scrawny younger kid who

just finished junior high. Plus two or three of Robbie's other friends, even a cousin of his from out of town, they all come visiting and we all have some good times together, a lot of dirty talk and bragging and farting and getting high and a lot of homoerotic shoving and grabbing and punching, the usual adolescent horseplay. I manage to get some interesting Polaroids as the weeks go by, all kids love to act up for the camera, nearly every one of them does the same jack-off pantomime and the same Michael Jackson crotch-grabbing but that's as far as they'll go for now, no nudity, nothing really wild, maybe that stuff in the newspaper about the cops made me a little skittish, maybe I'm not trying hard enough or pushing hard enough or inspiring the kids with my usual reckless energy, or maybe the planets are in some kind of luckless and unhappy alignment, I'm really not sure.

Now don't get me wrong, I know what a lucky bastard I am to have Robbie Bostanchic himself as my horny loverboy, damn right, he's the most beautiful kid in the whole bunch and here we are sucking each other's dicks almost every day. I'm not complaining, folks, please believe me. But you need to understand, paradise is always one more boy away, and then one more, and one more after that. You don't listen to only one Beethoven symphony endlessly over and over, satisfied with nothing but that single piece of music, even if that piece happens

to be your favorite. No, you want other symphonies, and you also want concertos and opera and maybe even some Beatles and Cole Porter as well. Music is beauty and pleasure and you always want more and more and more of it. So too with the beauty and pleasure of boys. Always more. Never enough.

And Robbie, I think, feels the same kind of impatience for more adventure, more excitement. He probably realizes by now that our original Polaroid project is kaput, he's no dummy, he doesn't even bother to cover his face anymore when I take his picture—but that doesn't seem to matter at this point, he's having a lot of good filthy fun and wants to keep going. I don't even know if he's a full-blooded queerboy or not. He's told me more than once that he's not and maybe he'll actually start chasing girls one of these days, we'll just have to wait and find out. But I remember when I asked him about jacking off with Patrick, wondering if they ever do it together, and I remember the way he blushed, which might have been simple embarrassment or might have been the self-conscious blush of desire, maybe he had the same fantasy about the two of them as I did. So why don't I just ask him again and solve the mystery? I do ask, I ask him questions like that all the time, but he's just a kid, he never gives me any real answers. Just recently I asked him if he ever tells Patrick about all the stuff we do together,

about all the blowjobs and all the pictures, the whole lurid scene. He told me to shut up and stop being a dork. See what I mean?

But good things come to those who wait, as any fortune cookie will tell you. The police investigation into that “wave of vandalism” never leads to my door and I’m left with the satisfied glow of anarchy triumphant, I’ve disrupted the dreary status quo and I’m glad, yes, I’m the one who did it, up yours! It’s June by this time, possibly even July, Robbie has been bringing his friends around and we’re having a damn fine summer. That young kid Travis has some mysterious weed connection and he sometimes uses my apartment to sell nickel or dime bags to the other boys. Robbie smokes occasionally but not much, surprisingly it’s his friend Patrick who always seems to be buying one of those nickel bags of weed and rolling up a joint. I say “surprisingly” because Patrick comes across as the straight one, the conservative one, the cautious nerdy type who never skips school or gets into trouble. But we all have our secrets and our shadowy vices and Patrick is no different, he’s a warm-blooded boy, he responds to pleasure. And he’s a cute kid, not a mouth-watering delicacy like Robbie but cute, sort of a teenage Tom Sawyer with his mop of reddish hair and freckly skin, a good athlete at school, very fit and sturdy, he has strong legs that look great in shorts.

And now please forgive this interruption, but when I say shorts, I mean shorts. Real honest-to-god shorts. Can you remember back that far? Are you old enough? Can you conjure the memory of some boy strolling through your local mall or hanging out at the arcade? There he is, right in front of you, picture him in a pair of cut-offs so tight they won't even zip up all the way over his crotch, so tight they cling to his hips and his ass like a denim skin. Or wait, this other kid over here, look at him in those skimpy gym shorts or sweat shorts with nothing under them except bare boy, no Jockeys or Hanes or anything else, it's so obvious, so provocative, you can see the jiggly action and movement of his boysex underneath as he walks, each step, each stride, you can actually see the softly bulging contour of his dick and balls riding freely inside the fabric between his legs. And when he passes, oh man, what a sight from behind, those shorts are snugged right into the crack of his butt and each perfectly firm cheek is a scandalous work of art.

So when I talk about Robbie or Patrick wearing shorts, now you remember what I mean. No baggy short pants. No hip-hop goons in bozo britches. None of that grotesque self-hatred and hostility masquerading as fashion. Just boys being natural and uninhibited boys, comfortable in their own bodies, each one a lusty young Adam still sovereign in Eden. Robbie favors cut-offs and, of course,

those sexy bicycle shorts. Patrick usually wears gym shorts when it's hot, gym shorts and knee socks and T-shirts cut off above the belly, that's right, boys were wearing bare-belly shirts before girls, before Hell's reign, before the Fall.

All right, enough messing around, I'll give you the full story and bring you up to date. Robbie and Patrick have plans today to go swimming, that's why they come over to my apartment around noon, there's a bus stop just down the block and my place is always convenient for getting together and killing time and then catching the bus to the beach or the mall or wherever. The kids all complain that I should buy a car, and one of these days I probably will, but I'm living on unemployment checks right now so the bus is the best way to go. I'm just dragging my worthless carcass out of bed when the boys arrive pounding at my door. No, I don't usually sleep until noon, but I was out drinking last night with an old college friend of mine, he lives in a rundown old house about a ten-minute walk from here, it's an odd little house known as "the shack" among the folks in this area. But that's a story for later. All I'm trying to tell you now is that I was hung-over this morning and that's why I was late getting up, and that's why I answered the door naked, because that's how I sleep. Well, to be accurate, I answered the door with a pillow held in front of myself, but I discarded it when I

saw the two kids standing there, just them, no strangers or cops. Sometimes I walk around the apartment naked even when the kids are here, I mean if I've just gotten up or if I'm taking a shower, it's not like I'm giving peep shows or something. That little Travis guy always finds it hilarious. And so does Patrick, he starts laughing now as soon as he sees me and then he calls me a perv, the usual. Robbie just pretends half-heartedly to be amused. He sees me naked almost every day, he knows my dick well enough to pick it out of a lineup—or to choose it in a tasting contest. Did I already tell you that he swallows semen? Sometimes he pulls away or sometimes he takes a mouthful and then lets it drool back out, but I've also seen him take a mouthful and then swallow the whole thing, he's not fussy, he'll do it if he's in the mood.

Anyway, I'm hung-over and naked and I tell the boys to come in, hey, what's goin on, what's up? Both of them are dressed for the beach in the shorts that they wear as their swimming trunks, Robbie in his cut-offs and Patrick in his red gym shorts, just their shorts and T-shirts and sneakers, no socks, only the most minimal attire. They tell me to get dressed and come with them, come on, we can catch the twelve thirty-five bus. I mumble and growl at them, exaggerating my own morning-after distress just to be funny, maybe I'll go with them after I get some coffee, I'm not sure yet. But the weather has a will of its own.

This sunny day is quickly becoming cloudier and darker, there's a wind blowing in from the west and then Patrick looks out the window and reports a flash of lightning in the distance. Forget about the beach, there's a storm on its way.

The kids decide to stick around and hang out. I finally wake up sufficiently to put on a pair of jeans and make a lunch of scrambled eggs and toast, Robbie and Patrick decide that they're hungry and tell me to make enough for everybody. OK, no problem, I make lunch for all three of us and then they sit side by side in front of the TV and watch wrestling as they eat their eggs and toast, both of them sitting there cross-legged on the floor like a couple of preschoolers watching *Sesame Street*. When Patrick is finished eating he sets his plate aside and leans back against his elbows and uncrosses his legs, knees raised, suddenly you can see one testicle and the tip of his penis where the gym shorts have pulled back too far. This happens occasionally when boys are relaxing and sprawling in those skimpy shorts they wear—often with no underpants, of course—it's not unusual to catch a glimpse of their dangly bare stuff. And I'm never shy about mentioning it or offering a lecherous compliment, which I do right now with Patrick, telling him that he's lookin good, man, thanks for the sexy show. He's not sure at first what I'm talking about, then he grins and nods sort

of absently and gives the leg of his shorts a cursory tug that accomplishes nothing, he doesn't much care, he's mesmerized by that WWF nonsense on TV. But Robbie cares, Robbie is definitely interested, he immediately turns to see what his friend is showing and then he actually leans forward to get a better angle and a better look. "Damn, Jenky, what a pig, don't be rude!"

"What? Shut up, Bostanchic."

"Fucker. You got no manners. You're like this, like here, this is Jenco," Robbie says, he unfastens and unzips his own cut-offs and spreads the fly completely open to expose himself, smiling oh yeah that's better, look here, this is the new fuckin style! He's amused by himself, suddenly his own goofiness is more entertaining than the wrestling on TV, he's impatient for some kind of activity, for something to do—and now he's getting ideas, you can tell, you can see his energy building and his hormones working. Yeah, it's funny, you can really feel the vibe changing here in the apartment. Robbie stays where he is with his denim shorts wide open and everything exposed, he's leaning back against his elbows same as Patrick and he keeps giving his hips spastic little upward thrusts to make his dick jump. Patrick can't help looking at him and laughing, no question about it, the vibe is shifting, even Patrick is losing interest in that WWF spectacle and starting to get restless, abruptly he hops up to fetch the

little bag of weed that he keeps in my refrigerator, he rolls himself a joint on the kitchen table and he lights up and then comes wandering back into the living room. Robbie has stretched himself out on the floor by this time, he's on his back and he keeps pulling his T-shirt up over his face and making muffled sounds of moaning and grunting, meanwhile his shorts are still open and his dick is about half hard, finally I say christ almighty, man, are you guys going to jack off or what? Patrick takes a hit from his joint and laughs the smoke right back out, he's standing next to Robbie and gives him a nudge with his foot, fuckin Bostanchic, he says, you're such a dork.

This is too much. Impossible. Robbie still has his T-shirt up over his face and he laughs at Patrick's insult. I tiptoe over like a sneaky burglar and then grab Robbie's denim shorts and yank them down to his knees. He calls me a fucker and takes a blind swipe at me as I bend closer and stick my hand between his legs to make him laugh and squirm, I'm fondling his balls, I'm fondling his dick, he's a helpless mess of giggles there on the floor, Patrick is watching us and laughing, I'm not sure if he's ever seen Robbie's hard-on before but he's seeing it now, this is the real thing, and he's seeing me play with it—but he can't honestly be surprised after all this time, he knows what's up.

Robbie is on fire, this kid wants to play and he has ideas. Come on, he says to Patrick, let's look at some fuckin pictures! He's up on his feet suddenly, shorts around his knees, cock up devilish and stiff as he rushes half-shuffling to my bedroom with Patrick right behind, my boyporn is in there, all the magazines, plus the Polaroid camera and the pictures of Robbie himself, also some copies of *Hustler* and *Stag* and some other crap brought over by Travis and company. That's what Robbie wants to do now, he wants to look at all of that porn with his friend Patrick and bust a nut with him, it's about time, it's hard to believe they've never done this until now. But part of the fun is turning this whole deal into a game, Robbie's game, today has given him a wildly unexpected opportunity and he wants to make it special, this is obvious, this is why I play along when he gets Patrick into my bedroom and then closes the door, pausing just beforehand to glance back and tantalize me with a grin and say sorry, Jake, this is private!

OK, I understand him closing the door and wanting privacy, it gives Robbie the feeling of a kinky and intimate seduction, alone with Patrick in that bedroom on a rainy afternoon, it's a red-hot scenario, it's a wet dream. So I don't complain or barge in, no, actually I relax and try to enjoy the weirdness. Because it is weird, wonderfully and salaciously weird. They've been in there

for ten or fifteen minutes, Patrick would've already finished smoking the joint he had with him, he must be feeling pleasantly high right now, they've been looking at all of that porn, giggling at all of those outrageous Polaroids of Robbie—when suddenly the door opens halfway and Robbie himself calls my name and says that he has something special for me, one by one he starts tossing out pieces of clothing, his own sneakers, his T-shirt, his shorts. There's a brief interruption, I'm still watching from the living room, waiting, then Robbie is back at the door with about half of his naked body showing as he grins at me and tosses out Patrick's sneakers, Patrick's T-shirt, Patrick's red gym shorts. That's all there is, that's all they were wearing today, there's nothing else. Again Robbie tells me it's a private party, Jake, sorry, gotta go, we're busy! Then the door shuts and I hear my radio playing music from inside where Robbie and Patrick are naked together for what I believe is the first time—and not just naked, not just that, but also getting boners together for the first time, yeah, this is their honeymoon, alone in my room, alone on my bed, so private and safe in there, they can do whatever they want now, anything they want, it's all OK. I wonder if they do it a little shyly at first or if they're eager and horny about it. In there on my bed. The stark nakedness of each other, how exciting that must be for them. Taking

their time. Enjoying themselves. The amazement of their bodies sharing such an intensity of pleasure. The sinful joy of it.

Almost an hour passes before the door opens once more and Robbie emerges naked, he has no choice, I have all of his and Patrick's clothing out here in the living room. His penis has the raw and reddened droop of after-sex fatigue. So they weren't just goofing around in there or faking it, that's clear to see, Robbie's tired dick proves it. "You guys had some fun together," I say to him. "Way to go, man, nice job."

"Jenco took forever. He was like nervous or something."

"Nervous, wow, that's cute. Bashful little virgin."

"You're sick."

"Did he see the pictures of you?"

"Hell yeah."

"Did you take any new ones? Take any of him?"

"A few. They're pretty decent."

"You did good."

"No problem," Robbie says, he grabs his T-shirt as if to start dressing but then changes his mind and flops onto the couch to watch some TV, it's still raining and thundering outside and there's nowhere to go but here, just an indolent afternoon of sex and television—and now apparently this new dynamic of casual nudity. Things

have changed around here, I guess. Robbie doesn't have to worry about being cautious or inhibited around Patrick anymore, now he can be his own naturally raunchy self and lounge bare-assed on the couch. He yawns and then remembers something. "Oh yeah," he says to me, "your sheets are kinda messed up."

"Yeah, I figured. That's OK. So did you guys just beat off together or what? Anything else?"

"You're fuckin nosey," the kid says, then shrugs vaguely and finishes his response by putting his middle finger into his mouth and sliding it slowly in and out.

"So yes? Cocksucking?"

"Maybe."

"You dirty dogs."

"There's some pretty good pictures."

"Of that? How?"

"I'm talented, man. You'll see."

"So where's Patrick? Is he coming out?"

"He's resting, I guess, I dunno."

"OK, maybe I'll just check on him," I say, heading for the bedroom. There's no way I'm going to let this day end without seeing Patrick naked and taking a long and thorough look at him. He's still on the bed when I go in. He's reclining against the headboard with one knee raised, he must've brought an extra joint with him earlier because he's smoking it now, relaxing, listening to the radio, some

new song by Phil Collins. He grins a little tensely when he sees me and then quickly inclines his upraised leg in a protective reflex to shield his crotch, to conceal his genitalia. But I can see everything just fine, he looks great, he has a superbly athletic body and he's very handsome between the legs, his penis has the same raw after-sex droop as Robbie's. I glance at the dresser beside me and notice the Polaroids scattered there in careless disarray, some old ones of Robbie by himself and some new ones of Patrick performing solo, also some disorienting close-ups of fellatio that are slightly blurry and badly framed, obviously someone took these by holding the camera at arm's length and then blindly aiming and shooting, there's definitely a cock being sucked and I think that's probably Robbie's blurry profile, man oh man, crafty devils. "Lots of fun," I say to Patrick. "I told you guys. I kept telling you. Now you know."

"Pretty cool," Patrick admits.

What else can he say? He's a teenage boy who just finished having sex with his best friend for the first time. Here in my bedroom. He's not exactly comfortable discussing it with me. Of course not. He takes a hit from his joint and then offers it to me. Sure, I'll have some, I'll be friendly. I sit on the edge of the bed and Patrick scoots himself aside a few more inches to give me room. He passes me the smoldering joint, only about an inch of it

left. “I should get my clothes,” he says, finally exhaling the smoke from his last toke.

“Don’t worry about it,” I tell him. “There’s no rush. Robbie’s still buck naked out there.”

“Well,” Patrick shrugs, like OK, maybe a few more minutes.

I pass the joint back, probably good for one final hit. The kid’s eyes are drowsy. His gingery hair is all mussed and funny. His pubic hair is the same gingery reddish color. I can smell boysemen on the sheets, just as Robbie warned. “Hey Patrick, man, can I touch your dick? Can I feel it?” He responds with something like a grunt of laughter and a compliant shrug and then he obligingly lowers his upraised leg to accept my hand. Listen to me, believe me, there’s no tactile thrill like handling some boy’s penis for the first time, that most forbidden part of him, that young cock, it’s so meaty and alive, it’s so waggly and playful. And then when it starts to get excited and it starts to change its size and its shape and you can actually feel the naughty thing growing and hardening right there in your grip, damn, I pity anyone who hasn’t known that unspeakable pleasure. “I just really need to see this,” I say to Patrick as I’m coaxing his erection all the way up. It’s a nice one, I’m impressed by what I’m holding. “Wow, man, it’s surprising how big this beast gets. It’s a beauty.”

“Thanks,” Patrick says simply, he’s too wasted from this afternoon’s long debauch to be defensive or sarcastic or anything except dopily passive. And now here’s Robbie wandering into the bedroom to see what’s up. “You fuckin jags,” he says, grinning his usual bad-boy grin. “You can’t do this shit, it’s not healthy.”

“This is holy sacrament, man.”

“Whatever that means,” Robbie says. He poses in front of the mirror to admire his own nude reflection, his eyes shifting briefly to look at me and Patrick in the glass, then shifting back to himself, then back again to us. “It reeks like cum in here.”

“Who’s responsible for that?”

“Mostly Jenco,” Robbie chuckles. “Messy doofus.”

“Anyway,” I say, “it smells good to me. No problem.”

I’m giving Patrick a lazy handjob as he reclines there beside me on the bed, groggy young boy just drifting now, just letting the weirdness happen. “Big old dick,” I comment once more, I can’t help myself, it’s such a satisfying fistful. Robbie turns and sits against the dresser to watch us. “Know who’s got a big dick for real? Travis does,” he says. “Right, Jenco?”

“Yeah, I guess,” Patrick mumbles.

“That’s interesting,” I say. “So how the hell d’you know that?”

“It’s not something gay. Don’t get excited. I’ve seen him peeing.”

“Oh yeah. OK. That makes sense.”

“It’s pretty big, that’s all. Fuckin Travis, man, he’s such a retard.”

I’m listening, I’m paying attention, but I can’t really concentrate until I try one other thing, quickly I lean down to do it, I need to enjoy the feel of Patrick’s cock in my mouth, not a blowjob, not yet, we’ll do that later, maybe tomorrow, this right now won’t take long, I just want the satisfaction of this one brief taste and then I sit back and keep going with my hand. Patrick doesn’t say anything. Robbie laughs and mutters something like crazy shit, look at you, stupid shit. He picks up several of the Polaroids and starts looking at them one by one, chuckling at them, cheerful young lecher, my golden Robbie, my Robbie Bostanchic.

But it’s strange, here I am in my bedroom with these two naked boys, I’m giving one of them a handjob that might take till doomsday to produce a squirt, poor Patrick is being very agreeable but he was already drained awfully dry this afternoon by his best buddy. Still, who knows, maybe something will come out if I keep pulling his pecker long enough. The boy himself seems willing to wait and see. So what could be sweeter? Tell me, honestly, wouldn’t you be here with me if you could? And

yet I can't stop thinking now about what Robbie just told me, about that Travis kid and his big dick. That keeps nagging at me now. Travis. Weird little Travis. I know, yes, a totally sex-obsessed wacko, that's me, you're right again. I surrender. Unholy mayhem. Hand-to-hand combat. What else can I tell you? I surrender.

* * *

DREAMBOY VARIATIONS

TWO

Why do people believe this crap I write? Did I ever say it was true? OK, maybe I did. And maybe what I'm saying now is the actual lie. Maybe I've lost track myself of the distinction between fact and fiction. I'm the ventriloquist and I'm the dummy and I'm the audience all at the same time. My world is a house of mirrors and maybe somewhere in those reflections of other reflections you'll find a semblance of reality. But I make no promises.

I say all of this, or something similar, when I first see Gito again after three and a half years. Let's just call it four years, that's close enough. He's pissed off because of the book I wrote about him. Believe me, he was all in favor of it at the beginning, he couldn't wait to become a "big fuckin star" and show everybody his name in the book, his real name, yes, he insisted that I use his real full name, Gilberto Lopez, in the story. But now the goddamn thing has been published and Gito is an eighteen-year-old with a whole different perspective, he isn't so eager anymore to let other people know about his behavior as that younger kid, as that fourteen-year-old street boy who shared my life and my bed for a while. Nothin but fuckin bullshit, he says now. I almost laugh because his angry scowl is so familiar to me, I saw that same expression so many times when we were together four years ago. But I don't laugh, this isn't funny, I need to discuss this mess

with Gito before an old friend becomes a new enemy. But were we ever real friends? Maybe not. “It wasn’t all bullshit,” I tell him. “Most of it was pretty much true.”

“That maricón shit, man, I ain’t no faggot like that.”

“There’s hardly any sex in the book at all. We don’t do anything together until the last few pages.”

“Talkin about my dick and stuff.”

“It was supposed to be romantic. And they lived happily ever after. Like that.”

“That ain’t right,” Gito says, he hasn’t changed much in the last four years, he’s still shorter than me, still a feisty bantamweight, his curly black hair is a little longer now and he’s wearing a red paisley kerchief tied around it as a headband, he’s also wearing the same kind of denim jacket as before. But I probably shouldn’t be surprised by any of this, four years really isn’t such a long time, he’s still just a kid, more mannish in the face and in his voice but still basically the same kid who came walking into the Figaro bar and into my life those few fleeting years ago. It’s funny, the random play of memory, how clearly I can associate each of Gito’s visits to the Figaro with a song on the jukebox or a program on the television behind the bar. Jimmy Carter talking about the hostages in Iran. Dave Kingman hitting a home run for the Cubs. Debbie Harry with Blondie singing *Call Me* like some spectral hooker. And Gito sauntering in with his box of candy to hustle a

few bucks from the assembled drinkers, myself among them, he soon came looking for me in particular because of my ridiculous generosity, hell yes, I was happy to give him ten bucks for a bar of chocolate just for the chance to be close to him and talk to him.

All right, let's be truthful, our connection was always a sexual one first and foremost. And that's the irony of this whole thing, Gito being upset about those few pages of sex in the book when the reality was so much more intensely queer, way more homo-kinky. Now don't misunderstand, I didn't downplay the sex because of reticence or discretion or some need for self-censorship, no, it was nothing like that, it was merely a narrative device, like doing a striptease for the readers, withholding the hot stuff for maximum titillation and maximum payoff.

So I never wrote about what really happened between us. Between me and Gito Lopez. Because there was nothing romantic about it and there was no titillating courtship and no happily-ever-after fade to black. He came into the bar with his candy, I bought some from him three or four times, then I bought his whole beautiful body and started paying him for sex. He was glad for the arrangement, he enjoyed blowjobs just as much as any other healthy young boy, plus he needed the cash. So we started seeing each other more and more, pretty soon he

was practically living in my apartment. But he never tolerated any violations of his macho code. He would let me suck his dick but he would never suck mine. He would fuck me in the ass but he would never allow himself to be fucked. Not even for extra money. Often he would get drunk or high and let me cuddle him and kiss him, that was a sweet bonus, he'd even kiss me back sometimes before finally growing impatient and pushing my head between his legs or climbing onto me for some anal humping. Not exactly a storybook romance.

But Gito was clever and wanted to keep his sugar daddy as happy as possible, that's why he brought his cousin Chico to my apartment one day, he knew what would happen. Did I already mention that I was living in Chicago back then? I had an apartment on Ashland Avenue and was working as a teacher. Well, that's irrelevant, my job as a teacher, it was just an ill-fated attempt to function as an establishment stooge. But the location of my apartment was a crucial bit of luck, there were bars and arcades all over the neighborhood where boys cruised and hustled, mostly Latino boys, we were still enjoying the fruits of the Sexual Revolution back then, pre-AIDS and pre-Reagan, the end was quickly approaching but we didn't know it, the whole scene was still gleefully libertine and freewheeling. So it was no big

amazement when I hooked up with Gito. And then with his cousin.

Chico was an odd kid. He was a year younger than Gito and profoundly shy, always speaking in a murmur, never making eye contact, there might actually have been something chemically wrong with his brain, some sort of fetal alcohol syndrome or borderline autism or whatever, I'm no doctor, I can't tell you for sure. But I do know for sure that I was very fond of him, probably even in love with him, he was like some adorably helpless cub or pup who immediately steals your heart. Yeah, he was a real cutie with his round cherub's face and dark blond hair, he had a Mexican mother and an Anglo father, lots of kids around there were exotic mixtures of various bloodlines—white and black, Asian and Latino—that neighborhood was a true wonderland of sultry young beauties.

