

© 1990 by The Acolyte Press  
First edition published March, 1990

All rights reserved. Except for brief passages quoted in a newspaper, magazine, radio or television review, no part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Cover design and painting by Mario de Graaf

The Acolyte Press  
P. O. Box 12731  
1100 AS Amsterdam  
The Netherlands

ISBN 90-6971-023-4

# Ordinary Secrets

by Kevin Esser

Michael is spending the weekend in Sandburg, staying with his niece and his nephew while their parents are out of town. It's been almost four years since he's seen them. The girl is ten now. Her name is Melissa. The boy, Eric, is a sophomore in high school, fourteen years old, a good-looking kid with clever green eyes and a bristly short crewcut, a crewcut that makes his head look as round as a fuzzy blond cue ball.

Right now, the girl is upstairs in her bedroom listening to tapes and playing with her Barbie dolls. Eric is out in the garage, out there working on the engine of an old Ford Galaxy with one of his friends, a younger boy named Dusty. Cute little Mexican kid. Dusty Rivera. The two of them are always together – or, at least, that's the way it seems to Michael. He's beginning to wonder about them.

A moment later, the two boys come storming into the house. They pause in the kitchen for cans of soda before settling in the living room to watch TV. Eric is wearing a white T-shirt and blue jeans, smudged everywhere with engine grease. He looks dirty and hot. The all-American boy. Blond, pug-nosed, pink-cheeked. Everybody's ideal Boy Scout and kid next door. Very slim, very lean, built just right for playing baseball, for riding bikes, for skinny-dipping in one of the nearby farm ponds. He's sprawled on the couch next to his friend. He's grinning at Michael. "You look bored," he says. "Are you sick of us already?"

"Not at all," Michael says. He's sitting in the corner with a book of ancient Persian poetry. "I never get bored, Eric."

"I get bored all the time," the boy remarks. "Especially on Fridays... with nothing to do."

"Fridays is the worst," the young Mexican kid agrees. "Boring as hell, man." He's wearing red gym shorts and an old camouflage army shirt. The shirt is unbuttoned and hanging open. The boy's bare chest and legs are dark brown, smooth, still sort of pudgy and childish. He's probably twelve. Maybe thirteen. But he tries to look older. Tougher. He always wears sun-glasses, and his black hair is macho punk all the way – brushy on top, shaved along the sides, long and shaggy in back. He keeps running the can of soda along the inside of his right thigh, doing it nervously, a restless fidget.

"We should have us a party," he finally decides. "That would be so hellish, man, no lie."

"Sorry," Michael says, "no parties."

"Mom and Dad wouldn't care," Eric says. "Come on, Uncle Mike, be nice."

Michael looks up from his book with a patient smile. "No parties," he says again. "We're going to have a nice peaceful weekend, like it or not."

Eric finishes his soda and sits forward on the couch. "Can Dusty stay here overnight, at least?"

"That sounds reasonable."

"He stays all the time, so it's all right, honest."

"Dusty can stay," Michael nods. "No problem."

"Excellent," Eric says. He glances down at himself, at his greasy clothes. "I should take a shower," he decides. "Before supper."

"Let's have pizza," Dusty proposes. "From Alfano's. Sausage and pepperoni, man."

"And extra cheese," Eric says. "That would be grubbish, no doubt."

"Sounds good to me," Michael says. "Whatever you kids want. How about Melissa? Does she like pizza?"

"Yeah," Eric says, "of course she does." He gets up and heads for the bathroom upstairs. Dusty scrambles off the couch and follows him out. Michael, once again wondering about the boys, smiles quietly to himself and goes back to reading his book.

Melissa comes downstairs a few minutes later. She's a pretty little girl with long blond hair pulled back in a silky ponytail. She wanders to the TV and turns on an old Disney cartoon show, then flops lazily onto the couch. Michael smiles at her from across the room. "I think we're having pizza tonight," he says. "Is that all right with you?"

"Pizza is yummy," the girl nods vaguely, never taking her eyes from the screen. Michael closes his book and sets it aside. "Dusty seems to be over here quite a bit," he remarks to the girl. "Does he come here every day?"

"Every single day," Melissa confirms, a little disgustedly. "He's here *all* the time."

