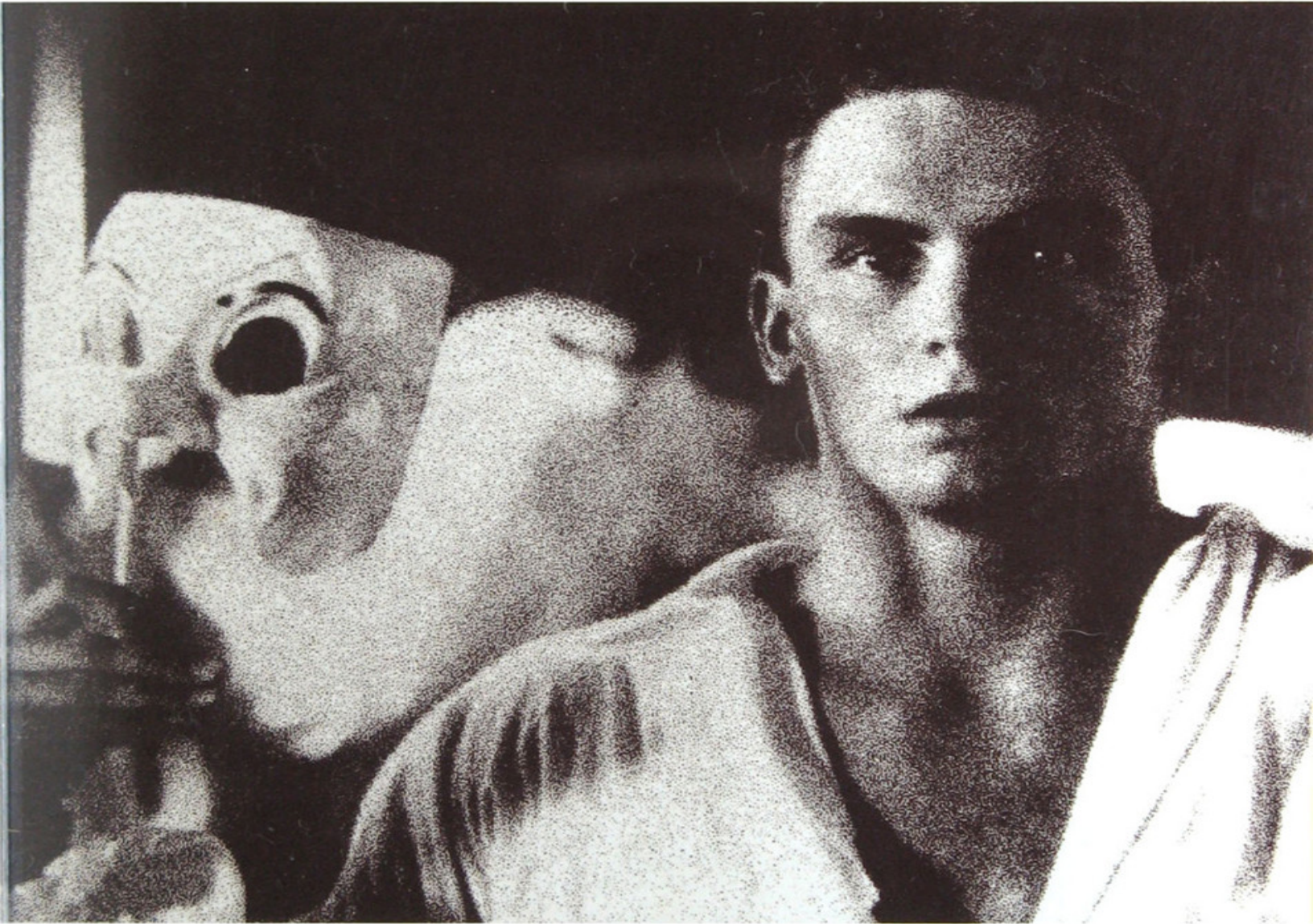


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# FRANK MOORHOUSE



## THE EVERLASTING SECRET FAMILY

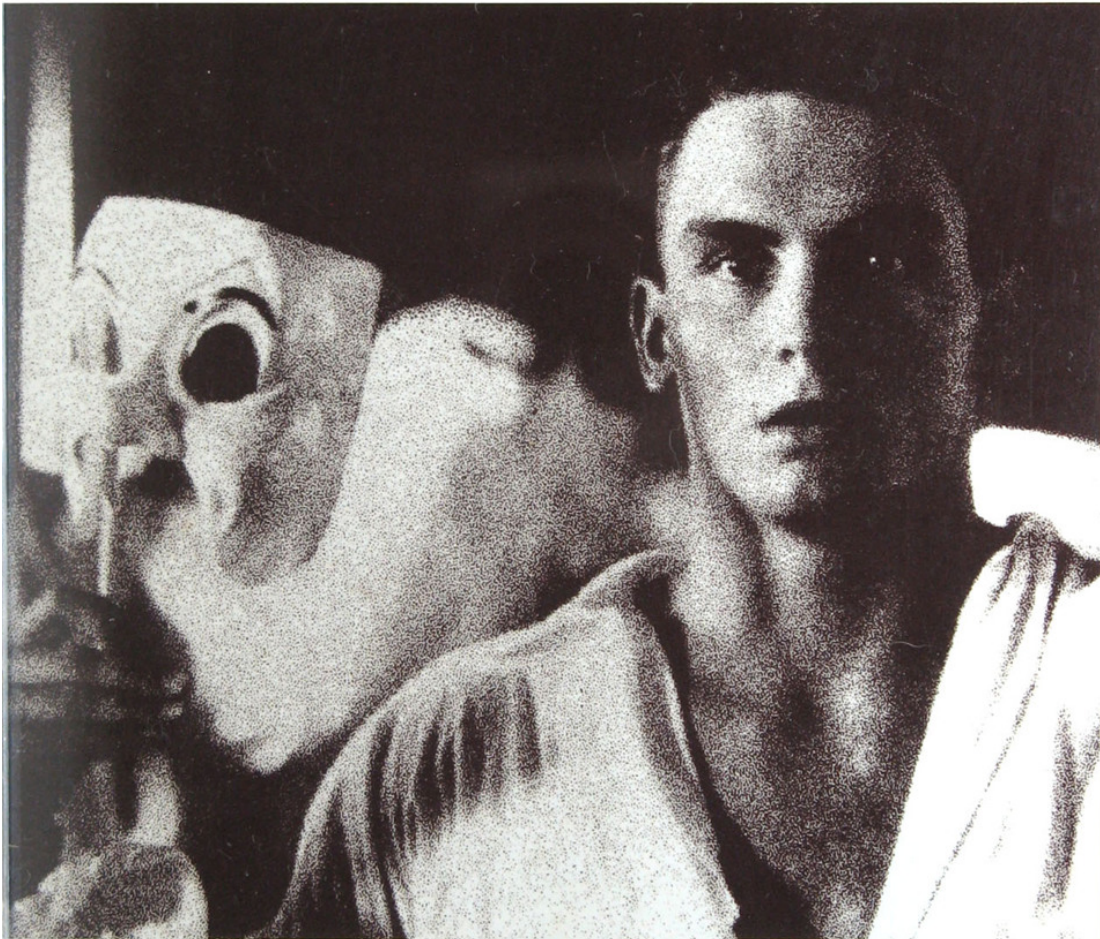
Now a highly provocative  
and controversial feature film



A U S T R A L I A ' S   L E A D I N G  
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# FRANK MOORHOUSE



## THE EVERLASTING SECRET FAMILY

Now a highly provocative  
and controversial feature film

**Frank Moorhouse was born in Nowra, New South Wales. He has lived for many years in the Sydney suburb of Balmain, a place he has affectionately fictionalised in his writing. He has worked as a journalist in Sydney and as an editor of a number of country newspapers.**

**As well as seven published books of stories he has written fiction and commentary of Australian life for magazines and newspapers in Australia and overseas, including Germany and France. He has also scripted several films including *Between Wars* and *The Everlasting Secret Family*.**

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*The Everlasting Secret Family* created a milestone when first released in 1980; it is now a major feature film.

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THE  
EVERLASTING  
SECRET  
FAMILY

FRANK MOORHOUSE

All characters in this book are entirely fictitious, and no reference is intended to any living person.

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# THE EVERLASTING SECRET FAMILY

## **An Erotic Memoir in Six Parts**

Prepared for publication by the author from letters, monologues, conversations, diaries and other sources.

*Narrator's note:* This was originally to be published privately and circulated privately. I do not in any way wish to harm the conservative parties of this country. In so far as this memoir touches on political things (and caution delimited this severely) it does so simply as a fact of our lives. It may be suggested that the publication of this work is a ploy in a personal relationship—be that as it may, that also was not the energising motive behind my having this put down on paper. I recorded it out of joy and I dedicate it to him who gave me the highest sexual privilege.

I.  
THE BAD DOG  
AND THE ANGEL CUSTODIO

In that trance of black lust, like a dog, I fell entranced, fixed by the shabby immigrant of uncertain nationality who had caught my submissive, available eyes in the lane and flicked back a glance, knowing and commanding, stopping me, entranced and trembling.

He moves his head for me to follow and I do at a distance, like a dog, the wordless, animal knowingness of male gutter sex.

I follow him, he taking me I suppose at first to his room, but then it becomes clear that he is looking for any place, a doorway, a porch, an alley. We come to a church. He walks into a path at the side of the church and stands there.