And my Gito and Chico were as pretty as any of them, yes sir, I was a lucky devil to have those two. Even if I had to pay for the pleasure. Gito never stopped badgering me for money, he always needed a new pair of sneakers or some new tapes, plus he always expected his regular stipend for sexual favors—and then he expected a little more for Chico's involvement. It wasn't exactly blackmail, Gito never came right out and threatened me, hell, he liked me, I liked him, we became fairly good pals after a while. And Chico was always sweetly contented

with the whole arrangement. Every weekend we all took trips to Lincoln Park Zoo or Brookfield Zoo, to the Shedd Aquarium or the Field Museum, to Wrigley Field or Oak Street Beach—the kids couldn't wait to jump into the car and begin their latest new adventure, they'd never been very far beyond their own neighborhood and might as well have been traveling to Paris or Tokyo, everywhere and everything was so foreign to them and so much fun.

Then, of course, there was the sex. Lots of sex. That was the original point, after all, I can't pretend otherwise. Sometimes you meet a boy and become friends and the sex follows organically, naturally, it's the inevitable fruit of your intimacy. Other times, and this was one of them, sex is the starting point and then the friendship comes later, you grow familiar with each other, you start caring about each other, the purely physical becomes tamed and warmed by a quirky kind of affection. In other words, the three of us had a sizzling hot time together. I was only a few years out of college and I'd never been involved in a situation like this, especially now with Chico, darling young Chico, I'd say he was my first genuine boyfriend since I grew up and graduated and moved away from home, no macho code with him, he came to my bed with experience and passion and no restrictions, he let me do everything with him and then was always happy afterwards to snuggle and kiss and doze in my arms.

And you should've seen him and Gito together, holy shit, they were the first boys to have sex in front of me, I think I've spent the rest of my life trying to recapture the high-voltage thrill of that original spectacle, you can look at photos and films of boys doing it together but you still won't be prepared for the real thing, you'll still be stunned by the sound and the smell and the wildness of those bodies right there so close to you, the immediacy of them, the total animal nakedness of them. You'll never forget it, I promise you, that first time you watch one boy ejaculate into another boy's mouth, or that first time you watch a boy working his cock inch by inch into another boy's bare ass, look carefully, look at the cock pushing in and the anus opening to accept it, you can't believe what you're seeing. Of course it was Gito's cock in Chico's ass. And it was Gito giving his cousin Chico a mouthful of cum. They always played the same roles. Gito was always the man, the aggressor, the humping satyr. He even called Chico his "girlfriend" before sticking his dick into the younger boy's mouth or butt. But Chico never objected or took offense. He liked being Gito's girlfriend. And my boyfriend. He was always eager to strip down and get busy with either one of us.

So I put Chico into my book and turned him into a pure innocent, a virgin, inverting reality for my own amusement. And I transformed Gito into the savvy but

skittish boy of my dreams who finally, in the last scene, surrenders to his heart's desire and comes to my bed. This is what pisses him off, I guess. He'd rather be portrayed as a cynical hustler out for freaky sex than as a rascally street kid vulnerable to faggot shit like tenderness and love. Now he wants money from me, he thinks I'm making baskets of cash from this book and he intends to get his fair share.

He first tells me this over the phone. I moved away from Chicago and back to my old college town after losing my job as a teacher, that's a long story in itself, let's just say I became too well known as a Queer Writer to continue working with young kids. Now I'm living on unemployment. Gito is trying to bleed a corpse but he doesn't even know it. Come down to Sandburg, I tell him, come and visit me, we'll discuss this whole thing. He says OK, but he'll need money for the train or the bus. Fine, no problem, I can afford that, so I wire him enough money for a bus ticket. A week later he calls again and tells me that he needs more because he ended up using the other money to help pay for his son's medical bills. Does he really have a son? I sure as hell don't know. He might, he could, he was always messing around with girls even when we were together. But the current details of his life are a mystery to me. We lost touch after I moved away, even though I made sure he had my new address and

phone number, I never heard from him until I sent him a copy of the book. Well, that's not quite true. He sent me a couple of letters asking for money, that's how I knew he was still living in the same old neighborhood.

Regardless, whether Gito is being truthful or not, I can't afford to keep blindly wiring money to him, I'm living on a tight budget right now. So I arrange to meet him when I return to the Chicago area to visit my parents. They have a big old house in the southwestern suburbs and I'm due for one of my pilgrimages to the ancestral hearth, it's an ideal opportunity to hook up with Gito at the same time. But don't worry, you can skip the visit with my parents, you're not interested in hearing about my agoraphobic mother or my impossibly good-natured father, poor guy, I can't imagine how he tolerates being married to such a neurotic mess, agoraphobia is just one of my mother's problems, she's a weepy hysteric forever teetering on the edge of full emotional collapse. But never mind, leave them be, we have other business.

I reunite with Gito at his favorite neighborhood joint, it's a little taquería called Flaco's, good food, we have some menudo and then some tacos with pork and some tacos with lengua, nothing fancy. But here's the surprise: Chico is also here today. Last I heard, years ago, he was living downstate with his dad. I transported him to Mexico in the book, more interesting that way, more rife with

narrative possibilities—but either way, he was really gone, adios Chico, I never imagined seeing him again. Now he’s here with us eating tacos. It’s been a friendly reunion so far. The kids look great, Gito with his red paisley bandanna and denim jacket, dark-eyed and olive-skinned, always such a handsome rogue, Chico still a sweet-faced cutie with blondish hair and a slight gap between his front teeth and skin like golden honey—and even now, as a seventeen-year-old, still just as timidly quiet and agreeable as ever.

Here’s what I’ve decided to do about the money: I’m giving each of the boys a fair cut of my royalties in gratitude for their involvement. I didn’t know that Chico would be here, of course, so my plan for a fifty-fifty split with Gito has suddenly become a three-way split with both of them. It’s not much, just a few hundred bucks, I mean we’re not dealing with some Stephen King mega-seller here. I even brought along my royalty statements to show Gito the figures in black and white, to prove my good faith, let’s just settle this whole thing right now and forget about it. And guess what, he seems satisfied with the arrangement, he stuffs the cash into the pocket of his jacket and grins, he doesn’t even bother with a careful check of the royalty statements, fuck it, he knows in his heart that he can trust me. Chico, needless to say, is more than satisfied, he wasn’t expecting any of this and now he

has a wad of cash to spend. He smiles and smiles as he eats his tacos.

I'm wondering, right about now, why Gito isn't upset about this three-way split. Think about it, he probably brought his cousin Chico with him to soften me up, to play on my affections, on my emotions, in order to guarantee some sort of payoff. But then his strategy backfired and now he's ending up with less money, not more, because of Chico's participation. So he must figure that he'll inherit Chico's share anyway, sometime later he'll manage to empty his cousin's pocket, not by force, that's not what I mean, but somehow he'll probably end up spending Chico's money on himself, that's how Gito operates. Or maybe I'm wrong. Who knows? And even if I'm right, that's Chico's problem, not mine. None of this started as my idea, man, I'm just here for the scenery.

We spend over an hour at Flaco's, we have lots of stuff to talk about, even Chico has a couple of things to say. I learn that he's been back in Chicago for a few months, his vagabond father finally got tired of bouncing from job to job downstate and returned home to sell dope with his brothers, Chico is glad to be back, he missed all of his relatives and friends. That's always been the Lopez family business, by the way. Selling grass and smack and other shit. We also talk about Gito's son, apparently he actually exists, his name is Sammy. Gito shows me a

picture of him, beautiful little guy, eighteen months old. Of course Gito's not married to the boy's mother, but he does make an effort to help her financially and to support their son, maybe he's actually growing up and maturing, maybe his eagerness to share my royalties has more to do with his son's welfare than with his own greed or selfishness. Have I been misjudging him? Maybe I'm the selfish and immature one, not him. Is that possible?

Finally we leave Flaco's and go to the apartment of some guy who might be the boys' cousin or possibly just their friend, I've never really been clear about all of their colleagues and companions, who's family and who's not, they seem to be vaguely related to nearly everyone in the neighborhood. Outside is summery and bright but inside the apartment is as dim and cheerless as an opium den, which is only appropriate, the boys and I have come here to relax and get stoned. Some Tejano or Norteño band I don't recognize is playing and singing from the stereo. Gito is sitting next to me on the couch. A sudden memory makes him smile. "Remember that fuckin giant stereo you had? Damn," he says to me. "You still got that thing, man?"

"With those huge JBL speakers? Sure, I've got it. Visit me sometime, see for yourself. And you too, Chico," I say to the other boy, he's sitting on a chair right in front of us, I lean forward to swat his knee and to give him the joint

that we've been passing around. Other people keep coming in and out, it's not exactly a party but it's busy, this is a popular place. A bottle of Ron Rico is also being passed around. Gito has taken three or four swigs from it by now. He's still thinking about my stereo and my old apartment on Ashland Avenue. "That crazy-ass place, man. Your old place. We done some wild shit over there."

"Definitely. Very wild. And fun."

"But you shouldn't be writin that shit, man. The way you done. That's bullshit."

"It wasn't all bullshit. Most of it was pretty much true."

"That maricón shit, man, I ain't no faggot like that."

"There's hardly any sex in the book at all. We don't do anything together until the last few pages."

"Talkin about my dick and stuff."

"It was supposed to be romantic. And they lived happily ever after. Like that."

"That ain't right," Gito says, but I already told you this part, sorry, I already told you that he's pissed off, staring at me with that familiar scowl of his, he's always had a dangerous edge to him, a darkness, an angriness. And now he's a little stoned and a little drunk, and so am I, which doesn't help. I launch into one of my semi-demented rants about the distinction between fact and fiction, between illusion and reality, I'm the ventriloquist and I'm the

dummy, my world is a house of mirrors, blah blah blah, finally Gito says coño, man, just shut up about it. His exasperated tone actually makes me laugh. Then he can't help himself and he also responds with a grudging chuckle. He curses me once more for my "maricón bullshit" but only half-heartedly, his temper has cooled, suddenly he spots somebody who just came into the apartment and he drags himself off the couch to intercept the guy and say hello.

Chico has been watching and listening like some patient little boy, but it's funny, it's incongruous, this "little boy" is holding a joint in one hand and a bottle of rum in the other. I pat the cushion still warm from Gito's ass to invite Chico over, come and sit beside me, quickly he's up and then resettling himself right next to me on the couch. I'll tell you the truth, I've been eyeing Chico all day, he's wearing tight jeans and a red T-shirt that has "MÖTLEY CRÜE" printed on the front and the band's summer tour schedule on the back, his dark blond hair is shaggy over his ears and he's got that endearing gap-toothed grin and those cherubic dimples and, hell, he's just out-and-out cute, a real doll, irresistible. "I missed you like crazy when you moved away," I tell him now. "You know that, right?"

“I had to go with my papi,” he says, sharing the joint and the bottle with me. “You never wrote or called or nothing after a while.”

“I know, sorry, I lost my job and moved away and lost track of you. My fault, man. But I’m glad you cared enough to notice.”

The rum and the grass are making my head pleasantly fuzzy, this is nice being here with Chico again, we’re not alone but it seems intimate, nobody looking at us, nobody paying attention. I have my hand on his leg, yeah, I love that feeling of warm denim over firm young thigh. Is he too old for this? Will he tell me to fuck off? Apparently not. This must feel as natural and comfortable to him as it does to me, this affectionate proximity, this closeness, now I even sneak a quick squeeze between his legs at all of that tempting stuff behind the zipper and his only reaction is a gentle sniff of laughter and another sip from the bottle of Ron Rico. “You look great,” I murmur to him. “Cuter than ever.”

“I don’t think so,” he murmurs back.

“You got a girlfriend these days?”

“No.”

“Boyfriend?”

“Not really,” Chico laughs, staring at some vague point on the floor, just as bashful now as he ever was, he won’t look me in the eyes. I nudge against his shoulder to

shoulder. “Because remember,” I tell him, “you said once that you didn’t like girls. For sex. Right? So I was just wondering.”

“That’s OK.”

“D’you still feel the same way?”

“I dunno,” the kid says, he actually glances at me now to read my face, my expression, my intent. “I guess so, yeah.”

I say good, excellent, I’m glad. This is becoming urgent, man, no joke, I can’t just keep sitting here with Chico, we need to move, we need to get away from these other people. Gito is still across the room talking and smoking with two other guys and a girl, there’s no way to hear any of them because of that loud ranchera oompah music from the stereo, they’re ignoring me and Chico and that’s just fine, that’s perfect, I get to my feet and wave for Chico to follow me, let’s go, come on.

The bathroom is empty. I lock the door behind us. The toilet is filthy and it stinks in here but neither of us is worried about hygiene or housekeeping right now. I don’t know how much time we have and I don’t even know what we should do together, Chico looks just as harried and uncertain as I do, he left the bottle in the other room but he’s still holding the smoldering remnant of the joint. I tell him to put it down, it’s almost dead anyway, forget about it, then I’m kissing him and he’s feverishly kissing

back, rum on our breaths, tacos from lunch, peppers, onions, I can taste the whole fragrant menu inside his mouth, this is madly enjoyable but we can't waste time on foreplay, I'm opening Chico's jeans even while we're kissing, I'm pushing down his underpants and then feeling his balls and his boner, that familiar boner, it's bigger now than it was a few years ago but not much, Chico's dick has never been very large but I've always liked it, each boy's dick is different and each boy's dick is just the right size when it gets hard, big or small or a regular six-incher, I like them all, each one feels perfect when it's in my hand or in my mouth.

But there's no time now for dallying, we need a couple of fast and frantic handjobs to finish this escapade. I turn Chico toward the sink and let him jerk off while I rub my own erection along the crack of his bare behind, I can watch his face in the smudged and streaky mirror while we're doing this, he's gazing down at himself as he masturbates, this is like some kind of contest for speed and it's a close finish between us, first I slop onto Chico's butt and then he's ejaculating his own mess right into the sink, one two three spurts hit the white porcelain basin and go oozing toward the drain. I reach around him from behind to hold his dick and to massage it while it finishes throbbing and seeping, Chico leans back exhausted against me, my fingers end up slippery with his semen and

I lick it off, strong stuff, the boy is seventeen now and he's producing full-flavored goat's milk these days, damn tasty, not bad.

Both of us feel much better when we return to the living room, maybe we were gone seven or eight minutes, no more. Gito glances at us without any change of expression, he's fairly wasted and bleary-eyed but I don't detect any particular reaction from him, he certainly doesn't seem to be jealous or angry or upset. And why should he be? That kind of emotional intrigue was never part of the relationship among the three of us. I'm just being paranoid.

I decide right about now to make this a true Lost Weekend, to splurge on a room at the nearby Ramada, I shouldn't be doing this, it's too expensive for somebody who's been living on odd jobs and unemployment for the past few years, I even sold my car recently to raise a little extra cash. And now I just gave the boys half of my royalties to deplete my assets even further. When I call my parents to let them know where I'll be for the next couple of days, god help me, you'd think I was calling them from prison or from some hospital's emergency room, it's my mother who answers, she's freaked out that I'll be staying at a hotel in Chicago, it makes no sense to her, it's insane. My father, I'm sure, will simply shrug at the information and keep reading his newspaper or

watching his TV show, he won't care, he reacted with the same equanimity even when I did my big "I'm gay" speech several years ago. I guess I'd say "queer" these days since being gay now means kissing the ass of Hetero Authority and playing by safe conformist rules and pretending that boys somehow become beautiful and sexy and desirable only when they turn eighteen. Yes, madness, this surrender, this submission, this corrupt betrayal of nature, of instinct, of love itself. No thanks. Gay today means cowardice and dishonesty and fraud. Call me queer instead. Or a boy-loving faggot. Hell, call me a pervert and call me scum but leave me my soul and my identity and my own true self.

Anyway, I was telling you about my mother's frazzled reaction to my phone call, she knows I like young boys and this side trip of mine can only mean some kind of illicit mischief and menace and risk, she wants me home in my old room for the weekend, her world is a dangerous and scary place. Of course, in some ways, she's right. I do make a habit of playing with fire and I can't deny it. But her reaction is irrelevant right now, let's move on, I was trying to tell you about changing my plans and getting a room at the Ramada, too expensive, extravagant, irresponsible, yes, all of those things—even so, no matter, I can't just say goodbye to Chico after our few brief hours together this afternoon. I want to enjoy some private time

with him, I want to take him to bed, I want to see and feel and kiss the full nakedness of him and make love to him until both of us are drained.

So that's exactly what we do, fifty dollars for two nights at the Ramada, Chico stays with me and we spend that first evening through to the next morning having sex and resting and eating snacks and then having more sex and sleeping and then having even more sex before finally going out for breakfast. I've been getting around this whole weekend in a rented Ford Taurus, now we drive back to the neighborhood to pick up Gito and do some cruising around the city, yesterday Gito was busy and told us to go ahead, go have your fuckin honeymoon, man, I'll see you guys tomorrow. He wasn't angry, don't misunderstand me, he was happy with his pocketful of cash and probably went to visit his girlfriend or out to party. But now he's ready to hang out with us for a while, it's a splendidly sunny day so we go to Grant Park and Buckingham Fountain and Oak Street Beach, then back south to Chinatown for dinner at Three Happiness, we all have an excellent time together.

Finally it's late enough to head back to the hotel and I invite Gito to come along, we can all mess around, have some fun. Remember, I told you earlier that Gito is hot, always has been, still is, I'd be happy to take his pants off and get busy with that handsome cock of his. But Gito

says no, he's got other shit to do, he'll take a bus back to Ashland Avenue. He's not interested anymore in sexual horseplay with other guys. That's my assumption, at least. So Chico and I return to the Ramada and take a shower together and then crawl into bed to cuddle and kiss and get each other's peckers up and eager. The kid had too much Mongolian beef at the restaurant and keeps burping while we're making out, both of us are laughing at the goofiness of it, I've also got onion breath and an overfull stomach, eventually I just end up giving the boy a good nut-busting blowjob and promise him that we'll continue later, we can do some real fucking, take our time, enjoy ourselves.

This lull in the action turns out to be a pleasant thing, we stay in bed and watch a rerun of *Saturday Night Live* and have a great little chat, probably the best conversation I've ever had with Chico, he's almost talkative tonight. He asks me outright if I have girlfriends back in Sandburg. I say, "Girlfriends? Are you kidding? No way!"

"Boyfriends?"

"My best boyfriend is right here with me, right now," I tell him, he's asking me the same questions I asked him yesterday, that's OK, that's only fair. "You've always been my favorite guy."

"No, be serious."

“I’m completely serious, Chico. I’ve always been crazy about you. But all right, to be honest, I haven’t exactly been waiting for you or keeping myself pure.”

“So you got other friends like me?”

“Well, yeah,” I say, I’m still tasting the onion and garlic and other flavors from dinner but now there’s something else, there’s also the goat-milky aftertaste of Chico’s sperm. “There’s a kid named Robbie. He’s great. And Patrick. Maybe you can come to Sandburg and meet them.”

I spend the next several minutes telling Chico about these new friends of mine and about all of the other changes in my life, so much has happened since I last saw him, I’m not a respectable teacher anymore with a good income and a car and a nice Chicago apartment. No sir, the times they are a-changin, no more show of respectability from me, losing my job was a fuckin blessing, I’m finished with any attempt to blend in or assimilate and now it’s time for defiance and resistance and radically uncivil disobedience. If my society hates me and wants to destroy me, OK then, I’ll hate it and try to destroy it right back. I’m no peace freak, man, I won’t turn the other cheek, we’ll settle this with riot and thunder and flame.

Chico grins at my histrionics, he’s never heard me expound like this, he’s not quite sure what I’m talking

about and he wonders what kind of stuff I've actually been doing in Sandburg. So I say well, ya know, there's my books and my stories, writing those and having them published puts me directly into the line of enemy fire. I also tell him about my various commando missions and merry pranks, planting boyporn in churches and in the public library, that kind of shit, doing whatever I can to disrupt the system and to electroshock the cultural consciousness. But then I have a question of my own for Chico, I ask him if he's ever actually seen or read the book I wrote about him and Gito. He says yeah, he saw it, Gito showed it to him, but he never really looked at the story. I'm a little surprised by this. "That's bizarre," I say to him. "Aren't you curious?"

"I guess not."

"What if I wrote something bad about you? Or something embarrassing?"

"You probably wouldn't," the boy says. "Did you?"

"No," I laugh, "I don't think so. There was one little scene of us in bed together. But that's all."

"In bed like this?"

"Sort of. Yeah. Pretty much."

"That's OK," Chico says, he's such a sweetheart, I'm beginning to wonder in earnest about him coming back to Sandburg with me, he'll be eighteen next year and able to go wherever he wants, maybe he could become the kind

of long-term companion that my usual fun-time boys like Robbie and Patrick—and yes, even Gito—could never be. It's my blessing to love boys in their fullest ripeness and beauty, but it's my curse to lose all of them eventually to time and age and the siren song of tits and pussy. Maybe Chico could finally be that elusive dreamboy who ends up staying with me and sharing my life. What a great story that would make, so romantic, our long separation and now our serendipitous reunion and the prospect of many happy years ahead for the two of us. Could this be destiny? Fate? Kismet?

No, man, don't make me laugh. Destiny is a farce. Fate is a joke. Chico and I enjoy the rest of our night together, I'm nuts about him, no other boy has ever been a real lover to me the way he has, the total passion, the intensity. Anyway, I call Gito next morning and tell him to join us at the IHOP on Taylor Street for a late breakfast, I'd like to see him once more before I leave town. He says yeah and we meet him there just before noon. All of us stuff ourselves on eggs and sausages and pancakes. Gito seems exceptionally cheerful and animated today, we're all in a booth and he's sitting next to Chico across the table, this arrangement feels OK at first but then I start to realize that it's not merely random or casual, no, Gito has a purpose, I remember now that he actually took Chico's arm and ushered him into the booth, he was like some kid

escorting a date, he wanted Chico beside him. And then he ordered Chico's breakfast for him and fussed over him and continued treating him more like a girlfriend than a male cousin. And that's how the two of them are still behaving, Chico himself obviously loving the interplay and showing just as much affection in return, even lighting Gito's cigarette for him, practically snuggling against him while they eat.

Damn, this is quite a display, even an idiot like me can get the message. No need to ask about the money I gave them two days ago, I'm guessing that Gito has managed to pocket his cousin's share by now, I'm not sure when or where, maybe yesterday when the three of us were together, all I know for certain is that Gito is the master here and always has been. When I mention something about Chico possibly coming to Sandburg with me, forget it, Gito just laughs at the idea and Chico just smiles. "Well," I say, "maybe for a short visit at least. If you're ever in the mood. No big deal."

"Yeah, man, that's cool," Gito says, answering for both of them, he's wearing his red bandanna again today, still chuckling now as he finishes his coffee and his cigarette. I should be insulted, I suppose. I should be pissed off and on my way out the door. But instead I offer the kids a ride home, it's not far and it seems like the decent thing to do, an appropriate final gesture. Sure, Gito

says, let's go. He's being very friendly. It's obvious now that my whole weekend has been a gift, a favor from Gito, his little reward to me for my generosity with the royalties. You understand? He let me have Chico for a couple of days just to be a nice guy, just for old time's sake. And Chico, as always, was happy to cooperate, he likes me and he definitely likes sex, for him it was a pleasurable diversion, something fun to do, no more profound or meaningful than going to a ballgame or to the beach. Yeah, that's right. Destiny. Kismet. Bullshit.

Why don't I just drop them off now and head for home? I should, but Gito dangles an unexpected invitation for me to come inside and "have a smoke" before I leave. That sounds OK to me, I've got Visine in the car, I can clear and unredden my eyes before my mother sees me later this afternoon. So I go inside with the two kids. We're at the apartment where Gito lives with one of his uncles, it's empty when we arrive and Gito undoubtedly knew it would be, he's always one move ahead of me, too bad he doesn't play chess, he could beat Bobby Fischer. I told you he's being friendly and that's true, he can be a genial and likable guy, even a lovable guy, yes indeed—but he always has an angle and a motive and today is no different, today he's cheerful and he's affable because the weekend went according to plan and he received his money and now he can end our visit by showing off his

mastery, by proving his control, no wonder he's in such a good mood.

So where is everybody? Why is the apartment empty this afternoon? I don't ask and Gito doesn't bother to explain. He rolls a joint from some kick-ass Colombian shit that his family is selling these days. He's got some old Aerosmith tape playing and it's too loud for us to conduct any real conversation, that's all right, there's not much left to say by this time anyway. We're about halfway through the joint when the boys exchange a few words and take off their shirts, they're sitting together on the gold velour couch and I'm in front of them, facing them, on a wooden chair. They each take another hit from the joint and pass it back to me and then they start kissing, just casually making out, feeling at each other's bare chests and stomachs and at the front of each other's jeans, not in any hurry, pausing when I pass the joint back, grinning at me as they finish it and then ignoring me as they go back to kissing and petting.

Maybe now I should finally give up and hit the road, enough is enough, but it's not so easy to do when a couple of cute boys are pawing at each other in front of you. I'm smoking a Kool and sipping at a Mountain Dew, that Colombian shit was strong and I definitely have a buzz, watching the kids make out together on the couch feels weird, sort of dreamlike, that gold velour couch makes me

start imagining bordellos and boywhores and other scenarios of Gothic debauchery. Suddenly Gito is up and making a trip to the kitchen and then returning with a can of Budweiser, he asks me in a shout if I want one, I say no, thanks anyway, I gotta drive home pretty soon. Gito shrugs and then stands next to me on my left, he's directly in front of Chico now, he gives his own crotch a provocative rub and takes one step closer to his cousin, the toes of their sneakers are practically touching, Chico sits forward and starts kissing Gito's bare belly and the front of Gito's pants, nuzzling against the bulgy denim and the zipper with his lips and with his chin and with both of his cheeks. It's strange about Chico, he's always been such a shy little lamb in his ordinary day-to-day life but such an uninhibited and shameless horndog when it comes to sex. He's like some guy who stutters when he speaks but who articulates flawlessly when he sings. For Chico, I guess, sex is like singing, it sets him free.