"He seems like a nice boy."

The little girl rolls her eyes and says, "He's a brat, Uncle Mike, and I'm not kidding."

"Boys usually are," Michael laughs. "Especially to girls." He glances at the stairs. "Is your brother taking his shower now?"

Melissa, still staring at the television, replies with a silent nod.

Michael pauses to light a cigarette. "Is Dusty taking one, too?"

"Probably," the girl says.

"Do they take showers together?"

"Sometimes... if they're in a hurry."

"That makes sense," Michael chuckles. "Very sensible boys."

Melissa wrinkles her nose. "They're *so* gross," she says. "Both of them, all the time, and I'm not kidding."

Michael is just finishing his cigarette when the boys come back from upstairs. Dusty is wearing his shirt and his red gym shorts, same as before, but he's barefoot now, and his crazy black hair is shiny wet. Eric's hair is also wet, matted against his scalp, matted in slick blond bristles against his scalp. He's not wearing anything except a soggy white towel. He has a deep coppery tan from long summer afternoons spent at the beach. His bare shoulders are ruddy and sun-freckled. He has a bundle of clean clothes hugged against his chest. He carries them across the room to the couch. Michael watches him, watches the way he walks, springy on his toes, a frisky, coltish strut.

Melissa jumps suddenly from the couch. "I wish you would dress in your own bedroom," she says to her brother, clearly exasperated. "You make me sick, Eric, I'm not kidding." She sticks out her tongue at him, then stomps from the room.

Eric glances at Dusty. They both laugh. "She's such a dork," Eric mumbles. The boys sit together on the couch. Eric takes a pair of white socks from his bundle of clothes. He looks across the room, at Michael. "Do you care if I dress down here, Uncle Mike?"

"No, not at all."

"Are you sure?"

"I'm positive, Eric."

The boy glances at his friend with a brief grin, then starts pulling on his socks. He has almost no hair on his legs, just some curly fuzz, some curly golden fuzz along his calves and shins. Also under his arms – a blond frizzy tuft under each arm. The rest of his body is hairless, clean, coppery smooth.

He gets his socks on, then picks up his underpants. Nothing fancy, just blue cotton briefs with white elastic at the waist and the crotch. Eric slips them on over his feet, then stands quickly and pulls them up all the way, up under the towel. He takes the towel off when he's finished. He stands there for a while in just his underwear and his socks, facing Michael, drying his hair with the towel, doing it slowly, obviously taking his time. Dusty glances at him every few seconds, but right now seems more interested in a rerun of

*Star Trek* just coming on TV.

Michael finally gets up and heads to the kitchen for a drink of water. A moment later, Eric is out there with him, reaching into the refrigerator for another soda. The boy pulls out a can of Pepsi. He closes the refrigerator and slides the cold can against his chest. "This feels good," he says to his uncle. "It's so hot today."

"The dog days are upon us," Michael nods. "But your outfit looks cool enough."

The boy laughs. "I guess it's pretty cool," he agrees. He's standing at an angle to Michael, slightly turned away, a good angle to see the front of his blue cotton briefs, to see the crotch of his briefs, the big soft bulging crotch – right there in front, no way to miss it, not the way he's standing there. Posing. Showing himself off.

Michael finishes his glass of water. "You're a handsome kid," he says. "Do you have a girlfriend?"

"Nope," Eric answers simply, matter-of-factly. "Do you?"

"No," Michael laughs, "I don't have any girlfriends, not at the moment."

"Girls are a pain in the neck."

"Really?"

"No doubt," Eric nods. "Girls are just a big worthless pain." He pops the top of his can of Pepsi, then turns away casually and saunters back to the living room.

At six o'clock, Michael takes the kids out for pizza at Alfano's Restaurant. When they get back home, all of them spend a couple of hours playing a game of Monopoly. And then it's time for bed. Melissa, after kissing her uncle good night, hurries up to her room. The boys hang around for a while longer. They sit together, as usual, on the couch. Watching music videos. After a few minutes, Dusty lets out a fart. "I ate too much pizza," he giggles, patting his stomach. "Man, that sinks bad!"

"Don't be farting in bed," Eric warns him. "You pig."