I follow him, the submissive dog. He does not speak but simply unzips himself. I kneel before him, burrow in with my fingers and pull out the soft, erecting penis and take it into my mouth.

I am taken down, down into that self-contained black world where there is no other thing, feeling, or sound but a moist, hot penis and my yielding mouth. There is nothing in the world for that time but his penis moving towards its explosion and my mouth moving, shaping, and pulling and wanting it. The mouth that is saying without words, yes, come, use me, fill me. No outside world existing, no other reward, no other way of being.

Holding his balls, drawing out the sperm, he grunts, his only sound, a giving grunt and then the pulsing sperm, the completed link, the joining by the highest sensation and the most brawny of fluids, two strangers in a path beside a church.

He pulls himself away, he zips himself, and he steps around me, walking away. Not a word, no gesture, no sign.

That was right and how it should be. I was left by him on my knees, shivering with stimulation, coming out from under that black, sexual hood. The exertion and the enlivened nerves of my mouth and

taste making me quietly gasp, panting there on my knees, weak from the perfection of that enactment. Our silent performance. In all its human basicness, complete. Corporeal recognition and fulfilment of need and role. The perfect rightness of it beyond morality. The weeping, honest animalism of it. I was weak with a ringing, singing gratification. I could have thanked God for permitting me to be, still, a human animal.

I stayed there for a minute as I returned to my identity, enjoying a recognition of where I'd just been and of where I was kneeling, of who I was, of my worldly connections, of my lover now waiting for me, of what I'd done—my smearing of that other life, a wilful disfigurement.

I got up, one hand against the church while my knees recovered, and then strolled back to our town house, our pied-a-terre, my penis moist in the silk of my underpants.

He was home waiting for me and I tried to be casual and not show the tired, remaining delight of my rutting.

"You look guilty," he said.

I went and washed and showered and cleaned my teeth, sterilising myself back into our strict, shared world. Our hygienic arrangement.

"I suppose you've been prowling the lavatories again," he said, although without menace.

He hadn't alleged that for a year or so. He had once had one of his heavies follow me and then there'd been efforts to stop me from being promiscuous, including terrifying—but unsuccessful—"therapy" in some private hospital. When I was sixteen.

"No." "Why all the redemptive washing, all that tired humming."

"I just feel good."

"Only one thing makes you *feel good*."

"Leave me alone."

"I have some news for you."

"What?"

"I'm going to marry."

I coloured. There in the lounge room I touched a Balinese carving for no reason, reaching out to it with a shaking hand, as if for

balance. I stood there perilously hovering above his splintering statement.

“You can’t.” That was all I could say.

He had been escorting—courting?—I don’t know, this girl—woman—for a couple of years. I never thought, I had always seen it as a front for his political career, or an arrangement or *something*. I don’t know about these things. She was in the Country Party or her father was something in the Country Party. I assumed they didn’t do anything physically. I thought she was another sort of hostess.

“You can’t.”

He smiled.

In passing I realised that I knew nothing about weddings, engagements, the etiquette of it all, another world. This thought went through my reeling mind.

“What about me, us . . .” But as I said it, I knew there was no longer any leverage in “us”, or that I should not have tried to use it. Then I said, just as hopelessly, “What about all this?” indicating the apartment.

“I’m going to leave you here—in your abnormality.”

I had never heard him say anything which disowned our life, or anything so hypocritical. The clinical word “abnormality”. After the sexual life we’d had. After he’d inducted me into it. I was aghast.

“I’ve never been unfaithful to you—not since the therapy,” I said without relevance.

He smiled.

“I’ve only been with people you wanted me to go with.” “I know all there is to know about you.”

“It worked,” I said, desperately, “that treatment.”

“I move out of here tonight.”

“No!!”

He laughed. “I don’t want to catch anything—wherever you’ve been—whatever sewer.”

“You’d better have her checked too.”

He hit me with the back of his hand, with his ring, as if he had been waiting to do it for a lifetime. It seemed so timed, so pent up. It was not like the other beatings, it was not sexual.



His college ring had split my lip wide open.

Senselessly I remembered what was different, remembered his always saying that I wasn't to be hit about the face in sexual play.

"I want," he said deliberately, also as if rehearsed, "a clean life, a domestic life. I intend to father a child. You have no further part to play."

"Betrayed," I screamed.

He hit me again and again, his ring cut my face and I could taste now the blood in my mouth from my lip.

"Yes," he said, not trembling, no loss of poise at all from having struck me or from the gigantic things he was saying, "I've arranged for someone to take my place, here. With you."

He laughed to himself. I couldn't take this second announcement in, let alone his private laughter.

By the time I'd gone weeping to the bathroom, dabbing my cut lip, my bleeding face, he was gone. He'd taken only his clothes and toiletries, in the Vuitton luggage. He took no objet d'art nor any of the other memorabilia of our shared life.

I was left, bereft. A frantic dog. I slid within seconds from clutching on to his presence, even though he was withdrawing it, clutching to those final moments of him being there in the room, slid to that extraordinary emotional sickness known bluntly as rejection. Unexperienced by me until then.

But on top of that I was bereft of what they call "shared pathology". That buttressed security which came from him telling me how I had been chosen to lead a very special life. How I had no ordinary destiny. That my relationship was with the great and powerful, in a special way, to serve and belong to the elite. To what reality did I belong now? I was too young now to handle it. I belonged through him. He was gone.

I cried at my cut face. I thought, for the first time in years, of my sisters, my parents, and my blood became melting snow.

I took what Valium I had and turned my blood and nerves into a stream of sluggish, chemically polluted snow. I was visited later that night by the doctor, who injected me with some other drug, and so I remained for weeks.

I did not go to the wedding. I remember staring at the invitation which arrived and sensing, even as drugged as I was, that this was not an invitation to something but the *closure* of something. I sent them nothing, if sending something is what you are supposed to do.

I saw him once, to get him to sign something about the apartment. I came on with a drugged blankness which passed as civility, while yearning for him to put his hands on me, and he, he was buttoned up in a lawyer's suit and wore a minute lapel badge I hadn't seen before. The sort of badge which is supposed to communicate only to those who also belong. Maybe it was the League of Married Homosexual Statesmen.

I had no strength of self for months after he left me. I found it unappealing to "play in the streets". I worried with a drugged resignation about the "someone" who was to take his place. No further word had been spoken about this. Still the cheques continued to arrive from his office.

Much of my time was taken with unsatisfying drinking. Never having a true desire for any particular drink, always beginning drinking by saying to myself that, although I didn't feel like it, if I drank I would feel like it. I made plans to run away. I tried to learn Spanish, became very "Spanish". I suppose running away to another culture. I now felt, saw, and became perplexed by "normality", those people in the shops. It seemed, as I shopped, to be so desirable to be like them now, the drab ones. After all those years of feeling privately superior. I wanted what I imagined he now had—the tidal routine of home-life, the idea of being woven into a rope of kinship and in-laws, and talkative, amusing children. In parkas.

That's how it all looked to me.

Of course, with his sexual ambiguity, and because he was who he was, and because he was controlled by ambition and by pledges and oaths and deals, he had had to pass over to this new life and he did it so lightly, passed so lightly from our bizarre homosexuality, with its rituals and peculiar mechanics, with its lubricants and locker-room maleness. My memories of it ached around the place—warm, wet semen, groins, soft body hair, silk underwear, the other specially made garments. Even its terror.

To outsiders—"special associates"—it had been good cuisine (done by a catering service—not by me), privately projected movies, and those strange evenings, lasting through until dawn, where everyone knew their part, untold, unasked, where not only the music, the lighting, the clothing, the behaviour, was satanic but the air seemed different and one's breathing was all changed.

And the quieter times, when I was the beautiful boy who shared this large apartment with him and was something of a mystery. A desirable young thing who obviously did what he was told. Who was directed to flirt with those important old men and sometimes more. But it had been a workable, shared . . . home . . . with its guest bathrooms and plenty of other space, the rambling courtyard.

I retched now, yearning for the odours of those days. I sweated in a fever of withdrawal, craving the pungency of a male intimacy.

All that remained, it seemed, was dirty laundry, unopened junk mail and a plaintive note from the cleaning person about "not her job to pick up after occupants". I waited, for the key in the door which would tell me that the replacement, if that is the word, had arrived.

I thought I was sickening and had tests.

I was sickening, but the tests could not find the sickness. I was a sick dog with no master.

Then—suddenly, unbelievably, unexpectedly, without warning, as if in answer to a prayer, like the clouds parting, the end of a bad dream, the beginning of spring—the telephone rang.

The telephone. It lets anyone into our lives at any time, it can strike so wilfully. It can be the sword; it can be the soft wings of an angel custodio.

This time it was the soft, feathered wings of an angel custodio which folded around me.

I was just leaving. I was outside the door when I heard the ringing of the phone. I took my key out and let myself back in expecting that, as always, it would stop.

It didn't. It was he.

The first call he'd made to me since he had left for the outer world.

He began with that desultory, false conversation—how are things? living it up? did you get those forms? And then he moved on to the shared lore of our life together, moved in that direction with a forced naturalness. How's Zonky? (the cat) and so on. Embarrassing to relate. Yes, I kept thinking, I know, I know what this is all about—but why doesn't he just come up and screw me instead of behaving like some ordinary lover. I was filled with another perplexity, this behaviour of his, as if he had to "win" me back. He kept on, about the cars in the garages of the town houses "wetting themselves"—a reference to a joke we'd had about the oil stains on the floors of the garages. I was embarrassed by his soppiness. Say it! Say it! But no, he had to sustain this false prelude.