Gito keeps swigging from his bottle of beer while his crotch is being nuzzled and kissed, he glances at me again and again to be sure I'm watching, he calls Chico his "baby" and his "little pussy" in a loud voice over the music while petting the boy's blond head with his free hand, finally he uses that same hand to unfasten his own jeans and to push them down and then to push and pull down his underpants. It's been a long time since I last saw

that cock but now there it is, big and bold as sin and so close I can see the swollen vein along one side of it and I can actually smell the sweatiness of his balls and his pubic hair, I'm serious, he has dangly balls and a furry bush of black pubes and I can smell him all funky and potent, the scent of an alpha male, primitive, intoxicating.

Yeah, man, that's my old Gito, nothing has changed, he's a classic hetero stud and anyone would call him straight, myself included, he's always liked chicks and he's always had a flock of girlfriends and one of them has always been Chico. That's what I was forgetting until now. Chico is his girlfriend and Chico adores him. It's complicated, I know, but that's how Chico is, he thinks of himself more as a girl than as a boy. And he thinks of Gito as his man, his papi, his numero uno. I'm just a friend, that's all, the romance and the passion between us was never more than my own fantasy. And now the boys are helping me to remember my proper role and my proper function. They're reminding me why Chico will never come back with me to Sandburg and why I should never have bothered inviting him. They're teaching me a lesson. I should be grateful.

OK, no problem, teach me, show me, I submit. Gito stands there in front of me with his jeans and his underpants down around his ankles and he lets his cousin suck on him for a few minutes, then he tells Chico to get

undressed and he starts humping him on the couch—but it's not comfortable enough, the couch is too narrow and too short and Gito isn't satisfied, so we all move to the bedroom where Gito strips off the last of his disheveled clothing and finishes having intercourse with his cousin, his baby, his little pussy. We smoke another joint after that and I have another Mountain Dew to quench my raging thirst. The boys stay naked on the bed. Gito looks gorgeous, a trim and slim muscleboy with washboard abs and perfect cocoa skin and all of that good funky stuff between his legs. He watches about thirty minutes of a White Sox game on the portable thirteen-inch television in his bedroom and then he turns to me and tells me to take off my clothes. I've been loitering around, lingering, waiting for this. So now I do as I'm told, Gito has always been the boss, I take off my clothes and I let the boy fuck me on the bed while Chico lies there beside us and watches the baseball game on TV. Afterwards I finally say goodbye to the boys and give them farewell hugs and then I drive back to the suburbs to spend another day or two with my parents. We have sirloin steaks and baked potatoes and fresh corn on the cob for dinner. I eat and eat like a barnyard hog.

Would you like a more upbeat ending? Or how about a true one? Gito says the whole thing needs more excitement. He can be a perceptive critic when he's not

stoned. He reads the story and grins and shakes his head. “It’s fuckin crazy,” he says to me. “Even worse bullshit than your book.” I laugh and ask him why. He says, “Coño, man, there’s a million things wrong with it. Like my name. Lopez ain’t my real fuckin last name! You said it’s my real name but it ain’t. And all this shit about Chico bein my girlfriend. Damn, Jake, you’re such a fuckin liar!”

“I’m a writer,” I say to him, still laughing, giving him a kiss. “My life is a house of mirrors, man. Remember?”

“And that’s another thing. You never told me nothin about mirrors and dummies and all that other crap.”

“Are you sure?”

“The whole thing is worse bullshit than ever,” Gito declares once more. And I can’t argue with him. He’s probably right.

* * *

DREAMBOY VARIATIONS

THREE

I don't have time to repeat myself. You need to remember where we've been and where we're going. Hounds are at our heels. So let's move, we're in a hurry, let's begin.

I'm sure you remember Robbie Bostanchic, my golden beauty, my Botticelli seraph. And I'm sure you also remember his friend Patrick Jenco, red-haired and freckly countryboy, sturdy young buck, just picture Tom Sawyer or maybe even Huck Finn himself in tight gym shorts and a T-shirt and you'll have the right idea. Both of them have been around all day to help me move, I'm on my way out of this apartment and into a house about a dozen blocks east of here, it's a shabby little place known by people around this area as "the shack." If you saw it, you'd know why. An old college friend of mine has been living there until recently, now he's moving out and I'm moving in. The rent is only a few dollars more than what I've been paying for this apartment. But I'll give you additional details later. Right now it's time for a break.

Robbie left a while ago but Patrick is still here, we're in the bedroom, he was helping me pack my books and magazines and other bits of miscellaneous porn, gradually we started looking at more and more of it, including dozens of Polaroids of Robbie and of Patrick himself, I could see that the kid had a boner inside his red gym shorts, he grinned when I reached out and squeezed it.

Now here we are in front of the bedroom mirror and Patrick is naked except for sneakers and knee socks, he's stark white around the hips where those gym shorts were covering him and he's suntanned coppery everywhere else. We're facing the glass and I'm standing behind him, I'm using one hand to feel the overall bareness of him and the other hand to yank at his erection, to jack him off. We've never done it quite like this before. I want the boy to look at himself, I want Patrick to see himself in full submission to his own desire as we do this together, I want him to be turned on by the spectacle of his own body and of his own cock being rubbed all hard and reddened and nasty as he stands there and watches. Just a couple of months ago he wouldn't even mess around or beat off, no way, not with me, not in my apartment. Now look at him.

Here's what I don't understand: It's OK for a boy to masturbate. And it's OK for me to masturbate. Normal, natural, especially for the boy, a good sign of healthy adolescent development. And, of course, it's perfectly legal. The boy can jack off by himself, no crime, no problem. I can jack off by myself, no crime, no problem. But if we do this normal and natural and legal thing together, suddenly it becomes abnormal and unnatural and highly illegal, the most heinous kind of criminal depravity. Can you explain this to me? Is there another example of some activity which is legal for the kid to do

and legal for me to do but becomes illegal when we do it together? How about drinking or smoking or gambling? No, those are already illegal for the boy, even by himself. How about drugs? No, those are already illegal for both of us, apart or together, either way. Give up? Yeah, that's right, it's unique, this whole sex thing, the State pulled this insanity out of its ass just to punish men and boys for sharing pleasure. It's like passing a law that prosecutes me for swimming or watching TV or eating hamburgers if I do it with a boy. Sure, it's OK for Junior to eat a Big Mac by himself and it's OK for me to eat a Big Mac by myself, but if we dare to eat a Big Mac together, holy fuck, what an abomination! What a crime against nature! It's lunacy. It's the lowest form of dirty-dealing and fraud.

So I'm in the bedroom with Patrick, in front of the mirror, he's just as turned on by this self-voyeurism as I am, he's staring at his own reflection with wide-open jackrabbit eyes as I pull and pull at his pecker, finally I tell him to finish with his own hand, go ahead and watch yourself do it, watch yourself jack off. He doesn't need a second invitation, he starts whacking at his own boner while I use both hands now to feel him, to caress his belly and his chest, to pinch gently at his nipples, he's leaning back against me, he's slowly flexing and pumping his hips to encourage his own orgasm, then he's ready, he's doing it, he's shooting, christ, you can see how hot and horny he

was by how much semen comes squirting out of him. I'll need a towel to mop off the top of my dresser.

This is how we've all been spending our summer, these two boys and I, mostly it's Robbie who does the ejaculating around here, he's an insatiable young goat who loves sixty-nining and who's not at all squeamish about taking a mouthful of cum from me or from Patrick, he'll usually swallow it, he doesn't care. Patrick is more cautiously hetero, he'll suck a dick but he's not eager about it, he definitely doesn't want another guy's cum in his mouth, he'll spit it out if any surprises him and gets in, yuck, he hates the taste of it. No, he's not like that sexdog Robbie, he enjoys messing around same as any kid his age—both he and Robbie are turning fifteen this summer—but Patrick is often happy just to sit around and read comics and sci-fi paperbacks or maybe even just to smoke some grass and watch TV. He'd be equally satisfied, I think, getting a blowjob or just getting stoned and watching a *Star Trek* rerun.

That's what makes this afternoon a little unusual, this kinky performance in front of the mirror, I don't ordinarily get Patrick alone and naked and squirting like a pony this way. So it's a bit of crazy luck when Travis McCoy comes strolling unexpectedly into the apartment, we've all been in and out this whole day and nobody can remember to lock the door, now here's Travis letting

himself in and the first thing he sees is a bare-assed Patrick Jenco who just finished masturbating and who hasn't had time yet to put his shorts back on. This same thing has happened a couple of times when Robbie was here naked—the door unlocked, Travis walking in—no big deal for Robbie, he just laughed and nonchalantly retrieved his clothing, no explanation necessary. Travis also laughed about it and called Robbie a “perv” or some other obligatory insult.

OK, wait a minute, I'll pause right here to remind you about Travis. So far there's not much to tell. He's an oddball thirteen-year-old who smokes Marlboros and sells nickel and dime bags of pot around this part of town, more and more he's been using my apartment as a place to deal his shit, I don't mind, I get a lot of free joints and I meet a lot of new boys. Of course Travis himself first came here when Robbie started bringing his friends over, recruiting prospects for my Polaroid project, enlisting potential porn stars. Alas, no volunteers have ever emerged from that group, sometimes my plans work and sometimes they don't. But Travis has become a regular visitor, which is good. And something else, call me sick, go ahead, but Robbie told me once that Travis has a surprisingly big dick. I've been hoping and waiting impatiently to see it.

Now back to Patrick, who's not nearly so casual about nudity as Robbie, he scrambles to put on his shorts as

soon as Travis walks in and sees him. I do the usual and laugh, funny shit, just enjoying what comes naturally. That's what I say to Travis. And I've said it before, like just fuckin around, man, just havin some fun and jackin off. I always joke around with boys about getting boners and jacking off, I did it with Robbie and Patrick when I first met them and I still do it with Travis, if kids can't tell right off that I'm queer, hell, they're just not paying attention. But Travis is a hard one to figure out, sometimes he'll react to these situations with a goofy grin and other times, like today, he'll display grim annoyance and mutter something about fuckers or faggots. He does a lot of muttering and scowling. Other boys, especially Robbie, routinely call him a weirdo or a dork or a spaz, and not just behind his back, they'll insult him outright, no pretense. Travis just responds with a grin or a scowl, depending on his mood, as oddly inscrutable as ever.

Nothing else remarkable happens today after Patrick blushes uncomfortably and scurries back into his shorts. But Travis, I think, will remember what happened here and what he saw, he got an unexpected eyeful of Patrick with a half-deflated boner and that's no joke, whether we laugh about it or not, Travis has now seen two other boys here messing around naked, plus he's seen me wandering around here naked several times, he knows what's up and what's waiting for him if he wants it. What else can I do?

I routinely rub his shoulders and goose him and pat him on the ass, I take his picture and encourage him to do whatever he feels like doing for the camera, I even let him see my porn collection, this is how I treat every boy I meet. I've been rejected or ignored by many of them but I've never been betrayed. Boys might think you're a loser or a feeb, that'll happen, but they won't rat on you or try to hurt you, believe me, not if you're good to them, not if you're honest with them, not if they trust you. And Travis is no different. He's just a little odder than most, a little harder to decipher.

No matter, we're finished here, say adios to my apartment and welcome to the shack, this dilapidated old hovel on the easternmost edge of town, it's the craziest little place you'll ever see. I think, decades ago, it functioned as a tiny mom-and-pop grocery store or candy shop, that's why it's set off at such a distance from any of the other houses, so strangely isolated, you travel east on Main Street past Fantastic Sam's Comix and Eureka Records and all of the other downtown buildings, then past the few blocks of outlying homes and a lone Shell Station until finally there's nothing else but empty road taking you out of town—which is when you see the shack on your left, the only house on what would have been the next block of buildings east of downtown. I've heard that they built the shop in expectation of further eastward

sprawl just as the Depression hit and all construction stopped. Apparently it was a successful little business nonetheless, only one phantom block distant from all of its neighbors, an easy walk or drive for any of its customers, it wasn't converted into a private home until sometime in the Sixties. But that one block of separation now makes it seem as isolated as some forest cabin, some hermit's refuge. It's perfect for me. I love it.

And remember, even though I'm stressing its isolation there on the outskirts, the place is only about a dozen blocks from my old apartment, it's still no problem for any of the kids to come visiting either by bike or on foot, Sandburg is a small town, nothing is very far from anything else. And don't worry about me, I just bought an eight-year-old Dodge Aspen for getting myself around, that's how we've been moving my stuff into the new house. I'm living on unemployment, true enough, but the car was cheap, two hundred bucks, a damn good deal. Also easier now for getting to the beach, to the mall, to wherever. No more taking the bus or calling a cab. The boys say yeah, finally, it's about fuckin time.

OK, back to the shack, you walk through the front door into the kitchen, then beyond that into the living room, which is also the bedroom, there's a curtain that separates the two. So why is the kitchen in front? Isn't the whole thing backward? Nobody really knows anymore,

but the original floor plan and plumbing of the shop probably dictated this current layout. Maybe this was the storeroom where I'm now sitting and watching Travis, back here in my living room. Or is it my bedroom? This place is funny, man, it really is.

Travis has been helping me to unpack. He likes this new house a lot, he says it'll be perfect for doing business, he calls it "our hangout." Yeah, I tell him, we're like Butch and Sundance. He might understand the reference and he might not, I can never be sure about him. The truth is, and I know this sounds mean, but Travis is a little dim, not just ignorant or uneducated but actually slow in the head, one of those kids you knew in school who struggled to pass the simplest quiz, who couldn't spell, who couldn't add, who thought the Civil War was twenty years ago and maybe George Washington invented the telephone. He believes that Mick Jagger was in the Beatles. He's convinced that the Cubs won the World Series a few seasons back and he won't be dissuaded. He has trouble telling time. When I was a kid we would have called him retarded. And not just because of what he knows or doesn't know, that's oversimplifying what I'm trying to explain, maybe you need to see Travis and talk to him in order to understand the sort of bovine dullness in his face and in his eyes, the inattentive gape of his mouth,

the childish yap of his laughter when he watches even the dopiast sit-com or cartoon.

But he can also be childish or perhaps childlike in more endearing ways, often eager for attention and approval, often excited and playful and impetuous, never predictable, strangely moody, frowning one moment and grinning the next, full of surprises and screwball energy. Today is a good example, here we are in the back room and Travis has taken over the job of unpacking all of my boxes, Robbie and Patrick were here earlier but they eventually left to see a matinee of *Ghostbusters*, Travis usually doesn't go to the movies, he says they're too boring, he'd rather busy himself with housework or yardwork or anything else that's physical and grubby and satisfyingly mindless, like unpacking my stuff. All of which explains why Travis is the one who ends up holding my *Pixote* poster and helping me decide where to hang it. He's familiar with this poster, of course, from my old apartment, I had it displayed there in my living room, always an item of curiosity and comment, this large picture of a boy running naked along a highway. Travis thinks I should throw it out. "It's too gay," he says.

"That's the whole point," I tell him. "You know I dig boys, man, get serious."

"Some people might think you're stupid," the kid says, he has prominent and uneven teeth and a clumsy tongue

and talks with a slight lisp, not an effeminate lisp, just a slushy impediment, his voice otherwise is remarkable for its huskiness, he always sounds like someone just recovering from a sore throat. I say, “Damn straight, lots of people think I’m stupid. So fuck ’em! How about over the television? That’s a good spot.”

Travis shrugs and nods and then proceeds to tack the poster to the wall above the TV, of course the thing is ridiculously crooked when he’s finished and I’ll have to hang it again later, but that’s all right, I tell him that it looks great. He laughs and does what young guys always do with that *Pixote* poster, he puts his face against it and noisily pretends to suck and slobber between the boy’s legs, always a popular joke. Where do they get this homo shit? From each other? From some genetic memory? Travis, I’m guessing, doesn’t need much inspiration beyond pure libido and hormones. He’s a hound dog on two legs. He’s only thirteen but he already has a lean and lanky look about him, he’s all bone and sinew, he makes me think of a scarecrow or maybe some barefoot hillbilly boy with his gangly arms and legs and his gaunt face and his mop of dirty blond hair. He glances at me now after pretending to suck the poster, he says, “Is that how y’all do it?”

“Who? You mean us all faggots? Yeah, I guess so. Wanna try it and find out?”

“Not me,” Travis says in his raspy sore-throat voice, he shifts his eyes away, very peculiar eyes, greenish brown like Robbie’s but with a distinctively Asiatic slant, in fact his entire face has the angular planes and high cheekbones of an eastern Asian boy, seriously, I’ve seen several pictures of boys from Japan or Korea that remind me of Travis, except for his blond hair, I swear, the resemblance can be amazing. Now, when he looks away uneasily, I keep coaxing him, I’m not good at cat-and-mouse, I’m not patient enough, I’d rather play cat-and-cat and get right to the action. I say oh hell, come on, let’s have some fun! Travis tells me to shut up and then he lights one of his Marlboros. I won’t shut up, I tell Travis that we should take advantage of this new playhouse, it’s so perfect out here all by itself, no neighbors, it’s our own private hideaway. “It’s a good hangout,” Travis agrees, he likes his own original description and he’s sticking with it.

“For our gang of thieves and scalawags,” I say to him, I’m on my feet by this time and feeling restless, the vibe between me and Travis is good, I knew I had him as soon as he did his X-rated pantomime with the poster and glanced at me for my reaction, I’ve seen that look so many times, it’s like some psychic language between men and boys, a subtle vocabulary of gestures and glances. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, I’m not going to set any deadlines—but I can see the curiosity and the mischief in

this kid's eyes, I can see what he's thinking lately and what he wants. "So fuckin perfect out here," I say to him once more. "Come outside, look at this back yard, totally private."

This whole little shack is one level, one story, there's an attic above it but no basement beneath and no steps or porches in front or in back, you walk out the back door onto a small concrete stoop and then right into the crabgrass and weedy yard. There's a high cedar fence around this entire back yard, it was erected just a few years ago by my college buddy in order to conceal and protect the crop of marijuana that he grew out here. Then he decided to expand his operation and he moved to a bigger and better place outside of town. So now this remote palisade is all mine. Travis has been out here before to look around, I guess, but we've never been out here together. "It's great, right?"

"You can grow your own pot back here," Travis says.

"You can do anything back here. Grow your own pot, sure. Or go nude."

"For what?"

"For fun, that's what," I say to the kid, then I give him a brief demonstration, it's hot today and I'm not wearing much anyway, a few seconds later I'm out of my clothes and doing a nude stroll around the yard while whistling *Battle Hymn of the Republic*. He's seen my body before,

I'm not bashful about showing it when I get out of bed or after I take a shower—and yet it makes Travis laugh every time, the sight of me. It's a common reaction from boys, they'll almost always laugh at a naked man but almost never at another naked boy, probably because nakedness robs the man of his grown-up authority and dignity and leaves him comically vulnerable. Also, I suspect, there's something about a man's sheer size and height and hairiness that fills any boy with a conflict of emotions: he's impressed, he's envious, he's nervous, he's excited, he's grossed out, he's amused. In short, a naked man unsettles and confuses a boy, which leaves the boy with laughter as his only response. Or I could be wrong. Who am I? Freud?

Yeah, that's right, maybe I just look funny. Travis laughs but he won't join me. No experience is wasted, however, that's my theory, random events can sometimes reveal surprising patterns, it's like my recent trip to Chicago when I visited two old friends named Gito and Chico, you've heard of them, you know them, my experience with them gave me a whole new perspective. I went there still believing in things like destiny and romance but I came back liberated from that kind of delusional bullshit. And I recommend the same prescription for you. Don't waste your time and energy yearning for that ideal dreamboy and soulmate, that one-

and-only love of your life, that's all mirage and nonsense, brother, that's a fool's quest. Wake up, stop dreaming, every boy you meet is your soulmate. Fuck romance and the perfect love, pleasure is your only destiny, hedonism is its own reward, from now on I'll take as many young cocks as I can get and I'll enjoy the lecherous frolic of it and I'll be grateful.

So it's OK if Travis wants to laugh and observe and keep his distance for now, there's a whole unruly pack of boys in and out of here all the time and two of them are already full players, especially Robbie Bostanchic, never forget about Robbie. He's the one who ends up showing the Polaroids to Travis, those hard-core Polaroids of Robbie and Patrick themselves that I started taking a few months ago, I'll show off my porn to anyone who wants to see it, no problem, but I won't show the personal stuff, that would be a creepy betrayal of privacy and trust. Robbie understands this, that's why he finally does the deed himself, he's been my cheerful ally and accomplice—partly out of friendship and partly out of his own delight in being devilish and kinky—since we first met and started messing around. But whatever his reasons or his reasoning, he now shows those pictures to Travis, every pornographic one of them. Patrick is also there when this happens, I can see him blushing but he doesn't

interfere, he just turns up the volume on the TV and keeps staring at whichever program he's watching.

OK, don't get excited, Travis looks at the dirty pictures of his friends and he snickers and he mumbles and he chuckles—but then humdrum reality intercedes and he has to leave, then Patrick gets stoned and also leaves for the day, only Robbie hangs around, my old faithful, my clever sidekick. I ask him why he decided to show the Polaroids to Travis. He shrugs and says, "That fucker just gets on my nerves."

"So you wanted to shock him? Something like that?"

"For sure, whatever, he's a dork."

"Or maybe you're interested in that big dick of his?"

"Gross me out the door, man!"

"Yeah, don't lie, you could have some major fun with Travis," I say to Robbie, often he wears bicycle shorts, he knows how sexy he looks in them, but today he's looking just as sexy in his denim cut-offs, no underpants, his bare legs so smooth and so sun-browned between the blue of the denim and the white of his socks, Jesus Christ he makes my mouth water. No, don't bother me now with the sad days of bagginess to come, don't show me visions of boyhood everywhere made shapeless and ugly, I don't want to live in that world. I don't want to see boys shrink and disappear dismally into their clothing. I don't want to be part of a culture where bagginess is as integral to

maleness as having a dick, where boys would consider themselves shamed and castrated just by wearing a pair of tight shorts in public. Please, leave me in a time and a place where boys are free to be beautiful and playful and seductive, it's not some dream or some fantasy, folks, it was real, it existed, I was there. Happiness, back then, seemed possible.

Come with me, yes, be with me, look at Robbie standing in front of us, smile at the perfection of him. This radiant kid, images of him define my entire summer. Those bicycle shorts and those skimpy cut-offs always bulging handsomely at the crotch. His sleeveless T-shirts and tanktops showing lean brown arms. His red-and-white painter's cap tipped at a cocky angle over his tangle of blond hair, oh yeah, that hair, that splendid sun-yellow hair. How do I deserve this succulence? I don't, nobody does, it's pure good fortune and I make sure to enjoy every bit of it while I can, I never let a day pass without touching him and kissing him and treasuring him.

Today is no different. We're alone after the other boys leave, middle of the afternoon, Robbie decides to try the shower for the first time since I moved here earlier this week. The shower is as old-fashioned as they come, just a vertical pipe and a nozzle in an antique claw-footed tub, there's a plastic curtain that pulls around the tub but a lot of water still ends up on the floor nonetheless. The

bathroom, by the way, is in front, right off the kitchen. Robbie spends about fifteen minutes in there before emerging naked and sleekly glistening, he and Patrick and every other fair-skinned boy of this utopian era have the same all-over summer tan with the same white hips and white ass where their shorts have been, now I follow that irresistible white ass of Robbie's to the part of the back room where I sleep. Remember, the "bedroom" is one half and the "living room" is the other—but when I leave the curtain open, which I nearly always do, there's no real difference. It's just a single large room with a TV at one end and a bed at the other. No real privacy, very communal, good, that's the way I like it.

Robbie goes over there to use the big bedroom mirror, he loves to admire himself and to pose and to preen, he can spend several minutes just brushing and fussing with his hair. I stand behind him now and I remember standing behind Patrick this same way only last week, coaching and prompting him—but Robbie is a different breed, he's never needed any encouragement, he's stood and jerked off in front of mirrors many times, he loves to watch himself do it, occasionally he'll ejaculate hard enough to hit the glass. But he's not doing that now, he's simply grooming himself, brushing his damp hair, then he grins at my reflection and does something a little impish to amuse me, he strokes the brush through his pubic hair as if

fluffing a kitten's fur. "It still ain't growin much," he says as a casual observation, and he's right, he'll be fifteen this month but he still has only some sparse blond frizz above his dick.

"You'll get more, don't worry, you'll get a nice bush."

"It's bogus, man, I'm like a baby."

"No way, Robbie, you're hung like a stud," I tell him, and I'm not just consoling him, trust me, he might be light on pubes but his penis and his testicles are ripe and droopy and fully adolescent. I'm rubbing his sun-freckled shoulders from behind. "So what should we do? What's your pleasure?"

"Let's go outside," the kid says.