"Screw you, man."

Eric gets up and heads toward the stairs. "We should go to sleep now," he decides. "Come on."

"Good," Dusty says. "I'm fuckin' bored, man."

Eric pauses by the stairs and looks at Michael. "Where are you sleeping tonight, Uncle Mike?"

"Here on the couch," Michael answers. "It looks comfortable enough."

"You can use Mom and Dad's bed."

"The couch is fine, don't worry."

Eric starts to leave, then looks back once more. "Can me and Dusty have a beer before we go to bed?"

"You're kidding, right?"

"We won't tell Mom and Dad, I promise."

"I can't give you beer, Eric, no way."

"Dusty gets really funny when he drinks beer," Eric says, smiling. "You should see him, Uncle Mike, he's hilarious, I swear."

"Sounds entertaining."

Eric takes a step toward the kitchen. "I'll just take two beers," he says. "That's all, I promise."

"Now, wait a..."

"Don't worry," the boy adds, "Mom and Dad won't find out." He doesn't wait for a reply. He goes to the kitchen and gets two Budweisers from the refrigerator, then rushes upstairs.

Michael doesn't move. He just stays there in his chair. Gazing at the empty doorway.

The kids are up early next morning. After breakfast, Melissa goes to a neighbor's house to spend the day. The boys go to Dusty's house. "We'll be back after lunch," Eric announces on their way out. He holds up a pair of swimming trunks. "Dusty's mom is taking us to the beach."

"Good," Michael says. "Have fun."

"Will you be lonely, Uncle Mike?"

"No, not at all, don't even think about it."

"He can read his books," Dusty says from the doorway. He's wearing his sunglasses. His freshly brushed hair looks wilder and spikier than ever. "Come on, man, let's go, I'm bored."

Eric, nonchalantly, punches his uppity friend on the arm, then disappears with him out the door.

Alone now, Michael roams upstairs to Eric's bedroom. The walls are covered with posters of Aerosmith, Bon Jovi, Batman, Walter Payton and the Chicago Bears. The floor is littered everywhere with dirty clothes, shoes, pizza boxes, soda cans, potato chip bags. Michael crosses slowly to the bed. The sheets are thrown back and tangled. The two empty beer bottles are on the night table. Next to Eric's alarm clock. Michael picks them up to take downstairs. One of them is still full. Michael sniffs it. The liquid inside is urine, not beer. Stale, acrid urine. He takes it quickly to the bathroom and empties it into the toilet. Then he notices something else, something at the bottom of the second bottle. He tips the bottle over and shakes it out. A used rubber, full of fresh

semen, plops with a tiny splash into the toilet bowl. "Clever rascal," Michael murmurs to himself. He flushes the toilet and heads downstairs.

It's about three or four hours later when the boys get back. They're still wearing their swimming trunks. Dusty is cradling a paper bag in his arms, a big paper bag filled with clothes. "He brought some stuff with him," Eric explains to Michael. "His mom says he can stay here till Monday."

"Until Monday?"

"If it's OK with you."

Michael reaches into his pocket for a cigarette. "It's definitely OK with me," he says. "As long as you don't get bored."

"We won't get bored," Eric smiles. He kneels next to Michael's chair. "Look," he says, "we bought these earrings at the mall before we went swimming." He turns his head so that Michael can see the tiny silver crucifix dangling from his left earlobe. "Dusty has one just like it," he says. "They're pretty cool." He rests his hand on Michael's knee. "Do you like them?"

"Absolutely," Michael says. "They're really sharp." He's close enough to see the freckles on Eric's sunburned nose. He reaches out and touches the little crucifix. "Very sharp," he says again. "Very cute." He skims his hand over the boy's bristly crewcut. "By the way, Eric, I took those bottles from your room and threw them away."

"Both of them?"

"Both of them," Michael nods. "I emptied them out and threw them away."

Eric looks straight at Michael, straight into his eyes. "Good," he says, "thanks." He hops up and grabs Dusty's arm. "Let's go take a shower," he says. "Come on, hurry up." The two boys rush from the room and go charging up the stairs. Michael can hear them laughing as they go.