He suggested he might drop around and, for the first time, said, "If it's all right."

If it's all right.

Oh shit, I hated him like this.

As I listened, I tried on a new feeling though. Could it be the helmet of power? After all these subordinate years? I said, in my special cocksucking voice, as soon as I felt the power, "Only if you promise to fuck me until I cry."

Was my voice right? Did I say it right?

He cleared his throat. "You know that's what I meant," and I think I detected some disconsolation. Oh, I wasn't accustomed to this.

"What about, say—five minutes from now," I said.

He managed to laugh and said no, it would have to be later, after a meeting.

The meetings.

Oh the time I'd spent waiting for meetings to finish. As a schoolboy dozing in his car.

But making me wait was a retaking of command.

"I'll wait," I said, "I want to be made to wait."

I could have tried to make him come now and skip the meeting. That would have been a test of this power. But I didn't dare. And I didn't want to.

The conversation ended with me quivering and wet.

“Hah, though,” I said to myself, “nevertheless,” prancing to the mirror, sighing, throwing myself on the bed, “nevertheless, now who the dog and who the master?” He needed me.

I had the usual trouble that evening filling the time until he arrived. The dreaded jigsaw. And it is unfair to a book to use it to “fill time”, I always say. Concentration is always running ahead to the time of the appointment. When he arrived I did the girlish thing of saying, “Sit down, I won’t be a minute,” and then going off to the bathroom again. Or maybe these days girls don’t do that. Only hysterically dependent boy lovers.

And then to bed. I swear I have never seen so much semen. We were supposed to go out to a late dinner. But we just didn’t make it. He poured out his whole self all over me. Dear Jesus, I could kiss you for bringing him back.

I didn’t mention The Marriage. I felt that I shouldn’t make him assert loyalty one way or the other. Yet. So I gave him joy, unconditional joy—without emotional payment. That was my tactic.

I gave him joy and he came gushing over me in a flood. And I, not too badly either. That woman must have been scaring it back inside him. It certainly rushed to greet me.

We were awash.

I brought him things so that he could do his favourite number to me and I wore the nightgown he required me to wear—just to make absolutely sure that it was to be as it was before. It was, it was old times again.

As I lay there under him and he began to come, I couldn’t help but register the quantity of it to myself, and I swear I rolled my eyes in pleasure. He whimpered as he let it flow out. It was nice to hear someone as important as he whimper, and to feel his involuntary clutch.

Poor man.

That wife was doing him no good.

That, though, was my last and only playing about with the idea of being Master.

I wouldn’t have done it very well anyhow.



After pouring himself over me in that starved embrace, he got up with not one word of sexual gratitude, drank scotch, poked about the refrigerator and ate half a quiche.

He didn't say much, but looked relaxed almost to the point of torpor. It was then I experienced the most diminishing gesture I know. The gesture which spelled out the new contract.

He looked at his watch.

But you must realise that, because he'd said nothing, and I'd asked no questions, and because he had obviously wanted to have me so badly, I had at this point a fantasy that he had *come back to me*. Come back to live with me. Maybe he had, by using the old intimacy, moving about in it the way it had been, using the language of our domesticity, maybe he had let me have this fantasy to, say, get my total participation. Or to be able to strike it down cruelly.

But. As soon as he looked at his watch I knew where I was. I knew that a dreadful new lock had closed on me.

The looking-at-the-watch gesture said, "I have demands on me above and beyond you." The eating from the refrigerator said, "I have the run of the place again." The way he sat in the armchair now and looked at me said, "I have reclaimed you, but in a different way." The way he had used me, tortured me, in the bed said, "I am still this to you."

I felt it in my stomach as I leaned against his legs and looked up at him. I was a vassal, now to be always in some low level of need, and this would be the difference, most time I would be in need of him and having to live within the shadow of his absence.

He went then to his suit and took from its pocket a black box. I was shocked by premonition. He took out a silver bracelet. A metaphor coming true.

This was a manacle.

He said firmly, "You are to wear this."

He dangled it. It was a plain silver, small-link bracelet. There was no engraving on the plate.

That was right.

"Put it on," he said.

The way he said that, it was the old days again. I had changed from sharing his daily life, I was now being kept for his pleasure.

“Yes.” My heart was hurting.

“Hold out your wrist.”

I held out my bare arm to him; liquid with submission, I could not have stood.

“Yes.”

He clicked it on.

“It has a lock to which I have the only key.”

I was breathless with feeling for him, breathless from his perfect authority, the unfaltering confidence of his command.

How hypercharged life is when it breaks out of propriety. I was sorry, as I trembled there against his legs, for those people with well-behaved love. How good it was to have one’s integrity utterly infringed, to be the trembling, crushed, infringed self.

It was for me a re-experiencing of that same true feeling, the lightning-struck feeling when he had come to the school that first time and taken me to the hotel room.

I was shaking.

“Thank you,” I said.

My eyes were crying. He ruffled my hair and said, “I’m not passing you on. I won’t pass you over to the animals,” and laughed in his private way. I was so weak I couldn’t bother with the implication but allowed his words to further eliminate any false sense of self-pride, of “integrity”, and thus allowed myself still further to flow free and true in a near swoon of submission.

He then, in a business-like way, dressed back into his suit, me tying his tie, helping him with his coat, his laces. I saw him out and then fell naked back on the sheets, my anus awash with semen, my mouth still cloyed with its taste, and a silver bracelet locked on my wrist.

“Til ring you,” he said as he left. “The House is sitting next week.”

The new purpose of the telephone, the telephone as chain, as a chain which permitted me to go only as far as the sound of its bell.

“Til ring you” was an instruction.

Oh, I knew who the dog and who the master now.

When I did sneak out and give myself to a drunken sailor or some migrant worker, it affirmed the meaning of the bracelet. I was restored to my sense of wholeness for all the nights I spent aching for him. I did a lot of sexual aching, harder for a seventeen-year-old boy. Never able to masturbate, for fear he would need me.

Always to be there for him when he wanted my body, when he was not too busy running the country. Or being a husband.

I was faithful to him, in my fashion, but I was still, too, a naughty bad dog sometimes in the early hours of morning out in the dark city.

## II. THE LETTERS

I'm going to get out the letters.

"I'd rather you didn't."

And why not? I want to show you what you were once. What you were when we lived together. Before power and marriage etc made your personality into a social technique, until it hides its face behind a flashed-on smile. You've become a shimmer of courteous responses. I watch you on TV. And with me you've become a grunt. Because your personality couldn't survive your oh-so-model life.

"I said not to get out those letters."

All those things you do at Home you've told me about to make me suffer. Do you know what they are? Elusions.

"What word is that?"

Elusions. What you do is not hobbies. They're ways of evading the eyes and faces of people. To avoid the need to truly react. I see it all now. Because I study only you. The paradox of politics. It is at the very heart of life but, for those who pursue it, it is a way of escaping life. I see it all now. It's all structured reaction. You and your coins and cannons. That's interesting. Your two prized collections of coins and cannons. Money and guns. I hadn't seen that before. When you come here, though, you drop the shimmer of courteous responses and become a grunting stasis, but at least that's real. That's animal.

"Your vocabulary is overreaching."

Not quite a person. A grunting stasis. But that's real. I'm the last remaining person on earth who knows you.

And who can sometimes find you. Your Wife doesn't know you. I can tell. The only time your muscles fall loose is when you are here. Is here, here with me! For those moments when I undress you, bring you to erection, when you lie naked, just another man, and when you moan and moan and cry out and murmur and cry and come—those noises show me that there is a writhing person in there. And my only

moment of power. Oh, but then—zip—you're gone again and each piece of clothing goes back on—hey presto—the Man of Affairs. Herr Cabinet Minister.

“Don't prattle.”

I will. I will read out from the letters. Look at the letters, hundreds, now so nicely bound. Will you one day have a government person, or one of those heavies, come around and destroy them? Or me. Why do you permit me to have them? I suppose because there is no way of them being linked to you. How many pages you once effused—over me. Look.

“You're becoming hysterical. Take them away. Take them away from my face.”

I will read. “. . . On that drive to Canberra you acted so impulsively, so impishly . . . did you realise that it was the first time that you didn't have to be coaxed? Or bribed or forced? Although you had always wanted to do it, once you were made to do it, it was not until that day in the car that you initiated it. You had until then, I suppose, liked the game of feeling that it was against your will, your nature, or whatever. You enjoyed playing the stubborn, sullen boy. It was from then on, from that day of that drive, that you were a different person, a special person with a special destiny and aware of it. Which I had of course known, and had of course known you would one day be made to realise . . .”

And I thought it meant at the time that I had “fallen in love” with you. But for you it meant that I was ready for anything that you required. That I was in a new phase. But at least your letters, if they were not “love” letters, were effusive and you were fascinated by me and you used words to me. At least there were words then, including words about yourself.

Let me recall the “drive to Canberra”. That evocative memory. It was your election campaign. We were driving through the electorate. I was fifteen. No. I was probably fourteen. Had I even done the School Certificate? I had been released from school after one of your “notes” had arrived at the Headmaster's office and I was told that there was a government car waiting for me. The faces of my friends staring down from the school windows. I'd pack my things knowing



that I would be whisked away to some hotel, to be fucked into a daze. And later, sometimes, to be used by your “associates”. Made drunk. And the drugs, oh yes, the muscle relaxants. Or no—sitting around in hotel rooms while you talked to people about things I didn’t understand. That is what I remember most. You talking to foreign people. I remember once hitting on the idea of filing my nails in front of them. I think I wanted to embarrass you, it seemed an outrageous thing for a schoolboy to do and you said coolly, “Yes, your nails could do with some attention—we don’t like grubby boys,” and those in the room all laughed knowingly. I went from the room flushed and confused, close to tears, but you didn’t come after me. I came back later and they had gone and I cried in bed with you in the submission of utter lost confusion.