Maybe I couldn't persuade Travis to become a nudist with me but I never had to persuade Robbie, we've already been out back twice this week to run around and whoop and enjoy our new freedom. Now I take off my shorts and underwear and I head outside with my young friend, detouring first to grab a blanket and to crank up the stereo, no neighbors around here to worry about, I can play my music loud enough to crack the plaster, today I'm blasting some *Carmina Burana* and some Wagner and some *Turandot*, I want musical bombast, I want thunderous overkill. The boys complain about my "classical shit" but they secretly dig a lot of it, I'm convinced. And it's great stuff on a sultry August

afternoon like this one, here we are in the back yard now and we've got the blanket spread and Robbie is kneeling beside me while I slather him with suntan lotion, this will be the first time we've stayed out here for more than just a few minutes, Robbie glances around as if he's suddenly not so sure about our buck-naked antics. "Don't get paranoid," I tell him. "Nobody can see us."

"I know," he says. "But it's still so weird. Just being out here, man. It's all so really different without any clothes."

"Feels good, right?"

"To the max, yeah, no doubt."

"But you're right," I say to him, rubbing the cool lotion all over his body. The sunlight is burnishing the blond fuzz on his arms, his legs, even along his backbone and shoulder blades, I think maybe it's called vellus, that pubescent fuzz, that golden downiness everywhere on his perfect bare skin. "It's always trippy to be naked outside."

And that's for damn sure, this is a new thrill for both of us, being so totally exposed this way, bringing such intimate and erotic behavior out of the bedroom and out of the house and out here to the back yard, even if nobody can see us, hell, it feels like some kind of exhibition, it feels wonderfully dirty, wonderfully exciting. In fact, it makes me start thinking about the whole concept of public nudity and public sex as a form of merry pranksterism, the

joy of daredevil lewdness and lechery, maybe giving some boy a handjob at McDonald's and then leaving behind a sign that commemorates the event: "A Happy Man jerked off a Happy Boy while eating a Happy Meal at this table on the sixth of August, 1984." Something like that. Substitute the day and month and year of your choice. Everything I'm telling you is happening twenty years ago or today or next week, I don't care, you decide.

Robbie laughs when I explain this latest idea of mine, he likes it, he thinks it would be some funny shit, totally rad. We've already smeared each other with suntan lotion and now we're stretched out side by side on the big beach blanket, Robbie is on his belly and he has one hand extended beyond the blanket's edge to feel and pick at the grass, imagine us on a raft and he'd be dangling his hand in the water. I sit up once again to smear even more lotion onto his bare bottom, teasing him about his "cottontail" butt, already you can see it pinkening from the sun. "We shouldn't stay out here too long this first time," I tell him. "We'll fry like two pieces of bacon."

"No doubt, man."

"Especially this tender fanny right here, boy. It's gonna cook. We'll be having rump roast for dinner."

"Very funny, Jake."

"Know what? We need to equip this yard better. Get some lawn chairs and stuff."

“Yeah, word up, we should get a big fuckin pool back here.”

“You must be high, man, I can’t afford that. But something small. Like a kid’s pool. Just to lay around in.”

“Yeah, cool.”

“We can make this a real party shack,” I say. I’ve put enough lotion onto the boy but I still have my hand on his rear end, enjoying those two meaty bare cheeks all slippery now with Coppertone and sweat, caressing them, squeezing them. “Not much summer left. We can’t waste time.”

“We should move to Florida.”

“You and me, right?”

“For sure,” the boy says. “I’m ready.”

“Don’t tempt me,” I say to him, still playing with his butt. “How’s this feel? Good?”

“Not bad,” Robbie says, the music is loud from the house but it’s easy for us to talk, Robbie is almost murmuring but I can hear him just fine against the operatic background, it’s *Turandot* now, Puccini pyrotechnics. I’m running my fingers between those tantalizing young cheeks of his, forbidden fruit, the kid is a demon for cocksucking but he’s never wanted anything anal, he’s never allowed a dick back here, I’ve licked under his balls and into his crack many times but never more than that. So what’s happening now? He’s enjoying

it when I caress into the crack and even when I touch his asshole with one slippery finger and start pushing into it, that's right, very slowly pushing into it, probing a little deeper and a little deeper into that most precious secret part of him. Again I ask him how he feels. "You like this, Robbie? Is this good?"

"It's pretty decent, it's OK," the kid says, his voice is sounding more and more mumbly, he keeps moving his hips in response to my finger penetrating him, finally he needs to liberate his own cruelly trapped erection from underneath himself and he rolls halfway up onto one hip, facing me suddenly, making my wrist bend to keep my finger inside of him. I can see the front of him now and I say yeah, no shit, you must like this just fine. Robbie puts one arm up to shade his eyes. "Oh man," he says low and breathless. "Damn. Seriously. Feels so funny. Gettin a boner out here."

"Major boner, man."

"Feels so different. Outside like this."

"Let's keep going," I say to him, sliding my finger in and out, you can hear the slippery suction of it. "In the butt. OK? Can we?"

"Just this once," he says to me.

"Really? In the butt? Are you sure?"

"We can try it. Yeah."

"OK, we'll try it, we'll see."

“Yeah, just to try it. Just once. Damn. So weird.”

“You ready?”

“Inside,” Robbie mumbles, and at first I think he means for me to get inside of him, to do it right here in the yard. But he means inside the house, he wants to go inside to do this new thing, to lose his virginity. After all these months, yes, he finally wants it, he’s ready for it. And maybe I always knew, looking back now, thinking about all of those many Polaroids of him showing his ass to the camera and spreading his cheeks, sometimes just standing and bending but other times down on his knees or on his back with his legs up in full fuck-me position, he wasn’t just playing around or joking, he was waiting, he was rehearsing for today, for right now.

I take his hand and bring him inside the house, it seems dark in here and hot and the music is impossibly loud but we don’t care, we go straight to the bed and Robbie flops onto his back and brings his knees up as if he’s posing for one of those familiar Polaroids, I don’t direct him, not necessary, he chooses this position for himself, this is how Robbie wants to be fucked now for the first time.

How can I describe this for you? How can I let you know the feeling of climbing onto Robbie Bostanchic and staring at his face as I sink my cock into him, as I start riding his upturned ass, as I begin humping this beautiful

golden boy in reality now and not just in some feverish dream? If I ease downward onto him, relaxing my arms, I can put my face against his, I can start kissing him in a way we've never kissed before, we've always been busy sucking each other in the past so we've never done this, we've never kissed while actually having sex and while the kid's hormones are in full boil and his inhibitions are zero, he's not thinking about anything now but sheer crazy pleasure and release, he's not macho or gay or straight or queer right now, forget it, he's just a wild naked boy kissing in a frenzy with his mouth wide open and his hands grabbing at my back, he smells like Coppertone and sweat and blond hair, I swear that I can smell the grassy blondness of him, the sunshiny blondness of him as I keep kissing him and as I keep riding him, his knees are up by my shoulders and my cock is in him as deep as I can push it and push it and push it, no Vaseline required, he's already slippery enough from the suntan lotion, I'm churning and churning the warm mucus of his rectum until finally I dissolve into him and suddenly I'm churning my own semen up there inside of him, inside of my Robbie. Only now do I notice the boy's own cum spilled between our bellies, he already ejaculated while we were screwing, it's slathered between us like a sloppy excess of that very same Coppertone lotion that I can feel and smell

all over the both of us. And then we're finished. Empty. No more. Even the music has climaxed into silence.

Do you remember what Robbie said about trying anal sex? Just once, he said. Just one time. But he admitted afterwards that he enjoyed it, he liked it, we could probably try it again later, he said, maybe some other time. Next day, already impatient, he's back and he's eager for more, I have to laugh, I'm delighted, this kid has discovered a new kind of pleasure, a new high, now he's hooked and he can't wait to feel that same high again. And this time he wants the full experience, he wants us to go back outside recklessly naked and to have sex on the blanket in the yard, he wants us to do everything out there in the open air under the sky and the sun, music blaring, full sex, really making love to each other this time, he wants us to do everything, I mean everything, using our hands and using our mouths to grope and to suck and then doing the new stuff, the real fucking, but this time doing it here outside in the wide-open yard with the sunlight hot against our bare bodies, even better this way, more primitive and wicked this way, and don't forget the kissing, plenty of kissing this whole time, Robbie likes this new kissing part, it's as if he wants everything now to feel as homo and freaky as possible, as if he's seeking some final and total loss of control, testing himself, daring himself to do more and more and more, wanting me to

mount him this way and that way, on his back like yesterday and now up on his knees, hell yeah, this is good, he likes it from behind, he glances back at me over his shoulder and he nods his approval while grimacing and grinning, finally we switch and he does it to me this same way, this is what Robbie wants, giving it to another guy in the ass for the first time and doing it out here in the yard like two dogs fucking.

Yes, Robbie is more than a boyfriend now. You understand? Patrick is a boyfriend. Travis might become a boyfriend. But Robbie has become more than that. After these past two days and what we've done together, no more doubt, this boy is my lover. I know it and he knows it, more than just the sex, this bond between us now, this fierce and forbidden alliance, we both understand this new reality. Robbie has become my queer loverboy.

I'd be exaggerating, but not much, to say that Robbie starts living with me after this. He sleeps here most nights and sometimes he'll stay here for two or three days in a row before finally going back home to see his mother. How can this be? Why does she permit this? I'm not sure. If this were some simple piece of fiction, man, I could tell you, I could invent a good reason. But I don't know. Maybe it's because I went to school with Robbie's older half-brother and Mrs. Bostanchic knows who I am. I might have mentioned once before—sometime,

someplace—that I went to high school with this guy, with this half-brother. Do you remember? Yes? No? Sorry, my mistake, it wasn't high school, it was college. But never mind, fuck the details, don't worry about the tedium of facts when we're together. Let's just say that Robbie's mother is a working woman, a single mom, she's worn out, Robbie is her only kid living at home, he's just turning fifteen and he's an uncontrollable tomcat anyway, his mother might actually be happy to have him staying at my place, she figures he's hanging out with an older friend who she knows to be a college graduate and not some ex-con or mental patient, she assumes he's safe and keeping out of major trouble, she knows where he is, she's OK with the whole arrangement.

All right? Satisfied? And remember something else, remember that the sexual hysteria and the molestation madness of America and its cultural colonies was just gaining momentum in the early Eighties, people weren't as media savvy about the burgeoning child-abuse industry and its cult of victimhood and those new monsters called pedophiles. There was no Oprah and no Jerry Springer and no tabloid TV of confession and confrontation. There was no home Internet or World Wide Web, no way to Google a person, no concept of sex-offender lists or databases. Someone like Robbie's mother would not have been nearly so quick to see me as a threat to her son, she

wasn't conditioned yet to perceive the world in terms of victims and abusers, a man and a boy together didn't automatically set off alarms of suspicion and mistrust. And besides, I was only a few years out of college myself, still just an older member of Robbie's own generation, I wasn't some gray-haired grandpa doddering after little kids.

Stop, enough, I'm trying to tell you about Robbie Bostanchic being my live-in boyfriend, my genuine homoboy lover. That's right, I'm excited, this is something new for me, this is no fuck-for-money deal, I don't have sex with Robbie and then pay him for the privilege, hell no, he's here because he likes it here and because he likes me, maybe even loves me, we're best friends, we're partners. He's the one who arranges the housewarming party for our shack, I've been here about two weeks and this party is certainly a good idea, maybe fifteen or twenty people are here, there's Patrick and Travis and all of the boys from that crew plus several of their girlfriends, even a few of my older pals have stopped by, naturally the previous owner of this house is one of them. These are guys I see fairly often, we go drinking, we go fishing, we play cards, we play golf, we have some good times. I don't just chase boys and fuck all day, believe it or not. I know how to play poker, I know how to chip out of a bunker, I know what kind of stink bait to use

for catfish. But every life has many facets and many truths and not all of them can fit on the page. We need to concentrate, we need to focus.

The party, before it breaks up, has only one problem. It's a problem I've encountered in the past and it's a problem I've decided to end right here, tonight, no more crap, no more nonsense. A couple of the girls have been mouthy and obnoxious all night and they keep laughing at my *Pixote* poster and making "gay" comments, eventually some of the boys who know me and like me even start going along with this horseshit and start cracking jokes, it's human nature, I understand, the boys want to look cool for the girls, they'll play along with this bigoted smart-ass rubbish even though they cheerfully pretend to suck the poster when they're here by themselves. I don't say anything while the party is in progress, I just grin and shrug off the furtive fag jokes and the funny looks, I'm careful not to act up and make any real enemies here tonight—but later I inaugurate a rule to make my new house an official no-pussy zone, I give the word to Robbie and Patrick and Travis and tell them to pass it along. Their male pals are still welcome in my home, as always, but the young chicks definitely are not. Now don't get me wrong, I'm no doctrinaire misogynist and I'm no cowering sissy, I like women, often I get along with women better than I do with men, they're more open,

they're easier to talk with, they're more honest and relaxed and friendly. I even had a few girlfriends of my own in high school and in college before I quit experimenting and wasting my time. But no creature on this fine green Earth can make my blood boil and my hackles rise like some smugly stupid teenage chick invading my territory and spoiling my fun. At this point, let's tell the truth, these girls are an alien species to me, they're my competition and my rivals, they invariably regard me with gum-smacking cattiness and slouchy disdain and instinctively resent my indifference to them and my obvious interest in anybody with a dick. It's been said that females view youthful sex as violation and that males view it as initiation. Is that simplistic? Probably. But not by much. The difference is real. Girls catch a whiff of the satyr from me and they sneer, they snipe, they recoil. Boys catch that same goatish scent and they leer, they make dirty jokes, they come back to see me again and again with their peckers itching and curious.

Basically, my life is all about trust, and I can't trust girls. They're spies and they're saboteurs from the enemy camp. So I issue an edict, no more chicks, no more pussy in paradise. And guess what, my boys don't care and their friends don't care, nobody complains or mutinies, girls are forthwith excluded from the shack without a word of protest. Does that surprise you? It shouldn't. Even grown

men have made a history of creating their own males-only clubs and lodges and brotherhoods, no women allowed. Imagine how much stronger that same fraternal guys-only instinct must be among a group of teenage boys. My estrogen-free policy doesn't bother them at all. Hell, they like it. Of course they do. And we're all a lot safer as a result. Especially me.

It's the middle of August by now, a movie called *Breakin'* is back for a second run at the West Theater downtown and the kids are going to see it over and over. That's been the craze this whole summer. Breakdancing. You should see these guys, they're so damn cute bustin and poppin all of their funky moves, they practice inside the house but they prefer doing it outside where there's more space and no furniture to bump into and no carpet to impede their sliding and spinning and moonwalking. I have a big square of plywood that they put on the ground and use for their stage, they've turned the back yard into their own rollicking dance club. We also have a kid's inflatable pool back there, it's large enough for three people to sprawl within it and to soak, of course this is a boys-only sanctuary so we don't worry about clothing or modesty, best way to enjoy the pool is nude, that's just common sense. Some of these kids who come over here aren't quite uninhibited or daring enough for that and they only undress down to their underpants, but that's OK,

everyone is free to choose and everyone digs the naughty thrill of this freedom, go ahead and take off your hot clothes, man, don't worry, even take off your underwear if you want, nobody cares, nobody will stop you. There's a feeling here of true self-determination and giddy self-rule, buccaneers on the loose, no restrictions, fuck the rules.

Travis is one of those kids who stops just short of total nudity, he'll happily strip to his underpants but then you can hear him mumbling about other guys being "rude" or "sick" for going further. But don't fret, I've still managed to see his dick, he might stay in his undies but he's far from bashful or uptight, he's constantly yanking them down in front or in back to flash or to moon. And when his briefs are wet, voila`, they're practically transparent anyway. No, Travis McCoy ain't shy. He's playing peekaboo and he's flirting, that's all. He's a schemer and a trickster. And, oh yeah, his penis is a nice one. Robbie was right. Travis has a big dick.

I wish I could give you a day-to-day account of this idyllic August. Here's a typical Monday with Patrick and Travis over on the plywood practicing their breakdancing, they're dressed in T-shirts and shorts, meanwhile I'm in the little pool just a few feet away with Robbie right beside me, we're naked, we're reclining and relaxing against the inflatable side of the pool which sags like a rubbery cushion behind our backs, the tepid water is up to

our waists as we lie in it and as we lazily jack each other off. This is what we do, this is how things are now, it's becoming an increasingly randy scene around here. Even some of those kids who aren't my boyfriends have started using the pool for more than just soaking, I don't mean they're actually queering off together, not quite, no such luck, but watch and you'll see this one or that one over here resting in the pool and you'll realize that he's masturbating, he thinks he's being sneaky, he thinks nobody will notice. That's the kind of stuff happening around here. Boys dancing in their T-shirts and shorts or sometimes just their underwear. Spermy water in the kiddie pool. Me and Robbie. Me and Patrick. And those two guys together, of course, those two best friends, Bostanchic and Jenco, they share the pool and mess around pretty much every day. And I've also seen Robbie with one of the other boys, a puppyish junior-high kid named Donovan May who comes over here to buy weed, they were in the pool together one day and I know they were sharing a handjob, I almost joined them but I was having too much fun just spying. That wild Robbie, man, he's a hellion, he's fearless, he was the first to go nude as an example for the other kids and he's never embarrassed to mess around, I've told you that already, he doesn't care what anybody thinks. Just yesterday there were six kids here in the back yard practicing their dance moves and

smoking a little weed and hanging out, Robbie was soaking naked in the pool when suddenly he stands up and he's got this totally ferocious boner, nobody has done this before, no way, some stealthy diddling and fooling around might be OK but you don't make a special point of showing your erection to the other guys, that's too gay—but Robbie doesn't care, he boldly parades himself around and around the whole yard, he actually does a strut to give his hard wang an extra comical waggle for the amusement of his audience, the other boys break up laughing and love every minute of Robbie's little performance, he's a major hit. He'd probably be willing to stand out there and masturbate for applause. It wouldn't surprise me.

Finally it's a week before Labor Day and all of the boys around town are congregating at the Village Green for a breakdancing jamboree and showdown, it's not an official contest but every kid in Sandburg seems to know about it, this is the only place to be today. The Village Green is always the place to be, I guess, for hanging out downtown. You can go way out to the mall or even farther out to Lake Swanson and its park, but if you're cruising around town and you want to get together with your pals, you come here to the Green. Today, through some mysterious synergy or dynamic, we're all part of this festive tribal gathering, everyone is wearing full breakdancing regalia as they convene: chains and gloves

and caps, samurai headbands and rising-sun shirts, leather, mesh, camouflage. My boys are in more ordinary garb, nothing expensive or flashy, but I think Robbie looks hotter than anyone in his black bicycle shorts and his backward painter's cap and one of those T-shirts which are so popular this summer, it's sleeveless and it's emblazoned in front with a big red sun and vertical lines of fearsome Japanese calligraphy. He's an amazing sight when he dances in that outfit. There's nothing organized about this event, kids are dancing in several locations, sometimes solo, sometimes in groups, my boys and their friends are near the playground equipment and take turns performing for each other and for anyone else who wants to gather and to watch. Robbie is gorgeous but he's not a great dancer, he's OK, he's lean and nimble and he's got energy and sexiness and charm but he's not great. And don't even ask about Travis, that kid is a funny goof who dances mostly for laughs, he's all bony arms and legs and clumsy flailing and graceless spins. Patrick is the real dancer of the group, he's a talented athlete at school and in Pony League and he has true grace and rhythm and style as a breakdancer, there's a natural fluidity to all of his movements and a fiercely muscular speed and agility to his big spins. He's lovely to watch with his reddish hair all shaggy and floppy and flinging beads of sweat. He's exciting.

No prizes are given, no trophies are awarded, this riotous breakdancing celebration eventually just peters out and everyone gradually disbands and heads for home. Travis runs off to somewhere unknown, he's always coming and going on mysterious errands that probably have something to do with buying or selling pot. Or maybe tonight he's simply returning home, nobody ever knows for sure, Travis never talks about his mom or his stepdad or his one older sister, he just comes and goes like Batman, no explanation, no discussion. The rest of us straggle back to the shack for an impromptu party, Patrick is the star, he was dynamite today and everybody knows it. I get drunk and keep telling him how amazing he was, how incredible, how kick-ass, then I start urging him to dance naked, come on, it'll be great, give us all a special treat, don't be a wussy! There must be ten or twelve other guys here this evening and Patrick is no exhibitionist by nature so he just ignores me and tells me affably to shut up.

But I'm just getting started, man, this has become an unofficial end-of-summer bash and I'm working on my second bottle of wine and I can't shut up, that's not possible right now. I continue badgering Patrick about doing some nude breakdancing but I also launch into several other tirades and harangues as the evening passes and sunset approaches, I loudly declare that we need more

nudity around here from now on, and not just nudity, fuck no, we need more excitement, more jacking off, sex is the ultimate act of autonomy and self-expression and we need a whole goddamn tribe of rebels and heretics here, we need pagans, we need bare-skinned primitives dancing and howling at the moon and enjoying the power of their own hard cocks. I tell everyone that I'll write a book someday about naked warriors, about queer warriors, just wait, someday I'll write a fuckin book all about them!

These boys around here are familiar with my purple rhetoric and just laugh at me or good-naturedly tell me, same as Patrick, to shut up. But maybe my deranged persistence finally has some effect on the general mood and the general libido, especially after a couple hours of partying, maybe Patrick is feeling stoned and dopey when he decides to do some celebratory dancing on the plywood in the back yard, boys have been trading places on this little stage all evening and now the sun is setting and the light is dim and Patrick is taking another turn, he's reprising his best moves, he's flaunting his skills. I turn on the light over the back door to help illuminate the scene and I start yelling at Patrick to show us some skin, show us the good stuff, take 'em off! The kid isn't wearing much anyway, it's a hot August evening and he's breakdancing now in nothing but his gym shorts and sneakers and socks. At first he continues to ignore me and

grin and go through his moves but then he surprises me by playing along and pulling down his shorts just as he's completing his routine, this is fuckin excellent, he finishes his last few moves with the shorts tangled around his knees, he's really dancing naked for us, no joke. Not for long, though. Just a few seconds of this and then he's done and he pulls his shorts back up. But now every boy here wants to show off and get a laugh of his own, one by one they each take a turn on the plywood and one by one they each do a brief routine of poppin and breakin with their jeans or their shorts or their camo pants pulled down to expose their dicks and their butts. I'm encouraged by this and keep clamoring for more, let's see some boners, let's go, somebody jerk off and win a prize!

Nobody goes along with my latest provocation, not even Robbie, my wildboy Robbie. No experience is wasted, however. Random events and patterns of consequence. Remember? The party breaks up around ten o'clock, early enough for boys to get home before curfew at eleven. Patrick stays behind after the others have left because he wants to watch the end of a *M.A.S.H.* rerun. And, of course, Robbie is still here, not unusual for the three of us to be together like this, we've all shared handjobs and we've all shared blowjobs, you know that about us, I've been busy with these two kids since we hooked up in the spring and there aren't many secrets

among us. But there's one thing which has gone unspoken for the past couple of weeks, Robbie hasn't said anything and neither have I, we haven't publicized our new relationship as full-fuck lovers who share a bed and sleep together almost every night. This is a path where not even Patrick can follow us, he's not interested in anal sex and never will be, he enjoys playing around and busting a nut but he doesn't much like another guy's dick in his mouth and he definitely doesn't want a dick in his rear end.

I'm telling you this for a reason, I want you to understand why it's unusual now when I decide to make out with Robbie right in front of his buddy Patrick. Blame those fiendish patterns of consequence, man, one thing leading to another, the end of summer and the breakdancing fest leading to this evening's party here at the shack and lots of weed and wine and then our backyard nudie revue, all of which left me feeling stoned and inebriated and horny and eager for truth-telling. And that same cunning concatenation of events must have worked a similar spell on Robbie, he's free to stop what's happening here but he doesn't, he gets right into it, he's digging it. We're on the couch together when I put my arm around him and pull him closer to me, that's not unusual, I'm always touching and hugging my boys, there's nothing remarkable yet about Robbie nestling beneath my arm and making himself comfortable against

me, his body turned halfway backward against my side so that he can see the TV at the end of the room. It's still not very strange when I sit there nuzzling and kissing at his delicious blond hair and his ear and the side of his neck, I've done this before, a few times even with Patrick himself, this kind of casual puppy-love nuzzling. And perhaps even now it's not so unusual for me to take off my shorts and my underwear as we're sitting there and then for Robbie to grin yeah, that's a good idea, peeling off his own bicycle shorts before settling back comfortably naked against me, cozy beneath my arm.

So far, all of this could be part of a normal night around here, simple foreplay leading to the usual climax and release with hands or mouths. But now Patrick starts to see something new. He's sitting sprawled directly across from us in the room's only other chair and he's been watching the last few minutes of *M.A.S.H.* while glancing at me and Robbie, now the show is over and he should probably be leaving but he stays in the chair and keeps glancing back and forth between us and whatever else is now on TV, more and more he's letting his glance linger on us, watching us. I'm aware of this and so is Robbie, both of us seem to be feeling the same thing now, we don't need to discuss it or plot it, both of us are in a mood tonight for revealing the truth about our new relationship and we want Patrick to be our first witness,

we want to show off in front of him and be outlaws and be queer and be shocking, we both know this, we both understand this suddenly and totally as we sit together on the couch, naked now, snuggling.