Melissa returns at four o'clock. She scowls and gives her foot an angry stomp when she finds out that Dusty is staying until Monday. "Then I want to stay at Jennifer's house," she announces. "I want to sleep there until Dusty leaves."

"Is he really so bad?"

"Him and Eric are *both* bad," the girl says. "They're nasty, and they're gross, and they make me totally sick, I'm not kidding."

"I'm sorry you're so upset," Michael says. "I didn't realize what a problem this would be."

"Please," Melissa begs again, "let me stay at Jennifer's house!"

Michael finally relents. He calls Jennifer's mother and makes the arrangements. By five o'clock, Melissa is gone again. Michael, suddenly, finds himself alone with the boys. Alone until Monday.

He strolls upstairs to check around. The door to Eric's bedroom is shut. Michael taps on it with his knuckles. Eric opens it halfway and peers out. "We're playing cards," the boy says. "Is it time for supper yet?"

"Good question," Michael shrugs. "What would you guys like to eat?"

Eric opens the door all the way. He's wearing a pair of yellow shorts, yellow track shorts with a scarlet SANDBURG HIGH SCHOOL emblazoned on the right thigh. No other clothes. "Let's go somewhere special, like last night."

"It's just the three of us this time," Michael mentions to the boy. "Melissa is staying at her friend's house until Monday."

"Great," Eric smiles. His track shorts are the shiny nylon kind, shiny yellow nylon, flimsy little things, cut high at the hip, snug between the legs. "It'll be more fun without her, no doubt."

"Let's go to McDonald's," Dusty says from the bed. He's sitting there cross-legged, holding five playing cards in his left hand. He's wearing his usual camouflage army shirt and a pair of white sweatpants. Also his sunglasses.

"I want me two Big Macs and a chocolate shake, man. I'm fuckin' starved."

"Sounds grubbish," Eric agrees. He looks back at Michael. "Can we go there?"

"Of course," Michael says. "As soon as you're ready."

Eric puts on his Nike hightops and a green mesh track shirt. He turns back towards Michael. "Do I look OK?"

"You look fine."

The boy touches the waistband of his yellow shorts. "I'm not wearing any underpants," he says.

"I know," Michael nods, "I can see that."

"Should I put some on before we go?"

"Forget it," Michael says, smiling now, "don't be silly."

"OK," Eric shrugs, "whatever you say."

The three of them end up in a booth at the downtown McDonald's. Their table is cluttered with Chicken McNuggets, Big Macs, french fries, milk shakes. Eric and Dusty spend the entire meal telling dirty jokes, laughing, burping, punching at each other. Michael tries to quiet them every few

minutes, but they only end up laughing and burping louder, amused by their own rude display.

When it's time to leave, Eric shakes his head and says, "I can't get up yet, sorry." He's staring at Michael from the other side of the booth. He has an agitated, faintly embarrassed grin. "Sorry," he says again, pointing down at his lap, "but I've got a problem here, really, I can't get up yet."

"Keep your voice down," Michael says quickly. He leans forward. "Are you serious, Eric? Is this some kind of joke?"

"I'm really serious," the boy insists. "I can't help it."

Dusty, sitting next to Eric, glances beneath the table at his friend's lap. He lets out a noisy laugh and bangs the table with his fist. Eric starts laughing along with him.

"See, I told you I should've worn underpants," Eric says to Michael. "Now I can't even move."

"This isn't funny."

"I think it is," Dusty says. "I think it's funny as hell, man."

"Well, anyway, I'm leaving," Michael says. "You can come when you're ready." He slides from the booth and goes out to the car in the parking lot. About five minutes later, the boys also come out and climb into the dark seat behind him. "Sorry," Eric says again, "I couldn't help it, Uncle Mike. Are you mad at us now?"

"No, Eric, I'm not mad."

"I couldn't help it, really, it wouldn't go down."

"No problem," Michael says again, "just forget it."

Back at the house, Eric and Dusty take off their shirts and their shoes and sprawl in front of the TV to play Nintendo games. After each game, they rush from the room and disappear upstairs for several minutes. By ten o'clock, they're starting to giggle and chatter out of control. It's obvious, suddenly, that both of them are drunk. Michael, sitting and reading in his usual corner chair, finally sets aside his book. "This is just perfect," he says. "What the hell are you guys drinking?"