Anyhow. The drive to Canberra. We were driving fast. I moved over to sit hard against you, remember? I put my hand lovingly up to your neck and my fingers into your hair. I did it because I now felt “in love” with you. Do you remember what you said? You said that I was too close, there’d be cars coming up behind us and you’d be recognised and lose votes. I said that you could possibly gain votes from homosexuals. You were amused by my using the word “homosexual” and said that it was the first time you’d heard me say it. I blushed, but you made me say it again, although I didn’t want to. You made me say that I was a homosexual, but I resisted saying it. And then I said it, turning weakly to you and taking your hand, putting it to my lips and saying it through your fingers and my kiss. “Oh yes, I am, I am homosexual.”

“You have an unhealthy memory.”

And you smiled—at the time I thought you smiled because I pleased you, but I think now you smiled because of private thoughts—and you said that I was a “special class” of homosexual. But there in the car then I undid your fly and went down on you, into that fundamental smell of urine and the lingering odour, almost imperceptible, of excreta (but it was there), down over your penis and through the imported underwear which you got for us, before you married—does she buy that dreadful underwear you wear now, or do you wear it to identify with the normal folk?—and I licked the

head of your penis through the silk and it oozed its juice making the silk transparent and I worked my mouth and the silk on your penis head while we drove at 100 mph through the wheat country and the hot, dry sun. You spread your legs to give yourself. Moaning, on and on at 100 mph in that Rover car you had then. I smelled the hot leather of the upholstery. The ever-so-slight smell of petrol fumes. The slight dry-cleaning fluid smell of groin. I gobbled and stimulated you, taking your balls up into my mouth, my tongue working you around and around, playing up and down, and then a finger fully in your anus. And then you came into my mouth pulse after pulse, the semen taste overwhelming the mingle of smells, the taste of semen dominating and wiping out all the other senses, although they came back, one by one, the texture of the silk first.

“Your memory is unhealthy.”

Remember, I took from you your semen and then lay there, my face in your lap. I remember plainly, while I had my head buried down there and you were coming into me, I remember thinking—is he ever going to stop. Is he ever going to stop? Is this possible, what have I done? I was very young.

“Don’t go on—stop now.”

When you finally finished, I sat up, wiped my mouth on a tissue, wiped you, and did up your fly, and we drove into town across the bridge. Within half an hour you were addressing a meeting and shaking hands with the mayor and his wife.

I remember you sending me to a newspaper office in the town to book space, or something, for your campaign advertisements, and a nosey old editor with an eye-shade asking me if I were your “son” or a campaign worker or what. I said, “Aide de camp.”

I thought that rather good at the time until you told me back at the motel that I had mispronounced it.

Those early campaigns were the only time, though, that you’ve taken me into your political life, even if I were only someone in the car, unexplained.

Excepting, of course, the Camden days, and they were hardly political. Those house parties. The old men and senators, or whatever, feeling me, talking about me being “pretty”, and you

saying to me after, “Just keep smiling at them, let them do what they want.” You were so torn then—you couldn’t do without my body then, but you felt that sometimes it did your career good for me to pleasure the Old Men of the Tribe. You were anxious though, the only time I could truly say you felt anxious about me, that I might become someone else’s boy, but yet you had to risk it, had to prostitute me. And then you got where you wanted and put me into this, this “town house”—is that what we call this? And it has come to this—me locked here, virtually, visited by, God what is he called? An accountant? He never lays a finger on me. More’s the pity.

Why doesn’t she dress you with some style? You’re both rich. You used to wear such beautiful clothing, but why drip-dry shirts—why? They are for travelling. Tell her, tell her they’re for when you can’t have laundry done. And for Chinese waiters.

“You are not to mention her.”

Yes. We won’t bring her into it. She’s sacred. Miss Sacred Heart Country Party Whore 1955.

“Stop!”

And you came back from the meeting in town to the motel and came to my room giggling. You never giggle now. Aren’t Herr Cabinet Ministers allowed to giggle? I was sitting up in the motel eating chocolates and listening to country and western music and you thanked me for washing out your underwear. But then you giggled and said that the mayor had followed our car into town and overtaken us near the bridge. You had said hastily to the mayor that I was a “nephew”. “Nephew?” said the mayor. “No, you were alone in the car. There was no one else in the car when I overtook.”

“You involved me in risks.”

So you locked me away. No, we could go back to those days without the risks. I am older now. I would be a good private secretary. I’ve told you this so often. But, of course, I don’t hold the same charm.

“You have your place.”

My head between your legs.

“I don’t think, really, that you need more whisky. Put it down.”

How I wish you were always around to tell me to stop, to tell me what to do. I was reading some woman and she says that's what it is all about—"extinguishing the consciousness". Obliterating the personality. I understand my state. I relish it.

"Theoretical books are bad for you."

Don't worry, this is not about the liberation movements. That's not my liberation. I know that. I know now that my liberation is to be found in the opposite direction. The liberation through obeisance.

"Mmmmm."

For instance, I could cut your initials in my arm. I could do that to show you what I mean.

"Don't talk like that. I've had to stop you talking about that sort of thing before."

What about when you had that doctor friend of yours inject me with some drug which made me helpless and warm and open and you had me, when I was fourteen, you and then those other two men. For hours. I was so dazed I couldn't work out what was happening to my body. You were training it somehow to behave in some sort of way you wanted, and you broke me so that I couldn't behave any other way.

"Oh shut up."

All right. But I will cut your initials in my arm.

"Stop that."

He shouted at me, but I went to the bathroom and found a razor blade and came back to him.

He sat there. I knelt before him, I was still in the satin jocks and satin smock that he liked me to wear, and I stretched out my bare arm.

"If you must" he said, a change of voice, he was switching now, turning on to it, participating.

You should brand me.

"It would be safer to have you tattooed."

Yes. I'd like that too.

"Go on—cut yourself. Cut my name in your arm."

He really wanted me to cut myself.

I cut. I did it. I cut one letter. The blood came out in a string of globules. My body went cool with the shock of it. I stopped. I baulked at the second letter. I would have done it but I was stopped, the effort required to mutilate one's skin, especially when the skin is perfect, as mine was, unblemished young skin, the effort was exhausting.

"The other letter—go on," he said, "cut the other letter."

The bastard.

Bastard.

I closed my eyes, opened them, and cut the loop of the next letter and then dropped the blade, I stared at the blood on my arm and then licked it, licked both the wounds, and then needed to sit.

I felt faint, and then his arms were about me, the world moved, unsteadily.

He pulled me to him. I had earned it.

"You stupid boy," he said. I sunk to my knees.

He had an erection. He had an erection and I felt it through the silk of his pyjamas. I kissed his penis through the pyjamas and I was back then in the car with the hot leather, I hugged him around his thighs.

He led me over to the bedroom and pushed me down on the bed lifting the smock, pulling down the satin to bare my arse.

My face went down on to my bleeding arm and I tasted again my own steely blood as I felt him move himself into me, as I arched my buttocks to take him. He came, ejaculating into me, almost as soon as he entered, and the throb and the thrust of the penis were so distinctly felt that it was as if they were drawn with pen and nib and ink on my nervous system, the hot sperm bursting against the sensitive lining of my anus.

When he'd had his way, he rolled off and said, "You should put sand into the wound—to permanently scar yourself."

I told him that I would do that. If I had been able to move, I would have done something like that. I was held to the bed by a heavy blanket of sensual pain. I was centred.

I will do that, I told him, I will.

I put my head against him and cried.

He then said something, something humorous, maybe tender, he said, "They are the most obscene letters I have received," and he put his fingernail on the blood-smeared initials and traced them, hurting me, tracing them with his sharp fingernail.

He then asked me to come to the bathroom, he liad to go, he wanted me to wash him.

I said that I would after I had put something on the wounds.

He said that could wait.

### III.

## THE LITTLE WORLD LEFT BEHIND

Do you remember that on the day of his death, I kissed you on the mouth?

A full mouth kiss. It was at a party, you'd taken me along because of how I'd been affected. We had heard of P's death that day and everyone had been making all the right noises. We stood there on the fringe of the dancers' skirts. The dancers revolved at the centre of the party, lapping at us as we stood in the darkened room. It was a backbenchers' party. I remember water slapping along the jetty near the house. I took your head in my hands and kissed you on the lips. You went with the kiss. I had gone over the line of self-control by then with whisky and grief about P's death. Was that grief? No, it was infuriation at being denied someone I wanted, that a person was denied me who had filled my mind and days for so long—as a person—not as a lover. A person who had talked to me. I would have been interested to have felt something as classical as grief. I would have been pleased to know that I had the capacity for the grand emotion. But whatever the inadequacy of my responses, I required, looking back, intense physical solace. I used sexuality that night to push away the presence of death.

Yes. It was the gaping hole of death that I saw. The way death leaves staring, unwanted spaces in our lives. It is a penalty. It places people out of consultation or touch. They continue in your head but that is not enough, is, in fact, a reminder of the penalty.