That's what we're doing, snuggling, Robbie beneath my arm with his back against me and his legs up on the couch as I feel his chest with one hand and feel the rest of his bare body with my other hand, our dicks are hard, Robbie takes a deep breath of pure pleasure and stretches himself catlike against me and reaches back to touch my hair, my neck, my cheek, he's grinning and he's grooving on this and then he turns his head toward me to offer his mouth for kissing, the kind of kissing that we've only done in private before now, slow and deep and passionate, the kissing of romance and of lovers. I told you earlier to forget about things like romance and soulmates, I know, I remember—but never listen to me, I don't know shit, I'm a fool. Here I am with Robbie and I couldn't be more desperately and helplessly in love, I'm holding his boner, I'm kissing him and talking into his mouth and I'm doing it loud enough for Patrick to hear, that's important, I need Patrick to hear me now cooing endearments to Robbie through our kisses, calling him my baby, my dreamboy, my sweetie. Robbie never flinches, he wants this as much as I do, he wants his best friend to see everything and to

hear everything and to know everything, there's nothing that can fluster or embarrass him by this time.

Yes, Patrick is our witness, he's staring at us as Robbie turns his body against mine and faces me and keeps kissing me, and then as Robbie straddles and sits on my lap and leans forward against me—chest to chest, belly to belly, groin to groin—and then as Robbie scoots himself higher just far enough to bring his ass up and on top of my cock, that's how we stay for now, Robbie sitting there and letting his crack ride and rub slowly back and forth along the length of my erection while we continue to kiss and kiss and kiss. That's what Patrick is seeing, that's his view, he's seeing Robbie's back and he's seeing Robbie's butt and balls give my boner an obscene massage. Does he want to see more? Is he waiting to see my boner go in? Should Robbie and I continue now and start to do some real fucking in front of him?

Not necessary, Patrick has seen enough, he's been sitting here and watching me and Robbie make love on the couch and he knows what we're going to do next. And it's OK, he doesn't object, he knows that Robbie is different and he's cool with it—but he's not interested in watching. Finally he stands up and heads for the kitchen and the front door. "I gotta go," he says. "Later, man."

“You can stay,” I tell him, just in case he’s curious enough or horny enough to change his mind. “You’re invited.”

“No, Jake, I gotta get home.”

“OK, well, ride fast, it’s almost curfew.”

“Hey Jenky,” Robbie suddenly says, he leans back now and sits up on my lap like a cowboy in the saddle, he’s still moving his butt against me, still massaging my hardness with his bottom as he grins at his friend. “Don’t forget about tomorrow, fucker!”

“No doubt, man, pick me up,” Patrick says, they’re talking about some professional wrestling event tomorrow in Peoria, some WWF extravaganza, Robbie’s mom is taking both of them and they’ve been excited about it for days. So that’s how we say goodbye. All is well. No problems. Patrick knows everything now and I feel a new kind of exhilaration, proud to be what I am and who I am, proud to have Robbie as my true and beautiful boyfriend, proud that someone else knows about us—but even more proud that Robbie himself feels the same way, that such a magnificent boy could love me so much and want me so much and choose me as his partner, his mate, his man. We belong to each other. I’m his. He’s mine.

I smile at him now when we’re alone. “That was fun, man. That was great. You were amazing.”

“That was hot,” Robbie agrees, still riding me. “For sure.”

“My sweetie.”

“Yeah, your sweetie,” the kid chuckles, he’s a teenager, he’s amused by sentiment.

“My baby.”

“Yeah, your baby.”

“You are, right? My baby? My sweetie?”

“Damn, I guess so,” Robbie says, he grins and leans forward against me, same position as before, he’s ready to do more kissing, more everything. “Your baby, no doubt, must be true.”

OK, this is where we should end, cue the romantic music and fade to the closing credits, drive safely, come back soon. But that ineluctable chain of action and consequence has one more surprise tonight. Robbie and I have finished what we started earlier for Patrick’s edification, Robbie has taken a shower and gone to bed and I’m getting ready to join him. That’s when Travis shows up, it’s after curfew but he never worries about shit like that, his parents probably think he’s staying overnight at some friend’s house while he’s actually out running around town. And now he’s here, getting himself a drink of cold water after I hear him pounding on the door and after I pull on a pair of underpants and let him in. He’s wearing a green T-shirt made deliberately ragged with a

rip here and a hole there and the sleeves torn off, also some denim shorts cut off raggedly above the knees, he looks sweaty and dirty and he guzzles two full glasses of water before wandering with me into the back room. I chide him for missing the whole fuckin party earlier tonight and he nods, he says yeah, that's why he's here, he's looking for Donovan, one of the kids who was at the party. "You're outta luck," I tell him. "Donovan went home around ten o'clock. Why? What's up?"

"Fucker wanted a dime bag. Forget it. I'll see him tomorrow."

"No problem. Are you gonna hang around?"

"Who's here? Just you?"

"Fuckin insulting, man."

"No, I didn't mean," Travis says with a slow, snaggle-toothed grin. He glances out the back door as if some stray kids might still be out there. "So quiet, damn, ain't nobody."

"There's somebody," I tell him, pointing past the open curtain to my bed. "See? He's asleep."

"Who the fuck?"

"It's my Robbieboy, my loverboy."

"That's sick."

"He doesn't think so."

"He's sick too," Travis says, taking a few steps closer to the bed. "Fucker is naked. Like usual."

“More fun that way. Wanna join us?”

“Shut up,” the kid mumbles, looking away, pretending to scowl. He tells me that he’s hungry, so we end up sharing some cold spaghetti and meatballs and watching an old John Wayne movie on TV. I’m feeling reasonably sober by now but I’m dead tired and I need some sleep. I ask Travis again if he wants to hang out and crash. He finally says OK, it’s too late for him to go back out and his mom and stepdad think he’s staying with Donovan, so yeah, he’ll crash here on the couch. “There’s room enough on the bed,” I tell him. “No need to be shy, Travis. We can mess around. All of us.”

“Don’t be gettin that way with me.”

“Just being friendly, man.”

“Y’all are crazy around here.”

“Damn straight. Whatever feels good,” I say to the kid, then I lean forward and sniff him as he passes me to use the bathroom. “You smell good tonight. Nice and sweaty.”

“That’s sick,” he says as always, his tongue a little thick and lispy on the sibilants. “I ain’t that way.”

Sure, I’ve heard that old disclaimer before, I’ve heard it again and again from every kid I’ve ever met. Even from Robbie, same old bullshit, they all insist that they don’t do this and they don’t do that and they’re not gay and, oh hell, you’ve heard the stories, you know the

refrain. So what else can you expect from Travis? He's only thirteen years old and he's been trained to think and to speak in macho platitudes, let's not blame him, he needs our help, seriously, he's been part of this raunchy scene all summer and he's still depriving himself, he's still being a good hetero soldier for no reason. So now this strange summer night and its dreamy serendipity has brought him to me, to us, to this shack, to this refuge in the wilderness. Each event, each moment, all random, all inevitable.

I return to Robbie and our honeymoon bed. Travis stays on the couch. It's just after six o'clock when I wake up and climb to my feet and trudge to the bathroom for a pee. The morning is already hot and humid. I trudge back now and stop at the couch where Travis is curled on his right side, facing away from me, apparently still asleep. The television was never turned off and it's showing an old black-and-white Popeye cartoon. "Travis, hey Trav," I call softly, not really expecting any response. But he hears me, he grunts and he mumbles, his voice is always hoarse anyway and now it's just a low animal rasp uttering inarticulate complaint. He swipes one hand backward to ward me off and then makes a raspy chuckling noise that betrays his grouchiness as a sham, a joke, he's a flirt, this kid, he's a trickster and a tease, I told you before. "Early,"

he keeps croaking into the pillow I gave him last night. “Too fuckin early.”

“Just checking on you,” I say to him, getting down on one knee beside the couch, I can’t resist that tightly denimed ass of his right there in front of me, I put my hand on it and start caressing, no big deal, I’ve done a lot of casual touching and feeling on him before now. He pretends once more to fend me off with a backhanded swipe and then he decides to stop playing and to enjoy what he’s been missing, finally he’s ready to join us, no more stalling and pretending, that’s why he stayed here, that’s why he came, he’s tired of teasing, yes, he’s ready. And he’s been waiting for me, he has a surprise for me, this sneaky kid, he rolls onto his back to reveal that his shorts are unzipped and open, you can see the white underpants beneath and you can see the swollen red knob of his penis showing above the waistband. He keeps his eyes closed and he grins and he mumbles that it’s too hot in here, it’s way too hot in this fuckin place. I say yeah, you’re right, you poor guy, you need some relief. I rest my hand on the front of his exposed underpants. “You’ve got a giant sea serpent in there, man. I can see its head.”

“You ain’t funny,” Travis says, he still won’t open his eyes, he can’t stop grinning. “Jake. Motherfucker. Perv.”

“You really do smell great,” I tell him, rubbing at him through the underpants and then reaching inside to hold

the warm hardness of him directly in my hand. He shakes his head and keeps grinning. I lean closer and lick the drops of sweat from his upper arm. “And you taste good, too.”

“Motherfucker.”

“Take your shirt off, Trav.”

“For what?”

“Don’t be a goof.”

“Yeah, fuck, it’s too hot,” the kid says, remembering his own comical rationale, finally he opens his eyes as he wrests and yanks the tattered green T-shirt over his head and tosses it aside, skinny and sun-browned boy baring himself for me, waiting for me to do more, mumbling and quietly laughing now as I again use my tongue to taste the salty trickles of sweat on his arm, on his shoulder, on his chest, licking this nipple and then this other nipple and then down to his belly button, suddenly he reaches for his own shorts and underpants and shoves both of them down halfway to his knees, he’s impatiently giving me his cock and I take it, many thanks, it’s already in my hand and now I greet it and savor it with my tongue, I slowly lick the whole big thing and then I lick his nice chubby testicles as a tasty bonus, there’s nothing like this first time, I’ve said it before, nothing like the squirm of pleasure from a virginboy just discovering the paradise of his own body. And I want my Robbie to share this

moment with us, I want him to see this and to enjoy it with me and with Travis, I call for him, I summon him to the feast.

He doesn't hear me at first, it's early, he's still dozing and dreaming, so I call for him again, hey Rob, hey Robbieboy, hey bud! Travis swats my head to silence me but it's too late for that, he's part of our family now, part of our sacred band of brothers, he wanted this place to be our clandestine "hangout" and that's exactly what it is, this is where boys will come from now on to be initiated, to be liberated. And it's also too late because Robbie has finally dragged himself out of bed and wandered over here to the couch where he smiles oh man, shit, we need the fuckin camera! Good idea. I forgot about the camera. Let's capture this manhood ceremony on film and enjoy it again later. Excellent idea.

This last scene belongs to Travis himself, to our friend Travis McCoy, this is his special moment. I lean away from him and tell him to finish so that we can watch, go ahead now, jack off for us, show us. He looks at Robbie and he looks at me, his erection is our centerpiece, it's a gloriously indecent pecker curved back against his belly like several long inches of the hardest and meatiest sausage, once more I encourage him to go ahead, show us, and now finally he does, he grips himself and he starts pumping. His shorts and his underpants are still bunched

above his knees but then Robbie impetuously decides to finish undressing him and he grabs those shorts and those undies and pulls them down and off, then he grabs Travis by each ankle and tugs off his white socks for him as well, that's better, skinny young Travis is completely naked now on the couch, he nods his satisfaction and happily spreads his legs as he continues to masturbate for us. Then Robbie finally fetches the Polaroid camera and Travis sticks out his tongue at us as we take his picture, he's seen all of those hard-core photos of the other boys and now he'll be among them, he's enjoying this, he opens his legs even wider to give us a hotter view of his balls, this is so easy for him, so natural, surrendering himself this way to his own nakedness and freedom, he keeps pumping and pumping until finally his entire body trembles and he ejaculates in front of us, OK, good boy, good job. His big pecker doesn't spurt, no, it spills, it overflows, it releases a gradual puddle of cream onto his bare belly. It's beautiful to watch. And now look at him as he smiles. Look at Travis. He's proud of himself. He passed the initiation. He's one of us.

* * *

DREAMBOY VARIATIONS

FOUR

I'm fluent in the new language of Victimese. Allow me to translate: To "abuse" a boy means to give him pleasure. To "molest" a boy means to make him happy. To "harm" a boy means to befriend him and to love him and to pamper him like a young prince. Orwell called it "double speak" in *1984*, remember? It's the spurious bullshit of demagogues and cops and moral fanatics. Up is down, black is white, affection is assault, freedom is coercion, joy is shame. This is the language of our enemy. The truth is dead and gone. Darkness has fallen.

So don't expect me to play by the rules. Are you joking? I'll shit on the rules. I'll go out of my way to break every rule I can find, to outrage every preacher and sermonizer, to distress every parent, to offend every teacher and counselor and every traitorous gay skunk in alliance with them. Are you one of them? Are you one of those sheep-brained fools who believe that boys need to be protected from nudity and sex and the delights of their own bodies? Are you? Then step closer, man, and watch me strip your son or your brother and teach him a few filthy tricks. Watch him smile and squirm. You'll never forget the look on his face.

You understand? My only power is my defiance. I live underground, I'm nobody, I'm null and void, I have nothing more to gain and nothing more to lose. Why should I care about rules or prohibitions or society's

scorn? I'm a beast of the forest. I acknowledge no creed. I submit to no master. "So take my advice," I say to Robbie. "Never let a noisy and flea-bitten dogma chase your nice clean karma down the road of life."

"What's that mean?"

"It's very clever and hilarious, believe me."

"A dog and a car?"

"Exactly."

"You're a weirdo, Jake, for real."

"But you love me anyway," I say to my boy, to my Robbie.

He's on his back and I keep pausing as I talk to him in order to lick and to nibble around the knob of his boner, it's so red, the whole thing, it's so swollen, it keeps leaking more and more pre-cum every time I lick it and nibble it, that's why I'm doing this, to watch it seep and drip and then to clean it with my tongue and watch it begin again, weeping its clear nectar. I've never known any other boy who leaks pre-cum as freely and juicily as Robbie does, at first I was even deceived a couple of times into thinking that he was ejaculating, there was so much sticky moisture dribbling from him—but no, that was just his lubricant, the thicker and creamier stuff always comes spurting later. And now he's just about ready for that messy milkshake climax, I can tell by the tightening of his nuts and by the hot stiffness of the dick itself, his erection

always looks especially prominent during these winter months when the rest of his body is so pale, always such a startling contrast between his white skin and the wicked redness of his boner and balls. I give the swollen shaft a quick rub and squeeze and that's all it takes, pow, his entire body clenches and he starts creaming onto himself, biting his lip and whimpering, it feels so good.

It's quite a job of licking and swallowing for me to clean that sloppy feast from his belly and from his chest and from the curls of his pubic hair. Yeah, Robbie's finally getting himself a nice bush of pubes. He's been impatient for that to happen. I never cared, he's beautiful to me either way. He's a young Apollo, a fifteen-year-old Phoebus, all radiance and sunshine and long golden hair. He's a Renaissance angel. I've never met a more perfectly lean and perfectly slender and perfectly luscious boy. Never. And now I'm lapping up his fresh sperm for lunch. I know, you're right, I should eat more vegetables. Finally we've lingered here long enough and I say OK, get your clothes on, we gotta go. The kid uses his shirt to wipe my saliva from the front of himself and then he gets dressed and follows me from the church. Outside we walk south along Tompkins Street for three blocks until we come to my car, parked safely away from the scene of the crime. "So speak up, tell me," I say to Robbie. "How'd it feel? Being buck naked in church?"

“Pretty incredible.”

“You liked it?”

“Hell yeah!”

“You were leaking like a fiend.”

“I was slightly turned on,” the boy says, he has greenish-brown eyes which are widely set and which have spectacular blond lashes that he likes to flutter at me whenever he’s feeling flirty, like right now.

This isn’t the first time we’ve pulled a stunt like this, it’s an idea that came to me last summer when Robbie and I started having sex in the back yard of my new house, the intriguing prospect of doing the same thing in even more public places, the anarchic thrill of it, very different from my old strategy of planting boyporn in churches and libraries. That old campaign was more radically conspicuous and disruptive, it was designed to provoke a response, it was a statement—just the opposite of what we’re doing now, which is all about never being noticed or discovered, that’s the whole point, the addictive high of performing these acts of public indecency without ever getting caught. This isn’t politics anymore, this is pure hedonism, this is just for kicks, just for our own sexual excitement. I intended originally to leave behind some kind of description of our activity, some written declaration or taunt that would transform our personal pleasure into a more noble form of political dissent. But

fuck it, that's too much work. We've decided instead to leave behind nothing but the cryptic message of our own cum. Today, before I cleaned Robbie with my tongue, I made sure to smear some of his stuff onto the pew, nice and messy. That's our only token, our humble signature, like Zorro's mark or the Lone Ranger's silver bullet, we leave behind the orgasmic essence of boy.

This is all a little mad, I know, I agree. Even some of my best friends and supporters would find these latest antics to be excessive and upsetting and gross. Yes, even intelligent people manage to believe in the special sanctity of churches and other similar bits of superstitious garbage. Well, sorry, churches are nothing to me but the bastions of my foe, they contain no sacred significance or truth, no God lives there, no saints or cherubs hover within. My deities are Eros Triumphant and Pan the Goatboy and wherever they ejaculate is hallowed ground. Anyway, I'm not picking on churches in particular, not really, we just happened to choose First Methodist today because it was open and empty and we couldn't resist. Robbie said we should go in and do something, usually that means he quickly opens his pants and masturbates, or we both unzip and masturbate each other, we've done it that way two or three times in the library, once in the grocery store—but today he actually took off all of his clothes and stretched out on one of the wooden pews and, of course, you saw

what happened next. Buck naked in church. With a spurting boner. Yeah, he loved it, big time.

I'm not sure why it took us so long to start doing this, probably five or six months since I got the idea last summer. School resumed for my boys, that definitely slowed things down, Robbie was practically living with me before then, he's my baby, my loverboy, now he's back home with his mom and sleeping in his own bed and catching the school bus in the morning just like any normal kid. I get him mostly on the weekends, that's when my house comes alive, my shack on the outskirts of Sandburg, that's when I usually see Robbie and his best friend Patrick Jenco and young Travis McCoy and everyone else from our gang of outlaws and rascals. Call them the Sandburg Buccaneers, this rambunctious crew, some of them are my boyfriends and some of them aren't, harder and harder these days to tell the difference, they all know what happens here, some of them will never become full players but they all know, they all hang around to enjoy the fun and the freedom and the tantalizing ambience of debauchery.

But Robbie is the integral figure here, you need to understand the bond between us, he's my boyfriend and he's my lover but he's also my accomplice, my comrade-in-chaos, everything we do together is a collaboration, a conspiracy of equals, getting completely undressed in that

church today was his idea, not mine, we met each other at Fantastic Sam's Comix last spring and we've been on the same lascivious wavelength ever since. He was the one who first persuaded his friend Patrick to get naked and to get nasty at my old apartment. He was the one who brought out the Polaroid camera when Travis jerked off with us for the first time last August here at the shack. He was the one who managed to share a quick handjob earlier that same month with a boy named Donovan May, they were soaking together in our little backyard kiddie pool and started goofing around mostly as a joke but ended up actually playing with each other's dicks, Robbie ejaculated beneath the water but Donovan didn't, he's three years younger than Robbie and he was nervous and he just kept laughing and fidgeting the whole time as if being tickled.

And now Robbie is the one who's making this latest of my schemes more than just some cockeyed fantasy, I would never be performing these stunts by myself, his involvement is the engine that started us and drives us and keeps us running. Without him I'd still be getting lucky with an occasional boy and sucking a few dicks, I'm not exactly helpless on my own—but I'd never be jerking off in the reference room at the library, and I'd never have the friendship and the trust of so many kids from so many different parts of town, they all started coming to my

place because of Robbie, including Travis, who then started selling his nickel and dime bags of pot here, which then attracted even more kids, including Donovan May—and so on, this chain of coincidence and serendipity stretches unbroken through the 1980s and the 1990s and the millennium and it all begins here, now, with Robbie Bostanchic.

That's the secret, yes indeed, find yourself a teenager who's horny for other boys and who loves to break the rules and take unholy risks and play dirty games, pretty soon you'll be shocking yourselves with your own freakiness, nothing will be impossible, you'll have your own crew of buccaneers using your house as their hangout and indulging their most devilish whims. Thanks to your very own Robbie, or whatever his name might be, it'll happen, he'll make it happen, he'll make your wettest dreams come true. Politics and ideologies and other abstractions won't seem so important anymore. The marchers in your Gay Pride parade will look more and more like the clueless buffoons they really are. The slings and arrows of your own inimical society will strike you and pierce you less painfully. You'll be too busy cavorting and hell-raising with your gang of young friends to care about the world and its bullshit.

You want details? OK, fine, I'll give you details. I've already told you that these past few months were a little

slow, a little tame, but now the activity and the energy seem to be picking up around here, fresh ideas and schemes are simmering, I'm dedicated to opening new doors of perception for every boy in this town and beyond, my home is their sanctuary for liberation and for initiation, here and only here can they learn the boundless nature of themselves, the secrets of themselves hidden and untapped and waiting until now for joyous release. All masks and disguises can be shed here. All inhibitions can be confronted and discarded. But none of this is achieved through analysis or therapy or sappy self-help bromides, no, it's achieved through play and pleasure and the epiphany of pansexual abandon.

And I'm not just talking about kids circle-jerking, that happens everywhere. I'm not even talking about a couple of buddies who might go a little further and experiment with some quick and utilitarian fellatio, that's not as common but it also happens. I'm talking about something much wilder, a journey beyond ordinary boyish sexplay to a whole new way of thinking, I want these kids to open themselves to taboo and heresy and perversion, that's right, perversion, sin, queerness, everything they've always been trained to repress and suppress and oppress before they came here to my lunatic old shack. This is where they can touch and test reality for the first time.

This is where reality itself can be shattered and replaced by the dizzying pandemonium of true freedom.

Here's what I'm saying, simply put, it's easy to befriend a boy and have a good time and bust a few nuts together—but it's a lot harder to get at some boy's psyche and turn him in circles and then watch him fantasize and create a startling new version of himself. First you need to maneuver yourself past all of those goddamn sexual roles and sexual labels that inhibit every boy's behavior. And that's difficult. Not even Robbie has ever referred to himself as gay or queer. If you forced him to self-identify he would probably choose straight, he would call himself a hetero. So you need to guide boys around that quagmire of terminologies and orientations to a safer ground, to a place where they can forget themselves and become something new. For a kid like Robbie, no problem, he might not call himself queer but he's a born daredevil, he'll try anything and then come running back for more. But most other boys need some help to try the extraordinary, to dare the extreme, to shock themselves. And it's Robbie himself who supplies that essential catalyst, he's the instigator and the motivator, he's the wolf in boy's clothing. But now, beyond even that, he has an idea. He has a plan. We're driving back home from First Methodist when he starts talking about making movies, how def that would be, how kick-ass. "Like

today,” he says. “If we had a movie of it. In church. That would be so def.”

“I like the concept, man. But it’s not practical. Not for public places. Too conspicuous. Too slow.”

“Maybe that’s true,” the kid says, his blond hair is a couple of inches shorter than I’ve ever seen it before, he had it cut last week, it curls halfway over his ears and just touches the collar of his winter jacket. He’s been wearing an old hat of mine recently and he’s wearing it again today, it’s one of those soft gray woolen caps that might have been worn by a cabbie or a newsboy in some old black-and-white film, Robbie likes it and he wears it slouched rakishly to the side, he thinks it looks cool, and he’s right. Now he keeps talking about movies, about making movies, maybe not in public, OK, but maybe at the shack. “How’s that for a good idea? Am I smart or what?”

“That’s ambitious, man. What kind of movies? Super 8? Pretty expensive,” I say to him, I’m living on unemployment and I can’t start spending money on equipment and film.

“No, not that shit,” he says. “The new kind. Like at your friend’s. Remember?”

Suddenly I understand Robbie’s new interest in making movies, I realize when and where this all started, he was with me last weekend when I visited an old college

friend who always buys the latest gadgets and gizmos. In 1983 this guy bought a Sony Betamovie, the first video camcorder, we didn't even call it a camcorder yet but that's what it was. Then Kodak introduced an even better one the next year and, sure enough, my friend also bought himself one of those. Now he doesn't need the Sony anymore. And Robbie wants it, he's stoked, he thinks we can make X-rated movies with it. Well, that's fine, but every detail of his plan would cost money and more money and then more money after that. So what's the solution? How can you make movies for free?

You can't. But you can pretend. That's our eventual inspiration—the supreme power of suggestion and imagination, the liberating magic of playacting—boys will do anything if you give them a good excuse for trying it, they want to be persuaded, they want you to give them any trivial rationale for letting themselves go and for doing the forbidden, the shameful, the unthinkable. Not everyone will want to play, don't worry, that's normal. Our friend Patrick, for example, he still comes over to buy weed and to get stoned, and he still likes an occasional blowjob, but he has a girlfriend now and he spends most of his time with her, he's not interested in our new movie-making game—and that's cool, that's his choice, all of us here are free to make our own decisions, to play or not to play, we still love him anyway, he's still our pal.

The movie-making game was my idea, I guess. Robbie introduced the general concept, of course, but then I made some essential adjustments. First I asked my friend about his Sony Betamovie and he immediately offered to let me “borrow” it for a few months or a few years, he doesn’t really care, he never uses it since he bought the newer and better Kodak. But he warned me that the tapes can be expensive, and that I would need a Sony machine for watching those tapes, and that the entire Beta format might be endangered anyhow. I said OK, no problem, I just wanna play with the thing and try it out, thanks, I’ll bring it back in good shape. And so I returned home that day with the Betamovie and its tripod and a half-formed idea about somehow making movies. Or pretending to make them. Yeah, pretending, that was it, our inspired strategy, so simple, so basic. Auditioning for the camera. A rehearsal that never ends.