The boys look at each other and break out laughing. "Dusty brought some stuff with him from home," Eric says. "It's dynamite shit, no lie."

"What is it?"

"Old Grandad," Dusty declares loudly, maybe a little defiantly. He's still wearing his sunglasses. "You want some, man?"

"I don't like the taste of bourbon," Michael says. "So now you're drunk, that's terrific, your parents will kill me."

"Mom and Dad won't ever know," Eric says. He shuffles across the room and drops clumsily onto Michael's lap. "How would they find out?"

"They won't," Michael mumbles. He can smell the bourbon on his nephew's breath. "I won't say a word, believe me."

"Then we're good and safe for sure," Eric says, smiling groggily. "You're a cool guy, Uncle Mike, you really are, no doubt." He kisses Michael on the cheek. "There, that's for being so cool."

"You're really loaded," Michael says gently. He has his hand on the boy's back. The skin is warm, very warm, almost feverish. "I hope you don't get sick."

"Do you like me and Dusty?"

"Sure, very much."

"Who do you think is cuter? Him or me?"

"That's a silly question," Michael says. "You're both cute."

Dusty walks over and sits on the arm of the chair. "So you dig guys for real, man?" His right hip is pressed against Michael's shoulder. "You ain't married or nothin'?"

"No, I'm not married."

"Uncle Mike is a cool guy," Eric smiles again. "He lets us do whatever we want."

"No shit, man, he's pretty fuckin' cool, you're right."

"We can do whatever we want."

Dusty rests his elbow on Michael's shoulder. "I bet you don't know how old I am," he says, that same defiant tone in his voice. "Come on, man, guess how fuckin' old I am." He takes off his sunglasses and lays them on the table next to the chair. His big brown eyes are watery, slightly unfocused. "Take a fuckin' guess."

"Probably twelve," Michael says. "Twelve years old."

Dusty gets up and turns himself slowly, a little unsteadily, in the middle of the room, giving Michael a better look. "Guess again," he says. He has a sturdy, compact body, as sturdy and compact as a little boxer, a little bantamweight. There's a youthful budding power in his chest and in his shoulders and in the chubby strong buttocks beneath his white sweatpants.

"Must be thirteen," Michael shrugs.

"Almost fourteen," Dusty nods. He sits back down on the arm of Michael's chair. "I'll be fourteen in October, but everybody thinks I'm a fuckin' little kid."

"The curse of being short and cute," Michael says.

"He's even got some hair," Eric remarks. "Look, I'll show you." He jerks loose the drawstring of Dusty's sweatpants and pulls them down in front, far enough to uncover Dusty's penis. It's a stubby thing, uncut, a stubby

brown thing with a sparse fringe of whiskery black pubic hair. "See, he's got some, I told you."

Dusty shoves Eric's hand away and pulls up his pants. "Piss off," he mutters, trying not to smile. "Show off your own fuckin' stuff, not mine."

"OK," Eric giggles softly, "everyone look at my fuckin' stuff." He stretches down the front of his yellow shorts. His pubic hair is the same soft curly hair that he has under his arms, the same soft golden hair, a nice curly bush of it. Eric glances up to make sure that his uncle is watching, then stretches his shorts down a little farther, letting everything show. He has a big penis, a big white penis, cleanly circumcised, a snaky albino thing with a raw pink snout. "It won't even get hard now," Eric says. "It won't do anything at all."

"You've got whiskey dick," Michael says, staring at it. "That's what happens when you drink too much."

"Whiskey dick," Eric repeats, tickled by the phrase. He looks at Dusty and starts laughing. "I've got whiskey dick, big time."

"Whiskey dick," Dusty agrees, also laughing. He nudges Michael with his elbow. "You should see it when it gets hard, man, it's fuckin' nasty."

"It's pretty nasty right now," Michael says quietly. "Very impressive."

"I've got total whiskey dick," Eric giggles once more. He pulls his shorts back up and rolls off Michael's lap, still mumbling and giggling to himself. He lands on the floor with a heavy thud. That's as far as he gets before passing out.

"Looks like he's finished for the night," Michael says to Dusty. "I guess you're the champion drinker."

"I can always drink more than him."