I hadn't had much experience with death. It was a new insecurity, this realisation that the protective circle of people around us will go, one by one. And death itself, the experience of dying, must be a bad experience too, the whole self resists it, avoids it, we must sense something about the passing through to that other state.

You seemed to want the kiss. I was hungering for it. It's odd that our physical life should have gone on for years without kissing. Or

maybe you kissed me when I was a boy at school, during those early days. But then the kissing must have ceased, until that night, the night of P's death. I kissed you and I wanted to do it always and not to stop.

But it was a members' party or whatever, and there were key people at the party. So it had to stop. But to your credit you did not shy. I was conscious immediately afterwards that I should not have. Although there was one person especially at the party I would have been glad to have see us. To cancel at last that shy curiosity. Of course I would have loved, too, to have declared us to them all. But there was to be no coming out for you. You knew it was the wrong historical time.

But I would have liked them to have all known and I would have liked to have declared those too who were part of our private circle from the Camden scene. It wasn't as if they were prejudiced or that they didn't know such things occurred even in their own ranks, but they did not want their category ruffled. They wanted no meddling with the well-secured boundaries of behaviour, expectation and conversation. As young A so nicely put it, no one in that crowd will accept his homosexuality when he declares it, not even his own father, they will simply say he's into "liberated chic" or that he's being deliberately "sensational".

But I suppose, at least, they have categories and that's one way of keeping things endurable. I prefer that in a way. I heard someone say the other day they don't believe in "homosexuality" or "heterosexuality", only in "sexuality". They want to deny the categories. Establish a broad, false harmony. They don't accept that there just might be natural hostilities, incompatibilities, inherent enmities in the human condition, in the sexual roles, in their many devious forms. They are the sort of people who hate categories because they do not wish to be excluded from *anything* that's going. They fear exclusion as a form of rejection, I suppose.

Yes, P taught me this. Yes, P taught me lots of things. Yes, yes, and you too, you taught me too.

I felt the bristles of your growth that night and they belonged so much with the sensation. Were part of the imprint of it.



Maybe also it was my try at breaking the dumbness about us which had overtaken you after those voluble first years. Those words you wrote in letters about “my role” and “my reality”. Before there were so many books, so many new sexual experts. As you have said, the lessons and the knowledge hadn’t been lost to the tribe, it was in the hands of those who deserved to possess the lessons and the knowledge. But then you lapsed into dumbness, a refusal to express, or connect, except physically. Was this a lesson?

But why did I think that kissing would break this dumbness? After all, kissing is another, but different, way of using the mouth, and precludes talking. Was your dumbness a way of avoiding verbal treason against your marriage? But you must have faced the disparity of your behaviour at the marriage ceremony.

You are hardly as true as steel and as straight as an arrow. You and your talk about political candour. I remember hearing you on some ABC program and getting the giggles. I suppose you say that once again it illustrates the indigestible fact—that truth is divisible. That being frank in one place and not in another is everyday human conduct. That people can be corrupt in one area of behaviour and not in another.

Yes, I know, you taught me all this a long time ago.

Did you know about P? P, nicotine-stained, decayed teeth, shingles, dirty ears. He desired me too, and I let him have me. I was very young and unsure. I knew I was supposed to go only with people you told me to go with. Maybe I knew P was not one of those. I suppose it was partly because he was famous (more famous than you at that time). I remember also him saying in a leering way that he was a “behaviourist” and believed that he could have anything from anyone by offering the appropriate threat, or the appropriate and sufficient inducement, or the appropriate verbal formula. I remember being immobilised by revulsion when he made it clear that he wanted me. Mesmerised by it. And then actually going into his arms, saying no at the same time that I began to undress, going naked and shivering into his arms, giving him my young body. It was in a judge’s chambers and I remember some files and I remember

thinking that I was being “defiled”. And it was true. I felt defiled. And it became a delicious feeling.

You have made me feel abused, ravaged, and many other things. But it needed a sick, ugly and brutal old man to give me the sense of being lovingly defiled. I was young, in fettle and P was so debilitated. He knew what he wanted to do with me. Everyone you sent to me seemed to have some strange thing they wanted me to do to them, or they wanted to do to me. Their own act. Straps, pain, what-have-you. It sometimes took me days to recover and I had to go on with school as well. P had no trouble with erection, as sick as he was.

You probably fucked me later that night. Oh I forget where you were. Probably some Important Meeting. Or “in with the PM”. Those hours that I spent dozing in your car after school while you were addressing something. All the pool drivers knew me.

You probably fucked me that night on his sperm. A fantasy you know I love, the thought of which you cannot abide. Especially the idea of P’s probably infected sperm. He tried on other occasions. I said no—because of us. There, isn’t that unbelievable fidelity? I was scared about saying no because he did have power in the land. Didn’t he? I mean, I didn’t know what would happen to me with people like him if I said no. I prayed that you could protect me. But the rotten thing was that I liked talking to him, and he taught me so much, and I hated to say no to him. I would relieve him but I wouldn’t do the things he wanted. My head was full of chilling stories told to me by those boys at Camden. Probably just to scare me. I kept the act with P quite separate from our reality. I mean in my mind. Oh for all his intellect, public standing, public “integrity”, he tried to blackmail me one way or another into doing things with him again. I had to say no, too, because I knew that there were only so many times that a young body could do what he wanted me to do.

How sentimental I am really deep down. Or was. But there—now the two things have joined—P now belongs to the same memory group as our “reality”, see, confession can do things to the pre-existing reality—P belongs now with our shared reality, tied with the same blue memory ribbon. Maybe you would prefer not to have had the gift of that confession?

But you were supposed to know everything. You had me followed at other times. Or was I above suspicion then? Too naive and young to be capable of deception? Or did you know, did you engineer it?

I think that when I kissed you that night of his death, I kissed P too, kissed the corpse with its rotting teeth goodbye.

It was only once with P, or twice or so.

My need for solace the night of his death was so crying a need because of the space he left in my life, not as lover but as tutor. We left the party and you had me and used me so hastily, rushing off then to meet the curfew of your marriage and you left a second space in my grasping, sad, needful consciousness, you left me doubly deserted and assailed—by death and by marriage.

After you came pumping into me and then within minutes pulled on your trousers, leaving me panting on the bed in a mess, I went looking for something more, for something that would complete the solace I sought. It was far too late. But whisky and lust—neither can tell the time.

Maybe I was trying to crowd bodies into the space left by P's death.

I found no one in the lavatories of the city and that was strange because there had on every other night, no matter what time, been someone hunting in the lavatories. But not on the night of P's death—as if by ordinance, they had been cleared.

Finally I had to telephone a woman I knew (you don't know her—and you won't) and ask her if I could come over to her place to stay for the night. She was fond and wanting to please and knew about me and felt therefore no threat from me. What I think she liked was someone unheterosexual to hold on to in the night, and she liked gossip about people in high places (I never told her *serious* gossip).

We would caress for the comfort of it and then I would go down to her anus. The absolute self-abasement of it, and the unlocked relief that self-abasement gives. By showing another person that you will do those things which the culture abhors, to behave with another person in a way that is repugnant to cultural conditioning, its hygiene, and to self-image. Bringing together those two parts of the body—mouth and anus—which are by nature so closely related in

function and yet in our culture severed, separated. The organ that sings in oratorio and the organ that cannot be politely heard. By kneeling before this common woman in this act of submission, lying with my face in her anus, I lost all identity—the body who went to concerts, pottery on Thursdays, who knew so many people—those things all fell away and I went spinning, falling outside culture and outside sex into that other world. Most of all, I lost homosexual identity.

Lying there on the bed she would lift her dress, smile at me, pull down her pants, turn her arse to me and open her legs. For all I know, she probably smoked while I died there. I would put my tongue there, bury myself in her buttocks, buying myself in the smell of earth, body function and waste that had no gender.

On rare occasions, including this night, she would cause her anus to give, stimulate it to release, and I would convulse, shuddering, smeared, and die as a person and find myself, alive in another state.

It was there, in the arse of this woman who meant nothing to me, that I found release that night.

I went home and back to bed, falling asleep with sperm and excreta odours about me. I again woke, hours after, and P's death was a day or so back. I woke and tasted the night.

I was able to go calmly about, sending an expensive gift to the woman, doing the other things that make my day. All this after a night of being enveloped, smudged and stained, and hurt by sexuality. I found solace in the overpowering infliction of it upon my consciousness. I had kissed your mouth and so kissed the corpse goodbye, and I still had your sperm dribbling from my anus. And I had knelt before this woman and buried myself in the excrement of her anus.

I felt an exaggerated aliveness. I had no hangover, and I had things to do. I showered, had a glass of milk, a mango, and stepped out into the world.

A friend had died and gone and I said to myself, a friend has died and gone. And I read the papers flicking through to the obituaries of P, “. . . a key figure in the extra-parliamentary life of the fifties . . . significant contribution to the constitutional history of this

country . . .”, while at the same time I enjoyed the sore aliveness of my arse. My mind trailed in and out of the news of the day, and back and over the sensations of the night. It gave me a sharp, sunny affirmation that I was living and doing, and that I could go down the dark tunnels of sexuality with or without you, and I could forget for a while that P was dead and you were married.

## IV.

### A MAP FOR THE CHILD

This is a map for the child. I think the map is probably educationally disreputable.

“He likes those things. Brontosauruses.”

Not one word to show he understands our emotional complicity in the child. No registration of what the giving of the map to the child means.