Robbie himself is the first kid to demonstrate how we’ll be doing this, as soon as he sees the camcorder on its tripod in my bedroom he starts performing in front of it, dancing a striptease and then beating off, twice I remind him that the thing has no tape inside but Robbie keeps going regardless, he says he’s just screwing around, he’s just rehearsing. Eureka! Just rehearsing. Who needs tape in the camera? Then young Travis proves the point when he shows up a day or two later and sees the camera

and grins, he knows this is the beginning of something new and he's immediately curious and immediately energized. He's jerked off here before and I've even given him head a couple of times, man oh man, what a treat it was to suck on that dick of his for the first time, it's a thick eight inches when he's hard and it looks like a big red banana or some kind of bestial horn curved upward between his legs when he's standing, when he's lying down it curves back impressively against his belly and tics to the racing beat of his heart. In other words, Travis is no innocent pup, he just turned fourteen and he's a randy hound, all gristle and bone and messy dark-blond hair, all lanky and uncouth, he's been initiated—but we haven't done much together recently, I told you before, things have been sluggish, so this Betamovie camcorder makes Travis grin now when he first sees it, he's excited by this new toy.

I'm still in bed when the kid arrives, I was up earlier to use the bathroom and I unlocked the front door to welcome any potential Saturday-morning visitors, that's how Travis let himself in, now he's here in my bedroom and he's looking at the camcorder. This bedroom, as you should already know, is one curtained-off half of my shack's back room. The other half, with a couch and a chair and a TV, is my living room. The kitchen and the bathroom, contrary to any normal design, are both in

front. I've never bothered to use this privacy curtain here in back where I sleep, I prefer the sense of communal space, the openness, the camaraderie. I want Travis and my other boys to walk right in and to share all of the most intimate spaces in my home—my bed, my bath—without any modesty, without any secrets.

Now I pat the mattress and invite Travis to hop aboard and to make himself comfortable beside me. He stands there staring at me as if he's undecided, his eyes are that same greenish-brown or hazel color as Robbie's but they have a distinctive slant to them, his whole face is strangely Asiatic, those Tartar eyes and those gaunt cheekbones, I suppose there's some sort of Slavic or other eastern European ancestry in his family. I'm starting to wonder if he's upset about something, the way he's standing there and staring, almost scowling, but then he grins at me with his big uneven teeth and he flops onto the bed and vents his excitement by rolling against me and jabbing at me playfully with his fists, giving me rabbit little punches of affection. "Naked motherfucker," he says to me. "Lazy bum, still in bed."

"Guilty on all counts," I say back, naked beneath the covers, I always sleep this way, even during the winter. Travis is still fully dressed and I can feel the January chill on his clothing as I put both arms around him in a loose and calmative embrace. "So you like that new camera?"

“What’s it good for?”

“Making movies, man.”

“Dirty shit?”

“Hell yeah! Extremely dirty. Horribly dirty.”

“With who? Just guys?”

“Yep, just guys, that’s right.”

“With me?”

“That’s up to you, Trav.”

“That sounds sick,” the kid says, he has a lispy impediment that makes each “s” a little slushy, plus he has a naturally hoarse voice, like someone with laryngitis, sometimes you can have trouble understanding him.

“How’s that camera thing work? Is it on now?”

“No, not yet.”

“Where’s the film?”

“It uses tape. It’s inside,” I lie to Travis as I’m loosening and opening his clothes. “But first we have to rehearse.”

“What’s that mean? Like practice?”

“Exactly,” I say, pushing his shirt up, pushing his pants down. “Like practicing. For the movie. Yeah. Nice.”

“Now what?”

“Just play, just have fun, you’re the star.”

“This is stupid,” Travis mumbles, he always needs to complain at first, just to be ornery and to get some extra attention. But soon he’s warming up and enjoying himself

as I gradually undress him and as I fondle his big bouncy balls and then start licking them, he's definitely enjoying himself, he's making funny "ooo" and "ahhh" noises and panting and lolling his tongue and doing whatever he can to perform for the camera—even though it's not running. You see? It's the idea of the camera that matters, it's the illusion, Robbie was bewitched by it and now Travis, look at this kid, he can behave like some out-of-control homoboy here today because he's just playing, he's just pretending, it's all just part of the movie. But when does the playing and the pretending become something more instinctive and more spontaneous? When do nature and raw impulse take over? Where's the line between illusion and reality when a boy is naked and his dick is hard? I guess we'll find out.

I've got Travis going crazy, man, I keep teasing him closer and closer to orgasm until he's actually trembling. And I keep talking to him about making these movies, how great they'll be, how much fun, especially with other kids. Like maybe with Robbie. For sure with Robbie, I say. Right? Would you do this same shit with Robbie? Would you pretend to be Robbie's boyfriend and mess around with him like this, Trav? Maybe tonight or tomorrow? Travis keeps nodding at all of my questions, agreeing to everything, to anything, finally I give him the rough and rapid head he needs for gushing his load and

filling my mouth. We stay in bed after that, Travis lets me cuddle him now in a way we've never done before, he usually likes to finish quickly and get dressed—but today he's content to linger here naked in my arms and to let me pet him and kiss his hair as I jerk myself off, he's not in any hurry for this to end, his eyes are shut and he's grinning a dreamy little grin.

So now I have to wait and find out if Travis was serious about “making movies” with Robbie. On most Saturday mornings Robbie himself would have been here, sleeping over for the whole weekend, in bed with me when Travis showed up. But today is different, Robbie and his friend Patrick went to some heavy-metal concert last night in Moline, they probably didn't get home until after midnight. Eventually Robbie comes over in time for dinner, we go out to Steak 'n' Shake for some burgers and we sit in one of the booths by the window, both of us are on the same side, suddenly Robbie nudges me with his elbow and nods toward his crotch to show me that he's unzipped and partially exposed, he wants me to whack him off beneath the table, he even has a handful of napkins ready and waiting—and normally I'd do it, no doubt, I'm proud of him for being so ambitiously dedicated to our campaign of indecency. But tonight I want my young partner to save himself for what might be happening later, a possibility which I now tell him about

for the first time, the full story of me and Travis and what we did together this morning.

Robbie listens as he eats his burger and his onion rings, glancing at me now and then to smile or to raise his eyebrows or to give a quick nod. The beauty of him can still transfix me. He's wearing my gray woolen cap again today over his yellow-blond hair. And those eyes of his, those wide-set eyes of green or brown or some opalescent color in between, the moistness of them, the feline brightness of them beneath their long flaxen lashes. That slightly upturned nose. Those full cupid lips. He's not just some good-looking blond boy, no, he's the very archetype of blondness, he's the perfect and ideal Golden Boy. He steals my breath. He knocks me dizzy.

I finish telling him now about my morning with Travis and I ask for his reaction. Is he ready to play? To perform? Is he ready to get X-rated with Travis? "I guess so," Robbie says, shrugging.

"You're not sure? What's wrong?"

"Nothing."

"Because it's too gay?"

"No, not really."

"Hell, man, you've sucked Patrick's dick about a million times. Right?"

"Yeah," Robbie says with another shrug. "But Travis. That spaz. He's gross, man. He's got bad breath."

“He smokes too much,” I agree. “But we all smoke. Even you do sometimes. He can brush his teeth.”

“He’s such a spaz,” Robbie says again. “But yeah. If he wants to fuck around.”

“Hey, you’re the one who wanted to make movies, don’t forget.”

“Word up, man, you’re right. It’ll be freaky. Yeah. When? Tonight?”

“Whenever Travis shows up,” I say. It’s OK that Robbie is a little nervous about this whole deal, I understand, he’s as bold and shameless as they come but this will be something new even for him—even after having oral and anal sex with me for the past several months, even after sharing blowjobs with his buddy Patrick, even after sneaking that handjob with Donovan last summer—even after all of that, he’s still understandably nervous about doing this crazy new stuff with other boys in the gang, he’ll be starting something blatantly and openly queer with Travis, he’ll be outing himself more and more recklessly every time he indulges this passion for pleasure. Our scheme for “making movies” at my house will change the way Robbie thinks about himself and perceives his own reality. And it’ll inevitably change the way he’s seen and perceived by all of the other boys. So he’s a wee bit nervous, that’s no surprise.

Back home, after our meal at Steak 'n' Shake, we discover no sign of Travis. But we do get a few visitors around eight o'clock, it's Donovan May and two of his friends, all of them are students at the junior high, a bunch of twelve-year-old scamps hoping to find a Saturday party and smoke some free grass. Too bad for them, there's no party here, but I decide to order a couple of pizzas anyway and Robbie shares a fat joint with them, so we end up having a little party after all. Donovan and his friends notice the Sony camcorder almost as soon as they arrive, they're predictably curious about it and all of them start laughing when I talk about making dirty movies with it. The two friends probably think I'm joking, or at least exaggerating—but Donovan himself has been a regular visitor here long enough to know better, he's laughing with his buddies but he knows about the sex and the porn around here and he knows that I'm serious.

I should tell you now, no secrets between us, that I've been ogling this Donovan May kid since he started coming here last summer, and especially since that day when he and Robbie shared their quick handjob in the pool. That one time was enough, it was sufficient evidence of his cheerful willingness to experiment and to play, I've been watching him ever since, confident that he'll eventually want more, that he'll eventually come seeking full initiation and liberation here at the shack.

Here at our hangout, as Travis likes to call it. And I've also been watching Donovan because he's just so goddamn cute, a pubescent teddy bear with pudgy cheeks and huge brown eyes and a broad nose and big full lips always slightly up-curved in a sweet little grin. And I can't forget to mention his skin, his satiny milk-chocolate skin, I suppose you'd call him African-American or black but he probably has a white parent or grandparent somewhere in the mix, that's how he looks to me, I'm just guessing.

Donovan is also a clever young guy. He knows about these new movie cameras and he's the first kid to open it and look inside and tell me that it's empty. Don't worry, I say, I'll be buying tape for it tomorrow. And I do, yes, I rush out at noon and go to the mall and spend several dollars for a single Sony cassette. But this is just a minor adjustment in our strategy, the elements of imagination and suggestion will still be crucial, I'll be using this cassette mostly as a ploy, as a prop, I can put it into the camera and record on it but I have no machine for playing it or watching it, way too expensive, I'll just record over and over on the same tape in order to run the camera. It's a marvelous bit of metaphysical silliness if you think about it, making movies that nobody will ever see, recording them but never watching them, each new movie erasing the unseen movie that came before, an endless loop of fantasy in a box.

Robbie wanted to sleep late this morning, so he's barely out of bed and still wandering around in his underwear when I return from the mall. He can't quite figure out this new twist to our movie-making game. "Now we got this film or tape or whatever," he says. "So we'll be shootin movies for real? Not just pretend?"

"We'll be shooting them for real, that's right. But no one will ever see them. So it's still pretending. Sort of."

"Oh man," Robbie says, slapping one hand over his eyes and laughing, he's heard enough, forget it, he heads to the kitchen now to find something for lunch. Have I told you about his unusual walk? He fell off his bike onto some broken glass when he was seven years old and he suffered a serious injury to his right leg, deep gashes in his calf that left scars you can still see and also left him with a gimpy stride. Last spring, when I first met him, I thought it was an affectation, a phony strut, just Robbie being a smart-ass and trying to look tough. But that's his real stride, nothing fake about it, that little hitch in his step plus his own innate cockiness gives him a naturally feisty strut, slightly up on his toes, alert, tomcattish, ready for any kind of challenge or mischief.

Finally, right after lunch, Travis comes over to see us. He's been going through some sort of punk phase lately and today he has his hair streaked with green, he's done this before, it's just vegetable dye, last week he was

sporting streaks of purple. Robbie tells him that he looks like a jag and Travis responds with his usual muttering and scowling. Not an auspicious start. In fact, nothing happens for the first hour after Travis arrives, fuckin weird, we're all a little edgy with pre-show jitters, maybe we've overplanned this whole thing, spontaneity is always better. Travis sits on the couch and smokes a joint and keeps glancing at the Betamovie camera on its tripod next to the bed across the room. After a while, when I ask him if he's in the mood today for making a movie, he pretends not to know what I'm talking about, suddenly he's all baffled and innocent.

So we're going to be coy about this, that's OK, I'm willing to play along with Travis and ease him into this first performance, he likes to feel coaxed and seduced, he always does this type of cagey pussyfooting, it's part of his gamesmanship. He makes me laugh, this kid, with his strangely gaunt and solemn face, his inscrutable Tartar eyes, his big Adam's apple like the kind you'd see on some goofy cartoon yokel. I'm sitting between him and Robbie on the couch, a second joint has been passed around and smoked, Travis is looking through copies of *Hustler* and *Snatch*, little by little I start fooling around with Robbie, he's still wearing only his undershirt and briefs and white socks even though it's chilly enough in here to raise goosebumps on his bare arms and legs.

We've hugged and kissed in front of Travis before, he and the other kids know that Robbie is my special boyfriend, my sweetheart—but Patrick Jenco is the only one who knows the full story, the only one who's seen me and Robbie nakedly and passionately entangled like real lovers, the only one who knows that me and Robbie do actual fucking.

Now we're going to change that, now we're going to let Travis see what's up and what's real, Robbie and I start doing some wetter and hotter kissing together, tonguing each other, groping between each other's legs. Travis is more interested in this live-action show than in those girlie magazines, he begins watching us and chuckling and mumbling sounds that aren't quite words, he's watching when Robbie pulls off his own underpants and he's watching when I take hold of Robbie's boner and lovingly massage it and squeeze it to produce that familiar dribble of juicy pre-cum. I turn to look at Travis, to make sure he's seeing this, to smile at him. "You ready, Trav? You wanna finish this love scene with Robbie?"

"What's that mean? Like how?"

"You know, come on, don't be a clown."

"I need to piss first," the kid says.

"Good, go ahead," I tell him, rubbing at the front of his jeans. "And we'll put on some music. For doing your scene. In the movie. What's your pick?"

“Put on Sammy Hagar, man.”

“That’ll be excellent, good choice, hurry up.”

“Yeah,” Robbie says from my other side, “hurry up, McCoy! Ugly spaz. And brush your teeth.”

“Why?”

“Like duh, man, just do it.”

“Motherfucker,” Travis grumbles, on his feet now and slouching toward the bathroom, not exactly rushing. I turn back to Robbie and ask him if he’s ready for action. He says hell yeah, big time, he’s been saving himself and waiting to bust a nut for two or three days, his boner is blood-red and twitchy and aching to shoot. He stays on the couch while I start a Sammy Hagar tape blasting from the stereo, some gritty heavy-metal to inspire the boys, good music for getting wild and making porn. A few minutes pass and I’m beginning to worry that Travis might have chickened out, maybe he just can’t force himself to have sex with another guy, it’s too gay, he can’t do it. But then Travis ends the suspense, here he is, he’s back from the bathroom and he has a surprise for me and for Robbie, his clothes are gone and he’s wearing nothing but a pink towel around his middle. He’s ready and he’s willing, no more doubt.

The gangly kid saunters into the room and opens the towel to flash his big half-hard pecker for us to admire and then he wraps and covers himself once more. Sexy

dogs, I say to him and to Robbie, sexy devils, come on, let's go. Robbie jumps from the couch and crosses to the bed, he's still wearing his undershirt and his socks but he's already tugging off the shirt as he walks across the room, moving with that gimpy strut of his, bare-assed and stiff-cocked. The two boys flop onto the bed side by side. Robbie raises his knees to reach for his feet and to remove his socks and then he decides to stay in that position, knees against his chest, ass upturned, showing it to the camera. Damn, that's right, the camera, I switch on the power and start it recording, then I shout to the kids over the music to go ahead, do your love scene, make your movie. Robbie nods but Travis hesitates, glancing at me and at the camcorder. I move to his side of the bed and sit on the edge next to him and remind him that it's just acting, it's just pretending, that's why it's OK to do anything now for the movie, anything at all, because it's not real, it's just playing, Trav, like this, here, do this, I take his hand and I put it onto Robbie's upturned ass and I move it around and around on those perfectly mooned white cheeks, letting Travis feel them and pet them, just like this, just playing, then I bring the kid's hand to my mouth and I lick his middle finger to make it slippery and I guide his hand back to Robbie's ass and I help him to get that slippery finger right into Robbie's pinkly puckered sphincter. Robbie himself is using both hands to spread

his own cheeks and to welcome the finger as Travis keeps pushing it in, no help from me now, he doesn't need any more coaching, fantasy and reality have suddenly merged for him here in front of this camera, here on this bed with this other boy, he's got his middle finger all the way into Robbie's asshole and he's sliding it in and out, in and out, grinning at the funny feel of it, grinning at the funny sound of it, he's playing now, he understands now, yeah, fantasy and reality have become a crazy blur.

That music is still pounding from the stereo, that heavy-metal thump of animal sex, it's the soundtrack for this X-rated movie as Travis finally pulls out his finger and then throws off his towel and falls against Robbie, two naked boys in each other's arms, pressing themselves together, letting their erections meet and touch and rub, feeling the hardness and the heat of each other's young cocks as they continue to hump face to face, this pair of teenage goatboys in feverish rut. Travis takes a brief time-out to look at the camera and stick out his tongue. I'm standing right there with my faithful old Polaroid, preserving as many images from this performance as possible. Remember, I shout to him, you guys are boyfriends, you're queer for each other, keep going, make this a really dynamite love scene! Travis responds by sticking out his tongue once more, unruly punk with his green-streaky hair—but he's happy to give a steamy

show, he's happy to be Robbie's boyfriend for this afternoon and to make some real love, no problem, just watch.

These two guys totally go at each other now, laughing while their hands reach and roam all over each other's bodies, both of them so excited by this shared nakedness, each boy so eager to feel and to handle and to enjoy the other boy's hard penis, the other boy's warmly swollen balls, the other boy's bare ass. Then these kids are using their mouths along with their hands to explore and to taste, the two of them almost grappling on the bed for position, no coordination or finesse to any of this wrestling and licking and pawing, a rough kind of lovemaking that eventually contorts them into a finale of awkward sixty-nining. Now young Travis finds himself with another boy's boner in his mouth for the first time, suddenly learning how to give a blowjob. And now Robbie gets to suck on Travis and that big hillbilly prick of his, what a mouthful, what a meaty whopper. This climactic scene doesn't take long, first Travis flinches and gags as Robbie's penis starts spurting, he immediately opens his mouth to let the milky mess come drooling out but some of it already went down his throat—like it or not, it's a fact, Travis just got his first taste of semen today. And then Robbie is taking what he just gave, I can see him swallowing the stuff that Travis is now

ejaculating—but Robbie doesn't flinch or gag, just the opposite, he swallows that first gush and then he allows that big boypecker to slip from his mouth just for the pleasure of watching it discharge the rest of its cum, the distinctive way it overflows and spills instead of squirting, it's so cool, it's so obscenely oozy and abundant, yes, Robbie pauses to watch but then he finishes feeding, using his tongue to clean the puddle of sperm that Travis just produced for him.

Afterwards, back in his clothes and drinking a Coke, Travis wants me to show him the movie. I tell him that we need a special machine for that, which is true. I also tell him to be patient, that we'll be getting one of those machines soon, which is a lie. And suddenly I have my first misgiving about this whole enterprise. Why am I lying about this shit? It's a harmless bit of fun, sure, I'm just giving nature a helping hand, just providing boys with a silly game, a fantasy, a vehicle for their own imaginations and desires. So what's the problem? Why am I still vaguely uneasy about this whenever other kids come over now and start asking about the Betamovie camera? Believe me, it's a spellbinding device, this camera, it works again and again with Travis over the next several days, you should see the stuff he tries now with me and with Robbie, wow, it's definitely hard-core. But more and more, something I've been noticing, Travis is

starting to ignore the camera, he doesn't look at it, he doesn't mention it, already he's losing interest in our movie-making game. He's hot for the sex, that's all, he doesn't need any excuses or rationales beyond that, not anymore. And it's better this way without all of the artifice and the playacting.

OK, so maybe I was wrong about this entire concept. Maybe instinct and impulse don't need any help beyond simply being unleashed and then being warmly encouraged with cheerfulness and affection and good honest lechery. Maybe the element of make-believe actually ends up diluting the more potent brew of reality. Maybe nature doesn't need a helping hand. Just step out of its way and let boys be their own authentic selves, you'll be astounded by the raunchy free-for-all.

Then again, the camcorder served a valuable purpose, it goosed all of us out of our winter funk and into this more vigorous mode of show-off sex and hijinks. And it certainly helped to intrigue and excite Donovan May into becoming more than just a casual visitor to our little hangout. I've been preoccupied with Travis, I know, but young Donovan is still around and still curious, I haven't forgotten about him, trust me. And Robbie hasn't forgotten about him either. He and Donovan have been chummy for several months, as you already know. Both of them are bright and frisky, both of them laugh at the same

jokes and enjoy the same TV shows and movies and songs, both of them are crazy about professional wrestling, Donovan has even gone with Robbie and Patrick to a couple of those WWF events in Peoria and in the Quad Cities. But really, when you think about it, I've just described most of the boys around here. So there must be something more between Robbie and Donovan, that's been clear since last summer. So what is it? You could call it puppy love, I guess, that sweet infatuation common among young boys since time beyond memory, Donovan is twelve and Robbie is fifteen, those ages seem perfect to me for that kind of puppyish romance.

But now I can stop wondering. Robbie shows up one afternoon and tells me that he went to Eureka Records yesterday with Donovan, that they were in one of the back aisles where the old jazz and blues records are kept and that they whipped out their dicks and started jacking off together—not all the way, just for a minute or two, but long enough to have their boners exposed and to enjoy the felonious thrill of it. So there you go, man, my Robbie has graduated and is now training acolytes of his own. And then a day or two later, right here at the shack, he shows me for sure what's happening, he's outside with Donovan and they're playing in a fresh fall of snow, running around the back yard, throwing snowballs, the usual stuff—but watch more closely, something not quite so usual, you can

see how these two boys keep colliding every few minutes as they race around, how they bump and jostle each other into a rough hug and then do some quick kissing before continuing their rowdy snowplay. No question about it, infatuation and romance are definitely part of this scenario. Robbie is seducing his first real boyfriend and Donovan is the fortunate kid.

But there's more, there's a final act, you need to hear this. It's Presidents Day and all of the boys are off from school, Robbie has been here with me since Friday, Travis has been in and out this whole weekend to deal his weed and to screw around, now Donovan and his two favorite junior-high buddies are here to hang out and to kill time on this languorous Monday afternoon. Donovan always wears his hat inside the house, it's a brown stocking cap and he wears it down over his ears like someone just in from a blizzard, somehow it makes his cute round head look even cuter and rounder. Robbie has good taste in boyfriends, that's for damn sure. All four of these kids are taking turns on some kind of Atari box that they've hooked up to my television, I don't even know what game they're playing but it keeps jangling the same little tune over and over and it's driving me mad. To me, this is nothing but a boring waste of precious holiday freedom. There's Donovan in his stocking cap, there's Robbie in his gray newsboy cap, there's this one kid called Skeeter and

this other kid called Pooch, all of them are either playing that infernal Atari game or doing some impromptu breakdancing while they wait for their turns, meanwhile the afternoon is slipping away, time is escaping.

So I'm doing my best to instigate something more exciting around here, all of my usual tricks and nonsense. What else did you expect? I bring over the Sony camcorder on its tripod and encourage the boys to dance and to perform in front of it, I suggest again and again that we play strip poker, I give shoulder rubs to Skeeter and to Pooch and to Donovan while they're sitting or kneeling and playing Atari and I keep working my hands inside their shirts and into the back of their pants and their underwear, they all wriggle and laugh and eventually tell me to stop. Then I give the same treatment to Robbie while he's playing and I even unzip his jeans and put my hand down into the front between his legs, he grins and tells me not to jack him off yet because he's trying to concentrate and he's trying to win. The other three boys see this and hear this and get another good laugh out of it. Robbie and Donovan exchange a glance while they're laughing, I'm sure they do, it's like a message being passed, it's like a wink of consent between them.

And I'm right, you know I'm right, Donovan's two friends finally leave in time to get home for supper but Donovan himself stays behind, he stays right here with me

and with Robbie. I'm in the kitchen when Robbie finds me and tells me that Donovan wants to mess around with both of us, that Donovan has been "horny to the max" for weeks but he was too nervous and shy until now to let us know. Adorable, right? Too nervous and shy. Robbie punches me on the arm and tells me not to act like a loser. I tell him not to worry, I won't do anything to spook his new boyfriend. Robbie gives a nod of approval. And he doesn't even bristle or object when I call Donovan his boyfriend. He doesn't correct me or argue in any way.

Moments later, in the living room, I ask Donovan how long he can stay. He shrugs and says nine o'clock, maybe ten, if that's all right with me. That's great, I tell him, that's excellent. I end up ordering Chinese food for the three of us, we eat in front of the TV but we can't hear it, the boys are playing their favorite tunes by Prince and Huey Lewis and a dozen others and they're playing them loud, pretty soon both of the kids are more interested in the music than in the food, they'd rather breakdance than eat, they're wired, they're restless, forget about egg rolls and Mandarin beef, they need to move and to jump and to stomp the floor. Then Donovan makes a sudden decision to take a break from the dancing and he plunks himself right down onto my lap, damn, I actually laugh from the surprise of it, here I am on the couch with Donovan sitting on me. He puts his arm around my neck like an old pal

and he laughs along with me, just as surprised by himself as I am. We share a fortune cookie that I've been munching, I tell him to "open wide" and I place a crunchy morsel of it onto his virgin-pink tongue and he chews it and smiles at me and then he lets me kiss him and he smiles again. Sweet boy. Cute teddy-bear boy. Then he points at the Sony Betamovie and asks me why I keep playing around with that thing. "For making movies," I tell him, I can feel the warmth of his ass through his jeans and through mine. "You know about the movies. Right? Are you just goofin with me?"