"What about last night?"

"We just had them two beers, man, that was all."

"Who put the rubber in the bottle?"

Dusty shakes his head and grins. "Eric did that, man, that was his fuckin' idea. I just pissed in the other bottle, that's all."

Michael takes out a cigarette. He lights it. His hand is trembling. "So you and Eric masturbate together?"

"Eric likes me to watch," Dusty mumbles. Nothing more than that. He gets off the chair and starts across the room. His untied sweatpants slip suddenly down his legs, down to his ankles. He glances back at Michael with a startled, sheepish laugh. "Stupid fuckin' things," he says, leaning down to pull them up.

"Just take them off," Michael says. He pauses for a nervous drag on his cigarette. "Go ahead, it's OK."

Dusty gives Michael another glance, then steps out of the pants and leaves them crumpled on the floor. He's facing the other way. His chubby brown butt has a diagonal red stripe across each cheek from sitting on the sharp wooden arm of Michael's chair. He looks over his shoulder once more, then heads for the stairs.

Michael finishes his cigarette. He gets up from his chair and steps carefully over Eric. The boy is snoring softly. He doesn't move. Michael leaves him there and goes upstairs. To the bedroom. The door is open. Dusty is on the bed. Waiting. Michael steps closer. The boy has an erection. It's short enough and blunt enough to be standing up almost straight from his tight brown balls. He puts his hands behind his head and spreads his legs. Getting comfortable. Getting ready.

Michael sits on the edge of the bed. "Can you ejaculate, Dusty? Are you sober enough?"

"I ain't sure," the boy murmurs, looking very sleepy. "I got me a good chub, man, that's all I fuckin' know."

"Yeah," Michael smiles, "a real good one." He puts his hand on the boy's thigh and starts squeezing gently. "Just tell me what to do about it."

"I'm fuckin' horny as hell," Dusty murmurs hoarsely, like someone talking in his sleep. "Maybe I can cum, I don't know, maybe I can cum if I jack off, man, I ain't sure."

"Let's find out."

The boy complies with a vague nod, then starts rubbing his penis, doing it slowly, clumsily, rubbing it between his thumb and two fingers. His eyes are almost shut. After a few strokes, he pokes Michael urgently in the ribs. "Use your finger," he mumbles. "Come on, man, use your fuckin' finger."

"Where?"

Dusty opens his legs wider and says, "Up there, man, put it up there."

Michael laughs quietly, a little flustered. "I've never done this before," he says, almost whispering. He reaches under the boy's scrotum and sticks his forefinger into the crack, into the sweaty crack, probing around until he finds the small puckered hole. He nudges his finger into it. He pushes a little harder, wriggling his finger up and in, twisting it deeper and deeper into the boy's ass – up where the hole gets moist, up where it gets slick, up where you can slide your finger easily back and forth, easily back and forth in the warm rectal slime.

Dusty starts shaking. He hisses noisily between his teeth. His sphincter begins spasming, begins clenching and squeezing around Michael's finger. And then it stops. Dusty relaxes. His stubby brown pecker is still hard. But

nothing comes out. "Too fuckin' weird," he mumbles. "It ain't workin', man."

"That's OK, Dusty, don't worry about it."

"I feel too fuckin' weird."

Michael takes his finger out carefully. "Really, son, it's fine. Just forget about it now and go to sleep."

Dusty rolls away onto his side. "The stuff won't come out," he mumbles once more into the pillow. "Fuckin' stuff won't come out, man."

Michael gives the boy a gentle pat on the behind, then gets off the bed and heads downstairs.

Next morning, when Michael wakes up, the living room is empty and quiet. He sits up and lights a cigarette. He notices, after a moment, that the shower is running upstairs. "Not a bad idea," he murmurs to himself. "I must stink by now." He decides to take a bath after the boys have finished.

About ten minutes later, Eric comes downstairs. Alone. He's wearing the same towel as yesterday, the same soggy white towel, carrying a fresh batch of clean clothes with him. "Uncle Mike, you're awake," he says, grinning. "Can I turn on the TV?"

"Sure," Michael says, "do whatever you want."

Eric turns on a baseball game, then sits next to Michael on the couch. "The Cardinals are playing today," he says. "Do you like the Cardinals?"