It shows the boundaries of the world, false boundaries, it's even wrong for its time, it's an imaginative reconstruction of an old map, it is art, not navigation.

“It is unlikely that he will use it for navigation.”

Yet once, just once, but obviously from premeditation, you touched me, while we were walking the child between us, you had had it left with you unexpectedly, you touched me and said, “The first child is ours—I think of him, I think of him as belonging to The Family.”

Take the map.

Take my heart, my blood, my sensory system—you've owned them,, depraved them—give them to the child as well.

“Now stop that.”

I have never complained about that—about what you did with my body. It's my placing, my status, in your life that I can't accept, now.

You have never asked me to do this, to wear her clothes. Is this a way of humiliating her and me at the same time? I don't mind that you lie back there, that you wait for me to undress you and to stimulate you, which is all too easy. But now that I have understood my role, and come to be good at it, you change everything. You want me to put on her things. It was never like this before.

“No.”

Was I gathering an identity, is that it? Do you wish to take that away? I'd rather be called a “predilection”, as you once did. I know

that after all these years you say that you are not homosexual, that that is not what it is all about, you say. You live not only against yourself but against the temper of the times. You should be in the Gay Cause. Here look—on the map—it says, “The Course of the Great Wind Currents.”

“Fix that eyelash.”

I suppose you would simply repeat that politics and power have always been intuitive arts for those few special people who are able to use the mechanisms of power, whatever they may be, in whatever system, at whatever historical time. The trick, you would say, is always to belong to the pre-eminent elite. Did I get it right?

Don’t be angry with me. But use me for what I am. A male. I give you my young body. I give you imaginative love. But not this.

“Yes.”

Oh God, her clothing fits me. We must be the same size, even this corselet.

“I want you to welcome this.”

But you took me as a child—a boy—because I was male. But I can’t argue against you. But I could draw another map for the child, of strange routes “outside the walled cities and cultivated lands”. Where you took me.

I was an innocent boy when you so skilfully turned me into a moaning, weeping, naked boy on a hotel room floor.

“Innocent?”

All right, there is no such thing as innocence, but I was uninitiated. How did you find me? Why did you come that day to the school?

You just smile. All right, so on that day on the floor of a hotel I was given the truth about myself and I embraced it. But how did you choose me? Who were those men who pointed me out?

I wanted her to die in hospital. I would have lived with you and we could have raised the children together. Yes, I knew she had been ill. Oh the savage, regal fantasies of the subjugated.

Even hustlers get their important lovers to make commitments.

“Where do you get this nonsense?”

I sometimes hate the bizarreness of my life. Did you know that? You have made the bizarre my normality, but sometimes I try to imagine the other life. I sometimes crave in-laws, outings, and lawns. Isn't that real life? Instead I stand here in her slip and her stockings.

"Mmmmm."

But no, I complain about the way things have changed. Me standing here dressed like this. But not only that. We were different at those lunches. I was once the sexy boy and always needed, to be fondled and so on, by your important friends, able to sit about without talking and then tell you everything that was said in your absence. It's not like that any more.

But you're not getting joy any other way, I can tell. You're not getting it from her—I can tell that. I'm the only one who can give it to you.

"The makeup is good."

The map makes a good joke. "Trade route," it says, that's what my life has been. And the map says, "Parts Yet Undiscovered."

We'll see. Is something still to come?

"Turn around, twirl around."

What will you tell her, for instance, about the map? That you found it in the street? That you got it from a wandering cartographer? Or that it was I who sent it as a weird present for the child. Dangerous for navigation. Does she know about me? Did she select the clothing, the underwear for me to wear?

"You're hypertense."

I'm hysterical.

"You need the doctor."

No. Listen to me. Please. No, listen to me. Please come away from the telephone.

"Perhaps you need to be sent away for a time."

No. I hate it up there.

"Put on the gown now."

I have my own friends you know. People you don't know. You claim to know everything I do and everyone I see. But you don't. I have people here. I have to put your photograph in the drawer for



fear that some stickybeak will seize it and say, “Why, you never told us . . .” or “Is he really . . .?”

“Turn around. I’ll do the zip.”

You are frightened that the words you might say would turn into silken ropes and bind your hands and tie you to my bed. You know that the feelings which move inside you, if once articulated, would become contracts which you’d be forced to honour.

“Now put on the shoes.”

You don’t try to present yourself any more. I mean with your clothing, your appearance. You don’t watch your weight. Does she really want you to dress like that? Obviously you don’t care a damn. Is it because you have a safe seat? Or does it give you a Plain Man image for the public? No frills. No foppery.

“Mmmmm.”

Mmmmm.

“Fix that eyelash.”

Does she really buy those underpants for you? They’re so cheap. Do you know what she’s doing? She’s killing you as a sensual being.

“Don’t prattle.”

Why don’t you take me on those trips? You have always promised. Are you frightened that I will kiss you behind the ear in public? I’m not like that now. I can converse. I read. Why don’t you let me meet people now?

“You met President Johnson.”

Yes, and he let his hand rest overlong on my shoulder. “And he wrote to you.”

Don’t tease me. Yes, he wrote me a letter.

“Maybe one day we will go to live in the Greek islands.” I don’t want to go to the Greek islands to live. I don’t want to go to the Greek islands. That’s not what I’m saying. There is another map—that is not the only “place to go”. I love this country. I’m more committed to this country than you, the professional patriot. I’m the one who cries at patriotic songs.

“You are a silly boy.”

I am not a “silly boy”. I am not a silly boy. I am your male love. A male lover who does not any longer know what is happening to him

or where he is. I know I can't leave you or do anything else with my life because of what I know about you and the rest. But nor do I want to. I want you. What are you now? Forty-seven? Overweight, balding. I want you to give our life emotional shape, size, status.

"You are hysterical. You have overstepped."

Never have you thought to ask me if I was feeling well, whether I could have sex. You just come here and the next thing, without more than a grunt, you are panting, crying, holding me in desperation. But you grant me nothing.

"The doctor will be here soon."

So the doctor will obliterate my mind, put me in a daze for weeks. Oh I know too what "soon" means. It means that I'm wasting time and you haven't had your sex yet. All right then, I'll lift up these skirts and petticoats, and you can gaze at her stockings, her suspenders, my legs—better shaped than hers, and just as hairless too. Have your sex. Imagine whatever it is that you want. It's yours. You own it. There. I'll hold up these skirts, pull down those feminine panties—take me.

And bending over I let him take me. He stood there behind me, the skirt falling down over my head. My beloved. I am that too. I am too a surrogate, as well as a boy, yes I am that too. And he was right, I wanted to be overlapped with someone else's identity—her identity. It was not only a humiliation but a victory. I could be her as well. As he entered up my body, dressed there in her clothes, I knew, it was revealed to me. I had lost another part of "myself" and I was filled with joy. He made me feel true. He made me right with the world again.

I whimpered and tears came to my eyes.

Oh yes, and yes give the child the mariner's map. I hope it misleads him in the correct direction. I hope he realises that for some strange reason it is the wrong maps which are beautiful.

"Here is the doctor."

He pulled out of me and, doing himself up, went to the door. He turned and said to me, "No don't undress, stay that way."

They stood at the door together looking at me, still bending over, anus exposed. The skirts pulled up and the woman's pants pulled

down to expose my proffered self. The doctor made a gesture, a raised eyebrow, a request by gesture, and received the reply, "Sure, go ahead." The doctor put down his bag, took off his coat, and came towards me undoing his fly.

## V.

### THE GIFT OF A SON

It's his birthday, isn't it?

"I thought you would remember."

He's thirteen, isn't he?

"Yes."

We will give him a treat, and then bring him back here.

"That's correct."

I'll make him something, his favourite dish.

"I want everything done correctly."

Of course it will be done correctly. You said once that he was our child.

"Did I?"

And that now we would come together. The three of us.

"In the long run it has very little to do with you. But I want this thing done correctly."

And he came. What is your favourite . . . is the school food just as . . . and which sport do . . . and when you leave?

And I prepared him a treat.

"I feel sort of good," he said, giggling and lolling back on the meridiennne after his treat.

I went with his father to the other room.

Out of sight of the boy he grabbed my wrist. "I want this done correctly."

It will be. And I looked at him, and I said, just as you did it to me when I was a boy.

"I'm not interested in you."

I told him that I would pleasure the boy, and that the boy would thank me for it, for having taken him over the dreadful chasm.

He was a divided person, savouring the situation and exercising his parental responsibility at the same time.

I told him to wait, feeling my control, however slight, of this part of the situation.

I left him and went to the boy. Now to open the gate.

I was the medium for them both. It could only be me. This was my moment. My moment.

The boy was lying back blissfully on the meridienne, a lazy smile on his face.

I sat down with him, moving his body over a little, sitting against his thigh.

Feel nice?

“Yes . . . oh yes.”

I’m going to make you feel nicer.

“I know.”

How do you know?

“I just sort of know.”

You want me to do it, don’t you?

“Yes, I suppose so . . .”

What am I doing to you? I asked him.

“I don’t know, but . . .

The drug was making him verbally lazy.

He smiled up at me, saying do it, do it, his boyish lips mouthing the words.

I took off his shoes and socks. I undid his belt.

This will make you comfortable.

He lifted his backside for me to take off his trousers. Has someone else done this to you? I had not considered that. Anxiety clutched my breathing.

“I feel sort of weak but nice . . . I can hardly bother to move.”

Has someone else done this to you? I tried to keep the urgency from my voice.

“No . . . just at school.”