"But I mean, like, it's all fake."

"Sort of, yeah, but still."

"D'you need it?"

"Hell, man, it's for you guys," I say. Robbie is in front of the couch doing some poppin and lockin and he's watching us. "It's for fun. The camera. For excitement."

"But Skeeter and Pooch says, they says just wait, they can do shit without it."

"Meaning what?"

"Without the camera," Donovan tells me, his breath is intimate against my cheek, against my ear. "Skeeter and Pooch says they'll bet you, just wait, they'll bet you anything, forget the stupid camera."

"Really?"

"Everybody says that. Ask Robbie."

“Other kids?”

“Lots of guys. Yeah.”

Holy shit, I’m confused, I give up. This movie camera made an impact, yes it did, it got kids intrigued and it got kids talking and now they all want to outdo Robbie and outdo Travis because they all know, they definitely know what’s been happening here, there’s been a chain reaction of gossiping and boasting and daring and double-daring which now has nothing to do with the camera itself, nobody cares about the camera, this is all about who can be the wildest, who can be the bravest, who can be the dirtiest. It’s all about things like reputation and notoriety and one-upping the other guys. It’s all about boys being boys.

I’m thinking about this whole funny affair but I’m not neglecting Donovan, I’ve been stroking his denimed crotch with my fingertips and pressing against his zipper, massaging those tender goodies hidden within. The boy keeps grinning and grinning, he’s glad that he stayed, that’s obvious. Too bad for Skeeter and Pooch—but don’t despair, they’ll get their chance soon enough, whenever they’re ready, it’s inevitable, they’ll show me their dicks and they’ll become my boyfriends along with several others in this gang who’ve been hanging around and watching and working up their courage, all of them, totally inevitable, you don’t need the shenanigans of

public sex or the unwieldy sideshow of movie cameras and playacting, hell no, just open your home and open your arms and relax, be patient, instinct and impulse will do your work for you, imagination and fantasy will come naturally, boys will create their own illicit brotherhood of secrets and sins. It all comes back to my original manifesto of liberation and initiation. Everything else is gimmickry and glitter and flash.

What's Robbie doing by now? Are you wondering? Take a look, he's still dancing to all of his favorite music but now he's starting to strip as he shuffles and shimmies in front of us, he's tired of me monopolizing his friend—not jealous, just horny and impatient. Off comes his gray cap, then his shirt, then his jeans. Even now Donovan is content to stay on my lap and watch. And I'm sure he's not surprised when I start to undress him as well—just slowly at first, gently removing that brown stocking cap he always wears and then pausing to fluff his softly kinked hair with my fingers. I unbuckle his belt and then I unfasten the little copper button on his jeans and I open his zipper. Donovan is staring down at my busy hand, quietly attentive, fascinated. I kiss his cheek and suddenly he looks at me and I smile and kiss him again, this time on the mouth, I can feel him kissing me back, I can feel the willingness of him. I lean back to get a grip on the Bears sweatshirt he's wearing and I pull it up and over his head

and over his outstretched arms, then I pull off his undershirt and I run my hand across the clean bareness of his chest and his belly, that smooth mocha skin of his, those pudgy little nipples, he's such a cuddly toyboy.

Meanwhile, right in front of us, Robbie is down to nothing but his white Jockey briefs. Now he interrupts his own striptease to step forward and to grab Donovan's arm and to pull him off my lap, that's good, it's time for these boyfriends to enjoy each other. Robbie quickly moves the Sony Betamovie out of the way and into a corner, we don't need it anymore, it was interesting and it was instructive but now it's superfluous. Still, I have to admit, a few souvenir Polaroids would be nice. Later. No hurry. We have another two or three hours before Donovan needs to leave. Right now it's more fun just to sit here and watch what the kids are doing, they're using that loud and funky music to continue dancing and to finish undressing, they look great together—Robbie so blond and pale and slim, Donovan so dark-haired and brown and succulent—they could be two young gods of ancient myth, one of the sun and one of the earth, both superb.

It's Robbie who takes off Donovan's jeans and Donovan's underpants. And it's Robbie who then encourages Donovan with a nod and a grin to return the favor, which Donovan does, yes he does, he reaches for Robbie's white briefs and he pulls them down and he pulls

them off, now both boys can dance naked and watch each other while they do it, now both of them can laugh at each other's released and liberated cocks going up and down and side to side, two happy young boners freely bouncing and stiffly wagging. Robbie retrieves his cap and wears it as a joke, what a spectacle, this vulgar boy of mine so impudently naked in nothing but his gray tough-guy cap, Donovan facing him and wearing nothing but his white socks all dirty and darkened on the bottoms, both kids keep glancing at me and smiling, this party is for all three of us, I've also stripped off my clothes by now, Donovan takes a long look at my hard-on and laughs to himself and then keeps dancing in his dirty socks.

You're curious, I know, so I'll tell you that Donovan is a typical twelve-year-old, his wiener is still immature and he has a small but very cute erection above tight hairless nuts—no real hair anywhere on his body, just some dark fuzziness under his arms and right above his dick, just a fuzzy pubic shadow. Now Robbie has done enough dancing and he puts his arm around Donovan's shoulders and he ushers the younger boy toward the other end of the room, toward the bed. He's a few inches taller than Donovan, I'm watching them from behind as they stroll away, these two bare-bottomed buddies side by side, Robbie's lean white butt almost cheek to cheek with the plumper and browner butt of his pal Donovan. Halfway to

the bed, halfway to paradise, Robbie abruptly remembers the cap he's wearing and he grabs it off his head and tosses it back to me like a floppy Frisbee. I wink at him and he nods at me and grins.

The two kids settle themselves comfortably onto the bed, of course they leave the curtain open, no problem for me to see them, also no problem for me to hear them now that the music has ended and only the TV is still playing quietly from its corner. Robbie lights a joint and he shares it with Donovan and then they start kissing, they start making love on my bed, no playacting or pretending with these two, so different from Robbie's performances with Travis or even with his best friend Patrick, there's a warmth and a passion now that you can't fake. I'm sipping a beer, I'm watching, I'm listening. The boys are mumbling as they kiss, laughing as they kiss, teaching each other how to do this just right, learning the secrets and the tricks of each other's lips and tongues and teeth, learning the taste of each other's spit, Robbie almost on top of Donovan as they squirm themselves together and hug each other tighter and tighter to share the full nakedness of their bodies, both of them still kissing and kissing and smothering in each other's heat and breath and scent.

Briefly I leave them, I depart for a fast shower, I want to give them some moments alone to become truly lost

and oblivious in this first honeymoon embrace, it's no big sacrifice for me, this is just the beginning, just a preview, what's happening here today will continue with Robbie and with Donovan and with countless others for years and years to come. Anyway, I'm not gone for long. Within fifteen minutes, maybe twenty, I'm back and I'm pleased to see that the boys have been eager in their lovemaking. Donovan is on his back with his legs in the air and his feet dangling above Robbie's shoulders while Robbie himself kneels there and hunkers down low and presses his face against Donovan's up-mooned bottom, his tongue is in Donovan's crack, I can hear the urgency of Robbie's breathing and the hungry wetness of his saliva as he keeps licking and eating into Donovan's ass and into the especially tasty treasure of Donovan's young anus.

OK, closer now, come closer, you can spy a glistening sprinkle of kiddie-cum already on Donovan's baby-fat tummy, Robbie must have just finished jerking him off or sucking him off while I was gone and they must have left those few drops of lamb's milk there for me to find and to see. Robbie even pauses now to raise his head and to point at the naughty evidence, he's proud of himself and he's proud of Donovan, then he lifts his pretty face to look at me and I lean down to him and we share a kiss, my sweetheart, my baby. Donovan himself seems enraptured and unaware, his eyes are shut and he's still wearing those

dirty white socks on his helplessly dangling feet and he's gnawing and gnawing on one of his thumbs as I call his name and touch his cheek, he opens his eyes and sees me and smiles like some boy just waking on Christmas morning. I stretch myself out beside him and cradle his head in my arm and give him gentle kisses while Robbie goes back now to licking and to eating at the naked goodness of his erect penis and his testicles and his ass, lucky young Donovan, our cuddly boy, gnawing his thumb and grinning dopily and pushing his bare butt against Robbie's mouth to get more of that nasty tongue, more of it, begging for more.

Wait another few minutes, stick around, Robbie is almost ready to climb onto Donovan, he'll mount him and he'll get inside of him, he won't need any Vaseline, he's already drippy enough and slippery enough, he'll slide his fierce red boner into Donovan's butt and he'll work it in slow and he'll work it in deep. The boys will kiss madly at each other while they fuck. I'll reach between them and I'll find Donovan's bold little stiffie and I'll play with it. I'll caress Robbie's ass and I'll caress Robbie's balls. But you don't need any more of these details. This is my movie, man, now make one of your own. Use your imagination. Release your fantasies. Let yourself dream.

* * *

DREAMBOY VARIATIONS

FIVE

Someday I'll write a book about queer warriors, or maybe I already did, sure enough, a big fuckin book about a whole tribal nation of naked queer warriors and their dances and ceremonies and customs. And I'll describe the wild initiation of young boys into the tribe, something loosely based on rituals that you might actually find in places like Papua New Guinea—cults of fellatio, the fetishism of semen, maybe the use of psychotropics to enhance the mystical frenzy. And I'll use my own boys from right here in Sandburg as inspiration, I've seen plenty of them initiated by their older friends, I've seen those little guys getting their first taste of cock and cum.

No, wait a minute, let's begin again, let's spin reality and make it dizzy and then examine the topsy-turvy evidence. Who was the first of those little guys in my life? After I lost my teaching job in Chicago, after I said goodbye to my streetboy pals and moved back here to my old college town—who was the first? Before I met some kids named Robbie and Patrick and Travis, before I moved into my wacky old shack and oversaw the creation of my gang of buccaneers—who was the young treasure and joy of my life?

I can see him, I can hear him, his name is Angelo Joseph Patallero. Some people call him A.J. or Little Jay but we'll just make this simple and call him Angelo. It's strange about this town, so many attractive boys here, I've

always been aware of it and I've always wondered about it, this phenomenon, this mysterious abundance of youthful male beauty in such an ordinary little place. But Sandburg isn't really ordinary, not if you know its history and its culture. You need to remember that Sandburg boasts the largest railroad yards between Chicago and Kansas City, and that all of those railroads brought lots of manufacturing and lots of factories with them, and that all of those big factories attracted a diverse population of blacks and whites and Mexicans and even some Asians in more recent years. And then, of course, there's the college here, which contributes a whole other stream of racial and ethnic variety to the communal mix. So you end up with an unusually heterogeneous town and an unusually conspicuous element of truly good-looking boys.

And that brings us back to Angelo, he's one of them, he's one of those kids who catches your eye as soon as you see him. I've been watching him for the past couple of weeks as he plays outside near my apartment, out there running around with some other boys who live on this block. I've only been here since last month, since May, so I'm still familiarizing myself with the local fauna and with this little guy in particular. Why him and not the others? It's hard to say, it's a question of nuances and subtleties, something about the energy of him and the spirited yelp of his laughter and the way he jumps and dances and hugs

the other boys whenever he's happy or excited. He's one of those natural leaders, he's got charisma, he's electric.

You might think that I'd be out there meeting this kid and talking to him by now, same old routine for somebody like me, no big deal—but you'd be wrong, folks, because this is long ago, maybe 1982, and I'm not ME yet, I'm still learning. I've fooled around with boys in high school and in college and I've had plenty of experience with young hustlers in Chicago and in many other places beyond, far beyond, down in Mexico and even in Brazil, that's all true. But now I keep getting older while the boys themselves stay just as young and just as forbidden—and don't forget, we're talking about a small Midwestern town here, this ain't Juarez or São Paulo or even Ashland Avenue in Chicago, the rules are different here, these boys are no streetwise city beasts and you simply can't accost them with the same kind of brazen temerity, no way, impossible.

So I keep watching and watching this boy as the days pass, finally it's Angelo himself who makes the first move and who manages to bring us together, it's the boy who ends up accosting the man. He gets his chance because I recently hurt my back while playing golf and now I'm outside to get some light exercise by taking a stroll around the block, suddenly I hear someone shout “heads up!” and I look around just in time to see a red Frisbee flying

toward me and just in time to reach up and catch it. Angelo is standing and grinning at me from about fifty or sixty feet away, he's with a group of other kids but he's the only one I see, he's the only one who will make himself my boyfriend and my darling. Some of those other boys will also become pals of mine—but none of them will be as special as Angelo, not even close.

I need to describe him for you, I know, I need to bring Angelo alive in your mind and in your imagination, this eleven-year-old boy in his sweaty white shirt and his gray shorts, that's what he's been wearing almost every day I've seen him, just that ordinary white undershirt worn as a T-shirt and those super-tight gray shorts with a zipper that can't quite close all the way and a seat that looks ready to bust its seam over his lusciously rounded ass. Careful or I might start bitterly lamenting yet again the vanished splendor of boys in sexy clothing, I might start ranting against a diseased culture of stupidity and ugliness that now puts boys like Angelo into droopy knee-length shirts and baggy short pants and makes shapeless grotesques out of each and every one of them. But no, I'll wait, I'll publish a poem about all of this in 1995 and I'll call it *In Unspeakable Fashion*, most of my friends will scoff and tell me that baggy clothing is just a fad, just a fashion, just a style, there's no significance to it, soon it will change. Then I'll write an angry screed in 2000 and

I'll call it *Baggy-Pants Thuggery*, most of my friends will scoff again and tell me that baggy clothing is just a fad, just a fashion, just a style, there's still no significance to it, soon it will change, soon it will pass. Finally I'll write a series of tales beginning in 2005 and I'll call them *Dreamboy Variations* and I'll bitterly lament yet again the vanished splendor of boys in sexy clothing, most of my friends will no longer scoff, most of them will no longer pretend that baggy clothing is just a fad, just a fashion, just a style, that there's no significance to it, that soon it will change and pass away. Even they will know by now that paradise is lost and gone for all of us.

So let's not upset ourselves about the dismal millennium, here's young Angelo in his tight half-zipped gray shorts that show off his beautifully bare legs, he's a dandy little specimen, just look at those sturdy hips and shoulders and that bold stance, his whole body is a trim and supple enticement. I toss the Frisbee back to him and then I spend the next few minutes watching him frolic with his friends, he's a good athlete, he's fast and he's graceful, two more times he throws the Frisbee to me and then rewards me with a high-spirited laugh when I throw it back.

Weeks later, after we've become friends, I ask him why he noticed me and why he decided to include me in his Frisbee game. He says that I looked sad and that I

looked lonely, he was trying to cheer me up. “Well, Little Jay, you did a good job,” I tell him.

“Thanks, Big Jay,” he says back. Then he puckers his lips and waits for me to lean closer and kiss him, he always does that, right from the beginning, he loves to share affectionate little kisses and he always asks for them by lifting his face to me and puckering his lips. It’s not a romantic or erotic thing for him, it’s just his way of being friendly. Like calling me Big Jay, that’s also his idea. I mentioned earlier that one of his nicknames is Little Jay, a lot of his buddies call him that and I picked up on it, occasionally I use it as well—so Angelo quickly made it reciprocal by taking my own first name of Jake and turning it into Big Jay. Sort of clever. He’s a sharp kid, very bright, you can see the wit and the wiliness in his big brown eyes.

Did I finish describing him for you? Did I tell you that he has blondish hair and that he wears it in a mullet? Those mullets are funny, they’re popular this year, short on top and on the sides and long in back, Angelo reminds me of a little pony with his hair like that. Blondish hair, yes, not quite fully blond but lighter than brown and streaked with golden highlights by the summer sun. His face is still childishly delicate with chipmunkish cheeks and a softly rounded chin and those oversized Bambi brown eyes. His body, well, you already know, it’s sturdy

and perfect and all boy, all intoxicating, I'd give anything to get inside those gray shorts of his, to take off every bit of his clothing, to see him naked. But I'm assuming and I'm predicting that I'll never get lucky enough for that. I already told you, I have no experience with these small-town boys, I can't imagine them ever wanting to show me their dicks or ever wanting to join me in bed for some seriously queer sex. It's 1982 and I'm hopelessly naïve about these things, I know, I'm hopelessly ignorant and unenlightened—but Angelo will teach me, Angelo will open my eyes.

I can't think of him as an eleven-year-old without seeing those gray shorts he always wears, they're grass-stained and grease-stained and dirty and they have a tantalizing boybulge at the crotch where the zipper won't quite zip. I ask him one day, hey Little Jay, what kind of underpants do you wear? He says they're just "regular white ones" and then gladly unsnaps and unzips to show me the briefs beneath his gray shorts, I don't think they're Jockey or Hanes or even Fruit of the Loom, maybe just some generic brand from K-Mart or Sears. I ask him and he shrugs and says yeah, K-Mart, my mom buys 'em. Then Angelo asks me why I want to know. I tell him that I'm "gay" and that I like to look at boys in their underwear—especially white briefs like those, just exactly like those. This discussion feels reckless and I'm a little

nervous but the kid only grins and takes off his gray shorts and says no problem, he thinks it's funny, he gets himself a Popsicle from my freezer and then sits in front of the TV in his underwear and his socks to watch a Three Stooges episode.

The whole “gay” thing never seems to impress Angelo one way or another, he doesn't ask me about it or ponder the sexual implications, it's as if I've revealed that I'm left-handed or half German or arachnophobic, to Angelo it just means that I like to look at boys in their undies, which doesn't bother him at all, he enjoys this new game between us. He just laughs when I wrestle with him and when I put my face against his crotch to smell the tart pissiness of those underpants, he's never very clean, he always needs a bath, I love the musk of him, the little-boy odor of him. Yeah, he just laughs—and if I pull his underpants down to tickle him between the legs while we're wrestling, even better, he'll laugh louder and he'll pull mine down and try to tickle me in return. So we've seen each other's dicks by now, that's right, and he's even seen mine when it's hard. I can't possibly wrestle with him and not be aroused, after all. Angelo knows that I'm excited by him, he knows what a boner means, he's young but he's not a moron. He knows that my boner is because of him.

But it takes a while before I get to see Angelo himself with a hard dick. Not because he's bashful or hiding anything from me, no, he's just young and he doesn't get aroused by wrestling or by being tickled and so far that's all we've done, it's enough to give me a hard-on but not him. Hey, we've only known each other for a few weeks, be patient, this is Sandburg, this ain't Manila or Tangier. Angelo and I are still learning to trust each other, to love each other. Day by day we do hugging and we do kissing which feels more and more eagerly affectionate, more and more eagerly intimate. Day by day we play new games which get naughtier and naughtier. Sometimes the boy will come to my apartment with one or two of his friends, he's popular, he has lots of buddies—but usually he comes alone, pounding at my door, smiling, ready for a big hug and a big happy kiss and then for some giggly mischief that gives both of us an excuse to take off most of our clothes and to grab each other and touch each other and to defy every prohibition of the world beyond. Does Angelo himself realize this? Does he understand what we're doing? Maybe not at first, but he does now, I'm sure. He understands.

OK, listen up, this is a good day, an important day, you'll see what I mean about Angelo, I'll tell you what happens. He greets me with his customary hug and kiss and then quickly takes off his gray shorts, this is late July

and it's hot and he's not even wearing a shirt today, now he also takes off his shoes and his socks and we do some wrestling in just our underpants, the usual routine, he pretends to be Hulk Hogan and does a lot of growling and muscle-flexing and jumping onto me from the couch. This game eventually moves from the living room into the bedroom, where Angelo uses the bed itself as a wrestling ring and the pillows as his opponents, leaping and bouncing and slamming against the mattress, occasionally even launching himself bedside from my arms to body-slam with maximum power and spectacle onto the bed and its jangling springs.

But today is too hot for very much of this frenetic silliness, even Angelo soon runs out of energy, finally he flops onto his back and I flop beside him and we sprawl there all sweaty as we listen to some music from the radio. This is when Angelo gets his idea for a new game, something quiet and easy for us to do in this heat. Well, to be accurate, this is a game that we've already played before once or twice. But we were wearing more clothes those other times. "I'll be Blackie again," Angelo tells me now. "All right?"

"Yeah, cool, I like Blackie."

"You do? Really? What's your favorite part?"

"I like his kisses. They're the best. Good idea, Little Jay."

“I’m Blackie, not Jay,” the boy reminds me, then he grins and he meows because he’s talking about his cat, Blackie is the name of his cat and now Angelo starts imitating him by crawling around me on his hands and knees and by rubbing against me and nuzzling me with his cheek and with his shoulder. This is pleasure enough, already I’ve got an obvious boner inside my Jockey briefs—but then Angelo starts giving me those “cat kisses” that we were just talking about, first time we’ve done this in nothing but our underwear, so much better this way when he starts using his tongue to give me wet little kisses all over my body, no pants to interfere this time, no shirt, my young catboy is darting and flicking his tongue against my bare legs, my bare arms, my bare chest, he’s actually licking my sweat but he’s not at all squeamish, this is something new, this is surprisingly sexual, this is wild.

I can’t help myself, even if I’m being rash, maybe I’ll regret doing this—but suddenly I tell Angelo that we should play this game without any clothes, no stupid clothes at all, we should take off everything. “More fun that way,” I propose, already pushing down my briefs to free the bony beast within. Angelo has seen it before—my erection—but it always amuses him, he grins at it now and gives it a friendly swat and then another and another to make the thing dance from side to side, it’s a toy for him,

it's like a yo-yo or a Slinky. "Cats don't wear underpants," he agrees, needing only a moment to pull off his own briefs, first time I've ever seen him stripped down clean this way, naked pixie with a dangly little dick and pinkly unripe balls and that familiar devil-may-care grin. "Hairy cats in underpants," he ends up saying, it makes no sense but he likes the rhyme of it.

"You're no hairy cat," I tell him, he's kneeling beside me on the mattress and I run my hand down the naked front of him, over his tummy and his penis and the creamy bareness of his thighs. "Smooth little kitty."

Angelo responds with a sly meow and resumes our cat-kissing game. What does he think is happening here on this bed? Why is he licking a naked man? What's in his eleven-year-old mind right now? I don't know and I don't ask him, that's for sure. I don't say anything to distract him or interrupt him. I just keep touching and feeling him as he crawls around me and nuzzles me and flicks at me with his busy tongue, his head is near my chest and I'm petting his dark blond shag of hair that falls so straight and soft over his neck, now he meows again and turns on his knees to nuzzle against my legs and suddenly I'm looking right at his pretty little butt. I reach out and caress it, each white cheek is a perfect handful and the crack is slightly spread and I can see the rosebud hole. Angelo looks at me over his shoulder and croons "silly old Jake"

and regards me with a grin, then he pays me back for feeling his ass by pretending to snap and nip at my dick and then by actually doing it, just quickly, he startles me by clamping his teeth right beneath the knob of my erection and biting down gently before releasing it and glancing up at me with another grin.

I need to help you understand that grin of his, those eyes, there's such a confident and relaxed cleverness about them, such a soulful kind of wisdom and poise, often I feel that Angelo is somehow older and more mature than I am, he never seems flustered, he greets any new experience with serene and joyful aplomb. But those are just words, useless, you need to know this boy and to feel the spell of his smile and to hear the musical charm of his voice, definitely his voice, it can be so lively and piping when he's outside with his friends or so seductively throaty when he's inside with me. He really does say things like "silly old Jake" when we're together, I'm not kidding you, he purrs endearments to me as if I'm the boy and he's the man.

That cat-kissing game becomes an almost daily event between us, it's not quite sex but it's damn close, we always do it nude and we always take turns, Angelo usually starts and then I get my chance to be the kissing cat, on my bed or on the couch or on the floor of the living room, he licks me and I lick him. My erection remains a

plaything for him, he always enjoys batting it with his “paws” or pretending to threaten it with his teeth, same as that first time, even gently biting it as a joke, making me crazy. And then, divine reward, I get to use my tongue all over his starkly naked body, he grins and he giggles as I have my fun with him, he lets me lick the cheeks of his butt and he lets me lick him in front and even kiss his penis, that’s only fair—he bites mine, I kiss his—once or twice he gets slightly stiff but not all the way, not a real erection, he’s still more tickled by this game than turned on.

But you can’t expect a man and a boy to tease each other this way forever, we keep playing around for a couple of weeks and then I need to do more, I’m ready and I’m certain that Angelo is ready, nature is pulling us to the next level, this is inevitable. Here we are once again playing our game, we’ve taken off our clothes and our underwear and I’m sitting on the couch with Angelo crawling and climbing all around me and over me with his warm little body and his kittenish tongue, I’ve got my usual frenzied hard-on and now the boy is being cute and he’s nudging and rubbing against it with his cheek, looking up at me, grinning at me. Normally I’d wait until later to jerk off, until after Angelo has gone, and even now that’s my plan, even now when I reach down almost reflexively just to touch my own dick, christ, I’m dying

here, this is painful, I just need to give the thing a quick squeeze, like clutching a sore thumb for relief—but then I keep squeezing it and stroking it and suddenly I’m actually masturbating while the boy leans back and watches me do it. This had to happen. How did I restrain myself until today? And why? Maybe I should’ve done this weeks ago. Maybe Angelo has been waiting for this, impatient and curious to see what a man’s big hairy thing can do. Well, OK, now he can stop wondering.