Michael lights another cigarette. "I prefer the Cubs," he says. "But I won't complain." He glances toward the stairway. "Where's Dusty? Isn't he awake yet?"

"He's at church," Eric says. "His mom and dad make him go every Sunday. He'll be back later."

"It seems strange without him."

Eric sets his clothes aside. "He didn't feel very good this morning. How late did you guys stay up last night?"

"Not very late," Michael shrugs. "Dusty was pretty blasted. He went to bed right after you passed out."

"Did I really pass out?"

"You certainly did," Michael chuckles. "You were drunk as a skunk, my boy."

"I still feel tired. I guess I must have a hangover."

"How about some breakfast?"

"No thanks, I'm not hungry."

Michael finishes his cigarette and rises stiffly to his feet. "Well, I think I'll have something," he says, on his way to the kitchen. He spends fifteen

or twenty minutes out there fiddling with coffee and cereal, then makes a trip upstairs to the bathroom before coming back down to rejoin Eric. The boy is still on the couch. He's staring drowsily at the baseball game on TV. Michael sits beside him and nudges his arm. "Aren't you going to get dressed? It's almost noon."

"I'm too tired."

"Even your hair is still wet," Michael says, running his hand across the damp crewcut. "Are you OK?" He puts his arm around the boy's shoulders. "You're not sick, are you?"

"No," Eric says, "just tired, that's all." He leans against Michael's side, nestling beneath his arm. "I'll get dressed in a little while."

Michael is feeling the smooth hard curve of the boy's bicep. "You have some good muscles," he says softly. "Do you lift weights?"

"Sometimes, yeah."

"You look terrific."

"I'm too skinny," Eric says. He holds up one of his legs. "See, look how skinny I am."

"You're just right," Michael says. He can smell Eric's wet hair, musty and sweet at the same time. "You smell like a wet puppy," he chuckles.

"Would you dry my hair for me, Uncle Mike?"

"Dry it with what?"

"You can use this," Eric says, touching the white towel around his middle. He untucks it and lets it fall open at the hip. "Is that OK?"

"Of course, whatever you want."

"Is it OK if I'm naked? Does it bother you?"

"No," Michael says, "it doesn't bother me at all." He takes hold of the towel and gives it a tug. Eric lifts his bottom. Michael pulls the towel off all the way. He's not surprised to see that the boy is getting excited, getting an erection, getting it right there in front of him.

"Sorry," Eric says, "I can't stop it."

"It's OK, pal, don't be embarrassed."

"This happens all the time."

"I know," Michael says, "like yesterday, at McDonald's." He starts drying Eric's hair. The boy has a full erection now, a big thick one curved up sideways against his belly like a hunk of raw red sausage. Big red hard-on, big red balls. "That should do it," Michael says after a few moments. "Good and dry." He lays the towel aside.

"Thanks," Eric says. He leans back against Michael. "It's really cool this way," he adds quietly. "It feels totally excellent."

Michael lets the boy settle comfortably against him, then starts feeling

him – gently, timidly, feeling him all over – all over his chest, his arms, his thighs, especially his thighs, his slender young thighs, lingering there, caressing them, feeling around his testicles, then up a little farther, petting his frizzy bush of pubic hair, and then his penis, finally touching his warm erect penis.

"Don't tell Mom and Dad," Eric mumbles suddenly. "Promise."

"Not a word," Michael replies, also mumbling. "I promise." He has Eric's erection in his hand now, and he's rubbing it slowly. The swollen red knob is beginning to seep lubricant. Michael touches it with his thumb. It feels slippery, the whole knob feels slippery, like it's smeared with snot. Michael keeps fingering it, squeezing it, getting it to seep a little more of its juice – and then he goes back to rubbing the whole thing, up and down with his fist. Eric is shivering. His hips are starting to squirm. He grabs his uncle's knee and holds it, grips it, like someone in pain, like someone squirming in pain. He pumps his hips faster. He makes a weak grunting noise. And then his penis starts twitching, and it starts squirting, making a real mess, squirting semen all over his belly, squirting it sloppy and mucousy all over his suntanned belly.