What? What happened?

I tried not to lose him by sounding like a school authority.

“Just sort of played around. Nothing.”

And with yourself?

“No.”

He smiled.

Was he lying?

But you know what I'm talking about and what I'm doing to you.

"Sort of," he smiled—teasingly?

Was he already a lying virgin-pretender? A tease?

I took off his trousers and cotton underpants. All with his name sewn in.

And then his shirt.

He was languidly co-operative.

It's good for this to be done to you.

"Yes. I like you. I'm glad it's you."

There was a genuineness in this. He was a virgin.

I knew how he felt now, tingling with the wanting. The wanting of the touch which would dissolve him. I let his body lie there, untouched for those trembling seconds or more, with him looking up at me wanting—the wanting of the touch which, if it did not come, would drive him into a craze.

His body was splendid, in the way that thirteen year olds are—an age where there can be no real defect. Physique just smoothes it away—the whole man was there, and the whole boy, and the female, all in superimposition.

The wispy hairs around his crutch were the only hairs on his body, apart from the light blond hair of childhood, so gracefully hermaphrodite.

He took my hand then, could wait no longer, and took my hand and placed it on his penis, and gasped, quietly, with relief.

I gave it a touch of acceptance as it erected, rigid quivering, and then I took my hand away.

I bent down, pausing though, my mouth just above his penis. I looked at his face, his eyes closed, his breathing broken and reckless.

He opened his eyes pleadingly.

"Please."

Oh, yes, I knew that "please". Behind that "please" lay the offer of anything he could give.

I held his eyes, still not giving him the release he begged, receiving from him the begging gaze, seeing the fear that it might not

happen which dances along with all totalisation.

I closed my mouth around his penis and he murmured loudly, “Oh yes—yes.”

My hand went under him.

His whole body, his anus, opened like a flower, as I put my finger there, an eager yielding.

“But . . .?” Again a question he had to ask did not complete and which contained no true concern, and which drifted away.

He knows, I whispered.

“I don’t care, really,” he smiled up, opening his eyes, conspiratorially, carelessly. “I like you. I like you touching me. I knew you would—it was in your eyes. I want you to do everything.”

I know you do.

“I like your finger in there.”

Yes, he liked everything.

He sat up, lifted my head from off his penis, taking the initiative, and, holding my head, he kissed me in that dreamily drugged way, his young saliva running to my mouth like juice from a crushed fruit.

“You get undressed too,” he murmured.

I did.

We lay there on the day bed and then tumbled off, rolling about on the carpeted floor, embracing, our mouths locked in an endless kiss. I loved him in two ways, at least—as my child, and as an object of beauty—and he probably loved me two ways, at least—as an adult with whom nothing was forbidden and everything granted, his first adult of that kind, and he probably loved me as a simple instrument of his excitement. But I loved him another way, as the linkage, something I had not dreamed of until recently, when the dream had become a plan and I had realised that it was all part of a huge eternal program. But now it did not seem like a dream or plan, but presented itself as an inevitability. Oh yes. I sighed with the clear sudden realisation. It was an eternal inevitability.

The drug peeled him of everything and he was a physical young animal of pure feeling. The drug had put back into his blood that which a lost society had taken out. He now knew no maths, no

morals, no geography, no manners, no propriety. The ultimate state of being.

I tried to slow him down but he could not wait, and I held his penis tightly as he poured himself out on me with great gasps and sighing, and I felt the outbursting too through the lining of his anus. Thirteen solid throbs of his penis, spilling and spilling.

Opening my eyes I saw his father's face from the other room. He was beyond parental apprehension now, he was the enthralled voyeur observing not only the erotic display but the loss of his own centrality in two lives—his repositioning in our lives and its endless dark possibilities. The exploding enlargement of his parenthood.

The boy was crying with the relief which comes from the only liberation.

"What happened to me?" he asked dreamily. "I'm all wet," and then giggled. "Oh I think I must have fainted or something, oh I've never felt like this. This is, this is—heaven."

You've been relaxed with something. I put something in the drink, I said, as a birthday treat.

Yes, he was right, I too felt like I had fainted. I had passed momentarily across to that special state of consciousness and back again. That orgasmic state, oblivion.

"We'll do it again? Can we do it again soon?"

Yes. I'd like you to come to visit me again. Soon.

He went to sleep in my arms. I disentangled myself, wiped him, and put a blanket over him, there on the lounge floor sleeping with a beatific smile.

I could not but help consciously acquainting myself with the fact that I had a father and a son now as lovers. I couldn't help enjoying the cheap novelty of it. But it pays to take whatever pleasures you can get your hands on, however trinkety. But there was another feeling less trinkety, a background feeling in my mind—I had a new security, a new place in the arrangement of things.

His father came into the room.

I told him that his son had loved every moment of it.

"I saw that."

He poured himself a fresh drink.



The cheap novelty of it disappeared and I was rivetted by a realisation of yet a third implication. I was joined to a line though history which went back to the first primitive tribal person who went my way, who took a virgin boy lover, and every boy who became a man and took, in due turn, a boy lover, through to Socrates. I had played a part now in the continuation of that chain. I had played my first part as a child in becoming a man's lover. I had now played my second part. I now belonged fully in that historical line. It was a way of passing on and preserving the special reality, a way of giving new life, the birth for the boy of a new reality, a joining of him to a secret family, the other family. To belong to that chain is to belong to another life.

I went to him, promising him by words and physically that I would not use the boy against him, and thanking him. That we all belonged together now.

When the boy awoke he stretched and smiled directly at me, he looked as his father. His father told him to dress. He dressed slowly and I saw a beginning of haughtiness in the lazy way that he dressed there and the brazen acceptance of his father's presence. He showed no hint of shame.

He seemed, too, to have a consciousness of his relation to me and his father's relation to me and this I supposed relieved him of fear of his father, maybe this was his dawning in that way too, yet another new power acceded to him that day. He did something which suggested that he had realised something about his power over us. His new self. He dressed before the bedroom full-length mirror where we could watch him, and he at the same time watched himself. He touched his body with his hands, oh that body, as though feeling himself as a body for the first time, and he did so admiringly. He held his own penis for a moment, bringing it to half erection, and then, smiling at us, he tucked it into his underpants. The other thing was the way he brushed his hair, using two hand brushes, showing a new care, and he then came over to us, kissed me on the cheek and whispered, "Thank you," and then he kissed his father. His father looked down at his drink as he received that rare, that most preternatural kiss from lips that would never again kiss innocently.

“We must go now,” his father said.

There was now in the boy’s walk and movement a lascivious confidence and that also was in his kiss.

Again at the door he took my hand and said, “This was the best birthday ever. May I arrange to see you again—soon?” And he leaned gently against me.

Oh yes, we’ll do things together, oh yes.

“Come on now,” his father said, looking at his watch, “I have a meeting.”

It was his son’s birthday but I had received the gift.

And now we were a family of a special kind with a long, long history.

## VI.

### THE WAND AND THE CUP (AND THE MAGICIAN)

He is fourteen now, with some soft facial hair, perhaps he would be shaving were it not for the oestrogen which he chooses to take, has long, groomed hair of the fashion now passing, which his mother and sister praise and brush.

“I dreamed of my mother, but she had no breasts.”

You are your mother—with no breasts.

“Yes, I have the female thing—my father shouts at me and makes me cry.”

But he is rugged in the Australian private-school way, although at the window of his face a dandy—and sometimes a lady—appear now and then. He is not yet dressing true to himself. He is limited to school clothing and that boring denim of the weekend.

He loves eating in good restaurants even now. He doesn't, like some of the young, repudiate all these things because of some voluntary poverty principle or food fadism.

“What is vol-au-vent?” he asked with a slightly reluctant innocence, but at least he asked. He risked his ignorance with me when the pressure is, at his age, always to pretend to knowledge. I smiled over at him, acknowledging the honour he paid me, the honour of being asked, of showing his ingenuousness.

I do not touch him there in the restaurant for fear my hands, once having touched his breathing body, would singe, burn, melt, perhaps weld to him.

I tell him what vol-au-vent is.

“Yes, I do know, I'd forgotten.”

I had so wanted someone like him in my life, so wanted to venture into my second part, and—whether by manipulating myself into liking him as a way to achieving that preternatural irony, or

whether from spontaneous affection, or whether by being myself manipulated in other people's plans—it had happened.

Maybe I wanted him to break my heart and then, years hence, I could play with his heart and body when he found he needed me again and, returning to me in desperate dependency, would need that which he, now and for a couple of years, would use so lightly and thoughtlessly.

I had travelled that route. My first man, his father, I had frustrated to anger and violence in the first years. Submitted with feigned indifference. Refused to show pleasure. Forced him to use pain and narcotics. And now he used me like a goldfish in a glass tank, taken out when he wanted to hold a twisting, pulsing life, but for the most time left to swim restlessly, to look out at him, screamingly, yet unattended. To yearn for his presence over his photograph in newspapers.

I tried to introduce R, there in the restaurant, to the Sauternes experience—where the sweetness of the dessert makes the Sauternes taste dry. It didn't happen. I don't know why. The Sauternes not chilled enough?

"Doesn't taste dry," he said, curious.

How to impress someone so impressive. The young and beautiful are so impressive within the limit of their years.

They work their enthrallment with so little.

Maybe it is easier when you have so little to work with, I can't remember, it is all fresh stuff then, and they can give it such detailed attention and zest.

When older, we have much life material but have to walk the line between impressing and intimidating.