So who’s being initiated here? Me or the boy? Both of us, I guess. We’re teaching each other. We’re learning together. Our lessons are partly anatomy and biology and partly emotion, a varied curriculum of erections and orgasms, of play and pleasure, of loving, of trusting. And now Angelo watches as I finish jerking off in front of him, he stares with cheerful eyes and quiet fascination at a man’s ejaculation and at all of that messy semen. But the lesson isn’t over, not quite, Angelo waits until I’ve spurted and dribbled myself dry and then he leans closer against my side and gives me a smile of approval and dips one dainty finger into the puddle on my belly. He sniffs it and then sniffs it again. “This smells funny,” he tells me. “What’s it made of? Like milk?”

“Not really. It’s sperm. Little fishy cells of sperm. And the gunk they swim in. For making babies.”

“Little fish? They swim?”

“They look sort of like fish. Or tadpoles. Under the microscope.”

“Don’t joke.”

“I’m serious.”

“So they’re alive?”

“Yep, this is living stuff.”

“Cool,” the boy says, giving his finger another sniff, then leaning himself lower to sniff directly at the stuff on my belly. “Is it dangerous?”

“Like how?”

“Will it make me puke?”

“No, not necessarily.”

“Yeah, it smells like fish,” Angelo decides. He leans away and regards his slimy finger one more time and then tests it very cautiously with the tip of his tongue. “Tastes like fish. Nasty fish.”

“Cats like fish,” I tell him.

“That’s right.”

“Don’t worry, it won’t make you puke, even if it tastes weird.”

“Do some people like it?”

“Some people do, yeah.”

“It’s pretty bad,” Angelo says, he puts the finger into his mouth to clean it and then grimaces at the flavor. “That’s all. No more.”

“You’re brave, man. You tasted it. Good job, Little Jay.”

“When will I be old enough?”

“For what?”

“To make stuff come out,” Angelo says, giving me an exasperated don’t-be-dumb look. He’s been beside me this whole time but now I put an arm around him and encourage him to sit on my lap, meanwhile I shrug and say I’m not sure, every boy is different, you’ll just have to jack off a lot and wait and find out. He’s laughing because I still have an erection and I’m still slathered with cum and now he’s sitting on my lap and he can feel the hardness and the wetness against his back as I put both arms around him and hug him to me, he likes this, he purrs “my Big Jay” and settles himself backward against my slippery dick and my slippery stomach. We keep discussing his own looming pubescence and what he can expect. “You shouldn’t have to wait very long,” I tell him. “You’ll be twelve in October, right?”

“Just before Halloween.”

“So pretty soon you might start getting some pubic hair,” I say, reaching down and feeling the bareness of his lower tummy and his groin. “And your balls will get bigger.”

“Yeah?”

“They’ll get bigger and start making sperm,” I tell him, and now I’m feeling them as I explain, I’m cupping and I’m fondling Angelo’s young testicles as he listens to me and as I kiss his ear and his shaggy hair. And I can see, looking down the front of him over his shoulder, that his penis is hardening, it’s stretching out and then up, it’s growing as I continue to play with his balls, finally Angelo has himself a real boner and now I can touch it and I can squeeze the vibrant stiffness of it and I can finger its small rubbery head while the boy himself makes a noise like sighing and laughing at the same time, everything is different for him now, suddenly our games are about more than just teasing and tickling and giggling, suddenly Angelo understands the animal power of his own body and his own cock. He turns his face to mine and puckers his lips for kissing, he’s thanking me for this discovery, he’s rewarding me and I warmly accept, we kiss and then we kiss again, more than just friends now, these kisses are different, I’ve got an erection and Angelo has an erection and I’m holding it and rubbing it and nothing after today will be the same.

It’s remarkable, this difference, Angelo’s perception has shifted and he’s become acutely aware these days of his own nakedness and he’s excited by it in a whole new way. He’s lost the oblivious immodesty of childhood and he’s discovered the sexual reality of himself and the

sexual reality of our friendship, he wants to see me masturbate again and again during these last days of summer, he wants me to feel him and to fondle him, he gets an eager boner now as soon as he undresses, he always shows it off and he sings that goofy “I want you to play with my ding-a-ling” song and he does a dance to make his hard ding-a-ling bounce a crazy jig. There’s a new frankness and randiness about him. He’s obsessed with “jacking off” now as the best game for us to play together, he watches me do it, he helps me do it, he evaluates the quality and the quantity of my ejaculations. But he’s just as intrigued by his own toy and by how it feels when he rubs it or when I rub it for him and by how it feels when it finally produces that orgasmic throb like some kind of magic or miracle between his legs, even better one day in September when that dry throb is suddenly a little moist, some kind of wilder and more potent magic this time, a drop or two of purest boyjuice. I kiss him and congratulate him, I tell him that he’s now shooting clear and pretty soon he’ll be shooting white, just wait, you’ll see.

He loves that expression, he’s always talking about “shooting clear” and he’s always trying to do it again, he tells me that he’s been practicing at home, he’s convinced that jacking off is like exercising or lifting weights, repetition can make you better and better. Angelo at

home, yeah, that reminds me, I've never mentioned his home or his family and I've never explained how this young kid can spend so much time here at my apartment. The easy answer, to be honest, is by sneaking and lying. He started coming here during the summer when he was out playing with his friends and he was free to roam and to visit, now it's autumn and he's not here quite so much but he's still here a lot, he stops by after school and he runs over on the weekends. He lives just around the corner, just a block away, so all of these rendezvous are simple enough to coordinate. But what about his mother and his father and his live-in uncle and his brothers and sisters? How do they feel about this friendship between me and Angelo? They know about me, they do, I'm not a total secret, I've met them and I've talked to them and I've even taken Angelo with me to the beach and to the park and to the golf course. That's right, I've been teaching him to play golf, he shares my clubs whenever we go out, this is what his family knows about me.

But that's all they know, they don't realize how many times Angelo has snuck over here during these past few months, they have no idea, Angelo doesn't tell them, they think he's at the arcade or playing basketball with his buddies when actually he's here with me, playing naked games, learning to masturbate. And learning to hump. This is new, this humping he does, he mounts pillows or

couch cushions or wet towels and he pretends to fuck them, he'll do this with anything that feels good against his dick, anything that can produce an orgasm. Last week we were wrestling and tangling and Angelo ended up on top of me, face to face with me, suddenly I could feel him humping his nakedness against my nakedness, sliding his cock against my cock, better this way than with pillows or towels, maybe even better than ordinary jacking off. This continues on his birthday and again on Halloween when he stops by early in the evening to show me his costume. He's twelve now but he's not too old for trick-or-treating, he's wearing a rubbery E.T. mask, everybody is dressing as E.T. this year, he has me laughing like a ninny when he does his croaky "E.T. phone home" voice and parades himself around nude except for that ridiculous mask, before long I have this horny E.T. on top of me and he's merrily humping and humping and I'm staring at his rubbery alien face and I still can't stop laughing.

A few days later, while Angelo is here with me watching TV, his father and his uncle suddenly arrive pounding at the front door downstairs. It's OK, no need to panic, the boy didn't take off his clothes yet and we have nothing to hide or to explain. So what's happening? Why are these Angry Villagers here to storm my castle? Angelo's father is tense and pissed off and he asks me, "D'you have my son in there?" Notice the ominous

wording of that question, man. Not: Is Angelo here? But: D'you have my son in there? As if I might have waylaid and abducted the poor kid. Meanwhile, Angelo's uncle is also standing there in the doorway, his hands are practically clenched into fists and he's glaring at me with a scary kind of malice. I could probably beat the unholy shit out of these two guys if sufficiently provoked, I'm no pacifist, I don't mind bloodying my knuckles occasionally—but that's not going to happen today and that's not the point. This isn't a barroom brawl. This is about Angelo and his pissed-off family and about me doing my best to stay out of prison. So I don't fuck around and I don't shoot off my mouth, I quickly call for Angelo, I live on the second floor of this two-apartment house and now the boy comes galloping down the steps to join us here at the front door.

Not even his father and his uncle can find a problem with Angelo's prompt and proper arrival from upstairs, he looks so utterly normal and nonchalant, his clothes are on and his shoes are tied and there's not a whiff of scandal about any of this, nothing amiss or inappropriate. The two guys look surprised, almost disappointed, they were probably expecting to barge in and discover a scene of depravity and molestation and a good excuse for trouble and for violence and for my eventual arrest. Too bad for them. Great luck for me. Nothing else to say or do, this

confrontation is over, so I stand and I watch as the men grimly escort Angelo back to their house. The boy turns once and shrugs at me in a helpless gesture of parting. I shrug back, just as helpless, just as bereft.

This trouble with the Patallero family, I gradually learn, started on Halloween. Angelo ditched his friends when he came over here to visit me and to show me his E.T. costume, lovable little sneak, he should've been out trick-or-treating instead of here humping on top of me and rubbing boners. Somehow, don't ask me for details, his friends betrayed his whereabouts and his parents found out and Angelo ended up being punished and grounded and prohibited from spending any more time here alone in my apartment. But he came back anyway. And I didn't even know we were in trouble. Until his paternal and his avuncular bodyguards showed up to rescue him.

This is my first experience with the growing menace of sex-abuse hysteria, my first skirmish with the enemy, I was already familiar with this mounting madness thanks to the shrill and complicit media but I never encountered the chilling flesh-and-blood reality of it until this day in November. In a way, you see, I was right about the greater risk of meeting and loving boys here in the heart of small-town Middle America—but the risk isn't from the boys themselves, they're just as warm and willing here as anywhere else, they all love to play. It's the parents, man,

it's that virulent community of "porch police" who pose the threat, there's no big-city anonymity here, no hustling scene, vigilant eyes are on you wherever you go and whatever you do. The risks are big. The dangers are real. But the rewards are irresistible.

I don't see much of Angelo in the weeks that follow, then his entire family packs up and moves to a bigger house across town—not because of me, don't be stupid, it's a coincidence of timing that feels personally and cruelly motivated but it's not, it's just life playing tricks. So I figure we're finished, Angelo and I, our forbidden affair is kaput. That's my assumption. But I'm wrong. The boy actually has greater freedom now to see me, not less. He owns a cherry-red Huffy bicycle and he uses it to come visiting his old neighborhood on the weekends—even in the winter cold, no problem—he pedals his way over here from across town, a trip of maybe fifteen or twenty minutes, then he spends several hours flitting from house to house and from friend to friend until he needs to return home. There's no way for his family to monitor his exact location these days, he can leave his bike in the yard of any of his pals and dash over here to visit me and to have some fun. There's still some risk, of course, there's always risk—but it's not bad, it's sort of exciting, even Angelo himself seems to feel the extra thrill of this illicit subterfuge, there's a new kind of bad-boy defiance about

him that makes each of his visits a kinky little adventure, this is where Angelo can try anything and test himself and fuck the rules.

So try to imagine this boy as a twelve-year-old, I'll help you, I'll give you some snapshots of him. Like the day he offers to pee on my chest or even on my face, it's my choice, I can see him sitting there on my belly as I lie on the floor, maybe we've been wrestling, he's straddling me naked and he's grinning and waiting to douse me, he's holding his dick and jiggling it in anticipation. He's changed so much since I first met him, taller now, more sinewy in the arms and the legs, bonier in the shoulders—but he still has that same gentleness to his face and those same big dark eyes that can make you feel quivery inside. And he doesn't have that hillbilly mullet anymore, now his blondish hair is uniformly shaggy all around and he usually wears it uncombed and unparted down over his forehead and his ears and way down onto his neck. He's every dream you've ever had, and he's mine. But finally I say no, don't pee on me, that would be a fuckin mess. Maybe I should've said yes. He seemed disappointed.

Or another day, he brings me several condoms that he bought from a machine at some gas-station restroom. This begins his fascination with rubbers for the next few weeks. He wears one to school, hidden inside his pants, just for the subversive fun of it. He pisses in them, filling

them like rubbery bags of lemonade. He puts them on me and jerks me off to capture my spurts of semen, then he puts the nasty things onto himself to enjoy the warm squishiness inside and maybe even to add a little spermy goo of his own. That's his goal, to shoot white instead of clear, to fill a rubber with good stuff like mine, already his orgasms are nicely juicy but he's not satisfied, he always fingers and appraises the stickiness produced by his own dick and then he shows it to me and says nope, Big Jay, I can do better, just wait—as if I'm the one who's disappointed and impatient, not him. My pubescent faun, my naked imp, I can feel a new fuzziness when I pet him below the belly where his pubes will soon be, I can't even see it yet but I can feel it, this fuzziness like velvet, a promise of adolescence and potency just there beneath the tips of my fingers.

Or one other day, one other snapshot, it's April or May and it's warm enough for Angelo to be wearing a T-shirt and shorts—not his old gray shorts, no, he's outgrown those by now, he's a bigger boy now, these are new yellow gym shorts and they're very short and very snug. And he's wearing them with knee socks, that's the image to relish, look at him posing there by the door, those knee-high socks are tight and they flatter the shape of his legs and they prompt the onlooker's gaze upward to the stark bareness of his thighs, you can't stop staring at his thighs,

they're still pale after a gloomy Midwestern winter and somehow they look extra sexy that way, the natural paleness of them, so boyish and smooth, so hairless and pallid, Angelo's naked thighs, you want to pet them, you want to lick them.

Let's stay here for another moment or two, let's dally on this long-ago spring day when Angelo arrives in his yellow gym shorts and knee socks and then gives me a kiss and tells me that he's gay. That's exactly what he says, right out, "I'm gay!" Or no, now I remember, he kisses me and then he grins and he says, "I'm gay, too!" It's a declaration of his love for me, his allegiance, his loyalty. He's decided that he'll be gay just like me. We'll be faggots together from now on, to hell with his parents and to hell with everybody else, he's going to be a homo just like his buddy Jake. So is he really a natural-born fag? Or is he just saying this to please me? I can't tell you for sure. Angelo will move away and be gone by next spring. I'll never know him as an older teenager, as a young adult, as a man. Maybe he'll end up dating girls and getting married and having kids, maybe I'll be his one and only male lover—but I can't tell you, I don't know the end of his story.

Yeah, you heard me, I said lover. Even Angelo acknowledges this reality by now. He's not just some little boy playing dirty games anymore, he's old enough these

days to think of himself as gay and to think of us together as some kind of erotic couple, he's turned on by the romance of this, he wants us to be like sweethearts in a movie or in a song and he wants us to do all of those mysteriously intimate things that sweethearts do together. I know this because he tells me, he directs me, he's just as assertive now as he was last year when he initiated all of our wrestling and all of our games. There's that word again. Initiate. And it's true, we're still initiating each other day by day into the secrets of joy and the secrets of desire. Sometimes I've identified a boy named Chico as my first real lover. And sometimes I've said Robbie Bostanchic, I mentioned him at the beginning, you probably know him. But now I'm telling you that it's Angelo, he's the first one, my first real loverboy, he's the epiphany and the sunburst. So you decide. I don't care. To me, all three stories are true.

There's more, we're not finished, Angelo says "I'm gay, too!" and then he tells me to put on some "classic" music for our afternoon together, he digs my classical stuff, it makes him feel cuddly and romantic. He likes for us to undress each other and to get into my bed and then to hold each other, to caress, to smooch, he loves these long and lingering minutes of foreplay as we listen to Wagner or Puccini or Beethoven, he loves to lose himself in the music and the passion, he croons endearments to me

and he purrs and he mews in his usual kittenish way, he lets me kiss him everywhere and he lets me suck him, it makes him shiver with pleasure to get his pecker sucked, I've been doing this now for several weeks whenever he comes over, he adores it. And he's not timid about returning the pleasure, he enjoys snuggling down against me and using his tongue on me, licking my balls, licking my dick, it's just like our old cat-kissing game—only now he'll keep going and he'll take my whole erect dick into his mouth and he'll suckle it lovingly until he can feel my spasm and my gush, that's enough for Angelo, he doesn't care for the rank flavor of adult sperm, he's OK with a little of it, he actually likes to taste and to swallow that first hot squirt, but that's all, no more.

I could continue but our time is short, I need to show you Angelo as a thirteen-year-old, our final months together, the end of our journey. You're wondering when he finally shoots white for the first time, I know, I don't blame you. But actually there's no definite first time, not really, it's more of a transition than a sudden event, it happens gradually and it happens mostly when Angelo is masturbating at home, he brings me rubbers with the milky evidence inside and he shows them to me proudly and then we do our best to produce a fresh sample here at my apartment. This is when Angelo grows and ripens into the fullest succulence of his boyhood, all rag-mop hair and

lean muscle and randy cock, he overwhelms me, every precious bit of him, even the smell of him, there's a new heat and a new pungency to his armpits and to his crotch where he's starting to get some frizzy hair, it's the sweet stink of adolescence and boysex, it's the scent of lust.

By this time, I'm happy to tell you, Angelo's family knows about his regular visits to my apartment and they no longer interfere with us. He's thirteen now and I've known him for almost two years and I haven't kidnapped or murdered him yet, so I guess his familial overlords have lost interest in our friendship. Maybe we would still end up encountering fresh dangers and difficulties, Angelo and I, if he stayed here in Sandburg and we continued our love affair, maybe his increasing recklessness and flamboyance would be our eventual downfall. It's possible. I'll never know, but it's certainly possible. He's becoming a gleeful young sociopath, a budding anarchist, he reads not only my own stories but also the stories and books and poems of Burroughs and Ginsberg that he discovers here in my apartment, also the stories in *Fag Rag* and *Pan* and sundry NAMBLA publications, even the silly little tales he finds in my copies of *Joyboy* or *Piccolo* or *Hot Teens*, where he also finds a wealth of pictures to further fuel his imagination and his juvenile radicalism. He tells me that I should make copies of these dirty pictures and distribute them around town for people to

find, like maybe in churches or schools, it would be so funny. I say yeah, interesting, but how do I make the copies? Angelo grins at me and pushes some unkempt hair from his eyes and then shrugs. “I’m just the idea guy,” he says. “I don’t worry about the details.”

“You always have good ideas, that’s for sure.”

Angelo nods, he’s not modest, my memory of this day is vivid and I can hear *Swan Lake* pounding from my big JBL speakers as we talk back and forth, I can see the boy jump to his feet and start dancing around my apartment as if he’s onstage with Baryshnikov, it’s January and I have the heat up and Angelo’s cheeks are reddened from the warmth and from his own excitement. There’s no limit to his energy, earlier today he was sledding and skating with some friends over at Lake Swanson, tomorrow he’ll be in nearby Stonerville for a basketball game, he’s on his junior-high team, he plays guard. Yes, he’s both a scholar and an athlete, a talented jock and a straight-A student, he’ll listen to Russian ballet while reading poetry by Ginsberg or Whitman and then he’ll go outside for a quick game of football or Frisbee with his gang of buddies. Years later, decades later, I’ll still weep from the loss of him, I’ll still miss him like an amputated limb, I’ll dream about him as the boy he was and as the man he must have become.

But let's not be sad, not today, not with Angelo feeling so frisky and so happy as he dances himself around my apartment. This is your best chance to see him shoot some genuine big-boy cum, he's just about ready to get undressed and get busy, he's already horny from looking at the pictures. Hell, he's always horny. He fantasizes about bringing some of his pals up here for sex, he's been talking about it for months, he wants to mess around with other boys, the idea of it makes him hot, it arouses him, he's frantically curious to see and to touch and to taste the cocks of these other neighborhood kids. He promises me that he'll do it soon, he'll bring over his bud Chris or his bud Danny and he'll do shit with them on my bed and they'll suck each other and they'll let me watch, no problem, these other boys will even let me do stuff with them as well, he's sure that these friends of his will agree to this and will enjoy this, he already jokes around with them about jacking off and they already make a game of grabbing and groping at one another's crotches and trying to give each other boners. So it'll be easy to do more, just wait, it'll happen. That's what Angelo promises me. He doesn't know yet that time is our enemy.

Today, this moment, all of Angelo's plans seem plausible. I trust him. He's frank and forthright about his goals. I remember him saying, "I'd like to give Chris a blowjob and find out if it's fun." Or, "I wanna suck

Danny's dick and see how I like it." Or even, "I can't wait to try sex with those guys, I think it'll be extremely cool." This is the way he reasons and the way he talks, always very sensible and analytical, it might sound phony to you but it's not, it's true, Angelo doesn't bother with codes or innuendos or hints, he comes straight out and tells you what he wants and why he wants it, no nonsense, no bullshit. But this precocious little man is also pure boy and he can happily abandon himself to madness and mischief. I have a poster on my wall from the movie *Pixote*, I kept it rolled up until recently but Angelo persuaded me to display it for anyone and everyone to see, no matter that it shows a naked boy, big fuckin deal, Angelo convinced me to hang it and to be proud of it—and now, as he dances past it here in my living room, he pauses to give *Pixote* a lover's kiss on the mouth and then on the dick, he says let's pretend this is Danny (that's his true crush, his true favorite) and then he rests his fist between the posterboy's legs and he sticks out his erect thumb and gives it a quick and noisy sucking. It's an effectively obscene pantomime and it makes Angelo glance at me and start laughing. I laugh right back and I tell him to quit horsing around, man, we're wasting time! He swipes the hair from his eyes and he nods, he's definitely ready, he unbuttons his flannel shirt as he

crosses the room toward me, he unzips his jeans, he grins and he lets me see the rude bulge in his underpants.

Watching him strip will always thrill me, I'll never tire of it, watching my boy get nude in front of me as he takes off his shirt and his pants, as he takes off his white socks, as he takes off his underwear and lets his erection pop up free, it's such a pretty thing, such an appetizing five-inch wiener standing up so hard and so red between the paleness of his belly and the paleness of his thighs, goddamn, what a scandalous body he has, all of that delicious ivory skin, all of that delicious thirteen-year-old bareness, look at him with his fuzzy new patch of pubic hair and with his balls hanging so much bigger and heavier than before, the way they dangle, the way they sag, the sinful plumpness of them. Now he stays standing in front of me as I undress, he watches me and then steps forward to where I'm sitting and waiting for him on the couch, he offers himself into my hands and I start worshipping the naked smoothness of him while he remains standing there before me like some voluptuary idol, like some debauched cupid. I kiss the soft warmth of his stomach and then I kiss lower and I nuzzle the stiff warmth of his prick with my cheek and with my lips, Angelo chuckles and pinches at his own nipples and lets his hips loll forward into my embrace and lets his dick nestle itself into my mouth. The music is still playing

around us, those sensuous Tchaikovsky melodies, our passionate soundtrack as we begin now to make love on this dreamy January afternoon. Within two months Angelo will be gone. His family will move to Colorado and I'll never see him again. He'll leave Sandburg without even saying goodbye. But that's later. Today is ours.

The boy savors this prelude of cocksucking and then he moves himself into position for something different, for his favorite new way of busting a nut, he turns around and settles himself onto my lap with his back against my chest. No, correct that, he's actually sitting on my belly, right on my pubic hair, so that my dick is up between his legs and standing hard against his balls and against the crack of his butt. Now he can start, now he can jack himself off with one hand and he can hold my dick with the other, he can press and rub my erection between the cheeks of his ass while I use both hands to reach down and to spread those bare cheeks for him, to open his crack good and wide for him as he keeps using my hard thing like a dildo, pushing the knob of it against his own asshole, using it to tickle and to tantalize himself, just a little, just enough, intensifying his pleasure—like fingering inside himself, only better. If you're standing in front of us, in front of the couch, you're lucky, you can see Angelo perched on me with his legs wide apart and his butt spread open and his anus showing all pink and raw

inside as he continues to push my cockhead against it, squirming himself onto it as he masturbates, letting an inch of it sink into him, up into his hole, you can watch my thing going in, easing in, maybe two inches now, no more, that's ideal for Angelo, that's all the cock he needs or wants in order to heighten the achy sweetness of his orgasm when he finally cums. And there it is, the real stuff, my boy's semen, you can see the creamy glisten of it as he spurts and as he spurts once more and then as he squeezes out a final ooze of it from the tip of his tired penis.

That's the reality these days for Angelo, that's the soul of him and the truth of him, he wants to be "gay" and he wants to try sex in the ass and he's starting to sample it whenever he masturbates, using my erection as his anal toy, taking a little more of it inside of himself each time we're together, getting accustomed to the feel of it. I've never actually fucked him, not yet—but it'll happen before he leaves. One day he'll straddle me face to face and he'll take a firm grip on my boner and he'll sit himself onto it slowly and slowly and slowly until it's all the way into his ass and he's riding it up and down, gently at first but then faster and rougher, up and down, letting it churn inside his rectum, riding it and riding it, you can hear the deep slurp of it inside his butt. This really happens, this is one week before he leaves me, Angelo is getting fucked

for the first time and he can't stop grinning, he can't stop laughing under his breath, he leans himself farther toward me so that we can kiss while we're screwing, this makes it perfect for him, this is the game he's always wanted to play.

No, never mind, forget all that. None of this is real. Farewell to Angelo Joseph Patallero, the epiphany and the sunburst, the best and the first. Forget the way he laughed and the way he danced. Forget the smell of his hair and the tenderness of his kisses and the bright heaven of his eyes. Forget his murmured endearments and his innocent whispers of love. No more. This is all illusion. This is the end. Angelo was a dream and now I'm awake. Now I start over. Now I begin again.

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