Michael lets him rest there for several minutes, then starts wiping the semen from his stomach. "There you go," he finally says to the boy, "clean as a whistle."

"Thanks, Uncle Mike."

"Do you feel better now?"

"I still feel sleepy," Eric says. He pulls on a pair of shorts, then stretches out on the couch. "I think I'll take a nap until lunchtime."

"Fine," Michael nods, "sounds like a good idea." He gets off the couch to give Eric more room. "I'll be upstairs taking a bath." He leans over and gives the boy one more kiss. Softly. On the lips. Eric kisses him back, then smiles and shuts his eyes.

Upstairs, Michael spends nearly an hour soaking and lounging in the bathtub. He doesn't bother to close the door. He realizes, after a while, that he's deliberately killing time, that he's waiting for something. For something special. For Dusty.

The boy shows up a few minutes later. He comes ambling down the hallway and spots Michael in the bathroom. He pauses outside the door. "I thought maybe you was gone," he says. He has his sunglasses on. "This whole house is so fuckin' dead, man."

"It's a very lazy day, you're right."

"Even Eric is asleep," the boy says. He takes a step into the bathroom. "It's too fuckin' boring around here." He's wearing gray denim jeans and a

red Cardinals T-shirt. "Ain't nothin' fun to do."

Michael stands up in the tub. "Didn't you have enough fun last night?" He steps out, grabs a towel, starts drying himself.

"I was too fuckin' wasted last night," Dusty says. He stays near the doorway, leaning against the wall, watching Michael. "Too much whiskey, man, no lie."

"How do you feel now?"

"Pretty decent."

"Good," Michael says, "I'm glad to hear that." He finishes drying himself, then drapes his wet towel over the shower rod.

"Too fuckin' boring around here," Dusty mutters again. He steps in front of the mirror to check his hair. Michael moves closer and touches him on the back. "We could stay up here for a while," he proposes gently. "If you'd like to."

"Maybe," the boy shrugs. He adjusts his sunglasses. "For a little while."

"Since there's nothing else to do."

"Yeah, right," Dusty nods. He looks at Michael over his shoulder. "Hey, man, do you dig my hair? Do you think it looks tough?"

Michael edges closer. "I think it looks extremely tough. I love your hair."

"It was Eric's idea. And the earring, too," Dusty says, touching it with his finger. "He likes to get stuff for me. All the fuckin' time."

"He likes you, no question."

"It's weird, man."

"Some guys are like that," Michael says. He slips his hand up into the back of Dusty's T-shirt. "It's not weird, really."

"It don't bother me," Dusty admits. "We get along pretty decent, I guess." He turns toward Michael. "It's funny, man, that's all."

Michael brings his hand down and rubs it across the front of Dusty's jeans. "Does he like messing around with you?"

"Yeah, pretty much."

"Do you like it, too?"

"It ain't bad."

"What sort of things do you guys do together?"

Dusty adjusts his sunglasses once more. He seems a little tense now. A little nervous. "I don't know, man... lots of shit, I guess. Whatever Eric feels like." He looks down at his pants. "These fuckin' things are too tight," he mutters, nudging aside Michael's hand to unbutton and unzip them. "They're startin' to hurt."

"Show me what you like," Michael says, helping the boy take his pants down. "Show me what you and Eric like to do together."

Dusty reaches behind him and closes the door. "Don't say nothin' about this to Eric," he warns. "I'm serious, man, don't go talkin' about this shit when Eric wakes up."

"All right," Michael shrugs, "if that's what you want... I won't tell him."

The boy opens the medicine chest and takes out a little jar of Vaseline. He hands it to Michael. "Here," he mumbles quickly, impatiently, "you go first."

Michael takes the jar. He holds it without moving, without reacting. Dusty nudges him. "What's wrong, ain't you never done this before?"

"No," Michael says, "never."

"It's easy, man, just go ahead and do it."

"I don't want to hurt you."

The boy pushes down his underpants. "Don't be such a dork," he says. "You ain't nowhere near as big as Eric, man, get real."

Michael agrees with a slow nod. "You're right," he says. "Let's do it." He steps behind the boy. And he opens the jar.

Downstairs, Eric wakes up briefly, then turns over on the couch and goes back to sleep.