Oh, I had been in his place. Sitting youthfully, hands dangling so lithe. No matter how sloppy or unkempt, the gleam of youth turned it all to adornment.

Oh, I had known the feeling of mild, instinctively understood pleasure which comes from realising that the man is having difficulty taking his eyes from you. I saw that R realised there in the restaurant just how enthralled I was. Since that first day, his birthday, he had been swimming towards a calculation of his power over me.

I had known it all, known the fondling in the way a man had looked and talked with me.

I had known it without qualm at all, unconcerned that men were spending money on me. Buying me. And, later, as the hold over men became conscious, I began demanding gifts, without shame, and exercising all privileges, exploiting by subtle test and sexual instinct the furthest limits of indulgence and demand in the power-sex entente.

I, those years before, after uncertainly submitting to his father, after being coaxed and cajoled into a way of living about which I hadn't an inkling, had sensed after a while the beginnings of personal power, but it was power without program, exploited only in the most trivial material ways, and which resulted, later, in my being exposed to a reversal of power, when I had to accept the indignity and hurt of being kept by a man and ignored by him for long periods.

I had known the time when, stripped, my body would not be in my consciousness at all, but very much in his. There was nothing then about my body for me to consider—apart from realising that naked I was sitting on my hands, like a child, and his suggestion that I not do that, and then being self-conscious about my hands, blushing, dying.

In those days, I had to just undress and there it would be, the physical perfection, the shading of hair on my legs and buttocks, my breathing faster, my penis rising to erection—the boy homosexual.

And my moment of self-truth. That strange day when, after a sports carnival at school, I had noticed his father with two other men. I had looked across and realised they were watching me. I had met his eyes and blushed. Whatever recognition had caused the blush passed too quickly across the mind to be caught or remembered. One of the men came across, crouched down where I was flopped, and talked to me, had known my name. I kept looking over his shoulder at the person who was to become my lover, my protector. He stayed at a distance impatiently. They seemed anyhow to know something about me, and the questioning seemed, looking back, merely a formality. It was as if they had looked into my heart or my psychology while I slept and already seen that I was ready to

learn about myself. When, a week later, a note arrived excusing me from school I knew in a wild guess that it was he, it was the next step. The waiting car on that first day, as I straggled out with my things, was driven by a chauffeur. I was breathing dreadfully fast and, although my mind wouldn't let me say it, I did know why we were going to the hotel and why I had to go to that room number and who would be there.

He was not "good looking" but I cannot ever recall thinking in those terms. Maybe I already knew that there in the heat, the bodies, the conformity to ideals of beauty does not matter, that beauty is a matter for conversation and aesthetics not for sexuality. All bodies are charged with passion. I know that.

But oh, it wasn't long after the first certain detached submission of myself, with all its implicit self-pride, that I found my penis reared and ached to be touched by him and my anus went loose and pulsed ever so slightly at the thought of his penis. For a time sexual instinct told me to hide this need but there then came the time to reveal the dependency, to go down on my knees and beg for him to fuck me. The passing from detachment, to pretended detachment, and then to moaning submission.

He wanted to shoot the rifle when we were on the property, after his father had gone back to the city for a conference. I said all right. We put up the targets and shot for three-target, five-shot aggregate. He shot better than I—122 to 116.

I then loaded the rifle and looked at the trees. I saw a blue wren. I shot the wren out of the tree. Bright blue cap, black eyes, blue scarf, pert tail.

He gave a small wince.

There, you shoot one. I said to him, smiling.

He was perturbed but felt it was probably weak to show it.

"But why, why shoot them?" he said, as if there might be a reason.

To show you can strike against nature without reason, by pure human will, just to show yourself that you can.

He aimed and then lowered the rifle. “No, I can’t,” he said, unsettled by a feeling that perhaps this was something he should be able to do, yet obeying the call of gentleness.

I smiled, put a hand on him, and said that it didn’t matter. But, I thought, it does matter as a test of personality, to see if that hardness had come yet, whether he could do the thing that had no “sense”. Which calls and instructions did his personality still obey? I took his face in my hand and kissed him as the sun set across the eucalyptus. Never mind, I said. It marked him off, I thought, marked him off from me. Gentle boy.

When had I passed that point of hardness? Had his father forced me to? I remembered no single test.

Then, as I was getting the ammunition into the shoulder bag, picking up the spent shells, he pointed the rifle at a magpie and shot it dead.

Well, I said, you *can* do it. It was I who was now perturbed.

He walked over, picked up the dead bird, looked at its limp neck, circle-eyes, and then dropped it.

“I’ve never done that before.”

Every bird has its mate, you know, somewhere up there in the trees, watching you.

“Oh shut up.”

It doesn’t prove anything—except that you can do the senseless thing, I said, trying to ease him, if he in fact needed his conscience eased. It doesn’t mean you’re cruel.

“Shut up. Don’t talk about it!” he said, and pointed the rifle at me.

Oh yes. He could do that some time if not now, or even maybe now. And the afternoon chilled more than its wintery self as I looked at his wilful face and the finger around the trigger of his rifle. Knowing that, being who he was, and at his age, he could get away with it. Oh yes. And I didn’t care.

I told him, anyhow, not to point firearms.

He said he would if he wanted to, and anyhow the rules didn’t apply to him any more.

Now I was sure he could pull the trigger. I didn’t care much for the knowledge as we walked back across the paddocks. I resented

him for having so quickly equalised our situation. Instead of me regaining through him a lost, softer self, he was becoming me. Surpassing me. I could do without another me.

There was an earlier condition, before sham indifference to sexual submission. There was the first excited curious pleasure when I did not know what was happening. He had passed from that. He had a long distance to go before he came to the fourth phase, the exquisite pleasures of the induction of a young person together with mellow appreciation of one's state.

Mellow appreciation—when did one reach that!

I told him to wash his hands. I told him that birds are filthy with vermin. Even the beautiful ones.

He asked about promiscuity. He had urgings towards “the crumbiest people”. He said that his father wanted him to go only with me. I wanted him, I said, to go only with me. Reluctantly and with an uncharacteristic allegiance to truth above self-interest, I told him about the instinctive requirement of the special reality in which he now lived, the need to be promiscuous while with me. To give himself to the streets. To dirty men, to men who smelled, to mean men, to the lowest, in streets, trains, lavatories. It was life's compensation to them, the miserable, those denied so much of what life had. To be given, when they expected nothing from life—nothing—to be given a superb young boy, a beautiful body for their pleasure in those passing moments of the night. For the boy who was to have everything in life the obligation of nature was for him to give himself to those lost in the night streets. It was, I told him, not only an age-old equation, obligation of office, but also one of the high pleasures of depravity. He would therefore have urgings, he the angel of a boy, to go with old men in suburban railway lavatories. I told him how, when I was his age, they'd tried to stop this happening, to break the age-old urgings and duties by some crude therapy, but they couldn't tear out of me the sense that this was right. That it was part of the morality of our special condition.

He nodded. But I do not think that he yet grasped the theology of it—only the earliest visceral urgings.



I took the tarot pack there on the last evening of winter, in the room lit only by the yellow and blue of the open fire.

The glow of the open fire lifted his face, lit it from the jaw as we sat on the floor.

I took the pack and squared it, and then let it drop a few inches to the carpet. The pack divided perfectly.

Take it, I said, take that card—it must be *our* card. The pack says so.

He lifted it and turned it over. It was, of course, The Lovers.

He looked over at me and smiled out at me, beamed there in the yellow and blue glow.

Now for your card, I see you as a wand, I said. Perhaps The Page of Wands.

I did a shuffle and had him take the top card. This is your card, I said, whatever it is, whatever the pack tells us.

It was—The Page of Wands.

“Hey!” he said, grinning, “that’s spooky.”

Oh R, you are my wand. My page.

And I the receptacle.

I took the next card, saying that it would be my card. I am, I told him, his receptacle. I had him turn the card.

It was the Page of Cups.

I am the cup, the receptacle.

I didn’t need to tell him the story of the cards.

He shook his head. “I can read those cards,” he said.

He looked at the Page of Cups and said, “He’s just a little older than the Page of Wands.”

I took his hand, we are the lovers, you the wand and I the cup.

His lips jumped across the inches between us, like a spark.

We kissed, long and moist, we caressed, hands rushing to each other’s body under our clothes.

Then, naked, sitting opposite each other, legs around each other, in the warmth of the fire, I told him that the cards forbade him to be anyone’s boy but mine. He nodded with tears in his eyes, and a lie in his heart. I leaned down on to him, took his penis in my mouth, as I

had his father's penis so many, many times, and found it, likewise, eager to give up to me. He filled my mouth. I had from it a sweeter sensation than from any other that had flowed into me. He moaned to the beat of my bursting heart.

Later, over tea, I told him that I had salted the cards and done an overhand shuffle. Old conjurers' tricks.

"You didn't!" he cried, affronted, hurt.

No, of course I didn't, I said to him quickly, touching him to reassure—frightened by how deeply cut he was by the idea of it. His tantalising gullibility. No, I said, not with the tarot pack, one must never do conjurers' tricks with a tarot pack. The tarot pack tells it as it is, I said. It was just a bad joke on our love. I'm sorry.

We kissed again, there across the table. "There will never be anyone else but you," he said to me.

I went to the bathroom and while I was there he called to me, "I knew it was a trick." A voice trying, trying to be hard. "I knew you were tricking me." Trying to learn the right lines. Trying to be like me.

He was on his way.



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