

*The Sixth
Acolyte Reader*



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Raising Hell

by Simon Worthy

I guess I'd been raising hell, too much hell. At least that's what Nurse thought. She complained to Mr. Darcy, my dorm master. I listened to them talking in the dispensary, with my ear in a glass tumbler pressed against the door.

Like, "It wasn't so much spitting his medicines out – all over the bed and sometimes all over me. I can understand that. But he came into my bedroom when I was out and he found my, well your, *things*, and what does a thirteen-year-old boy do with a *thing*? He can't wear it, can he? I mean, maybe he can but he *may* not. So he fills it up with... liquid – I hope from the tap – and drops it out the window, just narrowly missing among others *me!* Ernest, what am I going to do? Doctor says he stays in bed until Friday, but he's completely, obnoxiously, thirteen-year-old *well!*"

When they broke up – I mean talking: I never been around when they broke up doing the other thing – I ran back to bed and stuck the thermometer in my mouth and put on a sad look, and the two of them came out and Nurse said, "See what I mean? He's making fun of us. And that thermometer's made to go in the other end of him – all the way, don't I just wish!"

I stuck my tongue out – well, as good as you can when it shares your mouth with a thermometer.

Mr. Darcy shooed her out and sat down on the side of my bed and said, "It's all your fault, you know."

And I said, "Oh, sure, it's always our fault!"

And he said, "Sneaking out in the freezing drizzle just so you can see your buddy from back home."

And I said, "Well, how else was I going to see him? They wouldn't let me out. They wouldn't let him in."

And he said, "Okay, I don't mind if you bend a few minor rules once in a while, but you came down with serious, miserable pneumonia. Not to mention your hands." He meant they were in bandages from where I'd rope-burned them sliding down from my window.

And I said, "They're supposed to be able to cure pneumonia with antibiotics in three days these days. I been here a week. Catfish has

already gone home."

And Mr. Darcy said, "And left this for you."

He handed me a get well card that showed a bare naked baby on his back, a boy baby peeing right over his head out of a little stiffer, with written inside, "Really pissed off. Bet you are too. Git well. Your buddy Caton."

Mr. Darcy said, "That's not the kind of card boys at this school are expected to receive, so I kind of snuck it in."

He expected me to thank him but I was darned if I was going to. I didn't feel like thanking anybody for anything.

He said, "So, tell me, what's troubling you?"

Now wasn't that typical? Teachers were there to teach, right? And to punish you when you are bad, right? Did Mr. Darcy *really* want to know what was "troubling" me?

"Sure. You can tell me."

And I asked him, "I mean, *why*?"

And he said, "Why what?"

And I said, "You want to know."

And he said, "Bombing your nurse..." At this point I started to giggle. "Now, that's not very nice. She's trying to make you well."

And I remembered what she'd told him a few minutes ago, so I said, "I *am* well. Already."

And he said, "You're wound up like cuckoo clock."

And I said, "You're right, sir."

And he said, "So we're back to what's troubling you."

And I said, "Being in here."

And he said, "Well, that can't be helped. You'll be out in three days, I'm told." I knew he'd been told, so at least he was being honest. "What else? In general, maybe."

Well, if he really wanted to know... why not? I took a deep breath and said, "Let's start with free time. We haven't got any. There's a bell for this and a bell for that, and if you're late you don't get to see the movie on Saturday night, not that any of them are much good. And Saturday afternoon there's always a football game and you're supposed to be cheering the team on, only I couldn't care less if our team wins or theirs – what's so great about getting a funny-shaped ball down to the other end of the field while a bunch of kids are roughing you up trying to stop you? And Sunday there's compulsory chapel. And that's just the beginning..."

And he said, looking seriously into my eyes – at least he was taking

me seriously – "Just the beginning?"

And I went on, "Cause there's you people, too."

And he said, "Us?"

And I said, "Un huh." Now I was wondering whether I'd gone too far, but I went on anyhow. "You treat us like we're pets or something. You can only say certain things to us, because we might get the wrong idea or we wouldn't understand or we'd pick up a bad attitude. You don't take us *seriously*."

And he said, "Give me an example."

And I said, "Sex," like it came out of my mouth without me knowing it was going to, or wanting. Actually, I didn't really think much about sex. Maybe that's why it just popped out.

And then Mr. Darcy surprised the hell out of me. He got up, went out into the hall, checked to see if Nurse was there – she wasn't – came back, closed the door and sat down on the side of my bed again. And he said, "Give me an example about sex."

That had me thinking hard. Maybe he was laying a trap for me. Like the police do – butter you up telling you what a fine guy you are, they're your friends, you can tell them everything, even the worst thing you've done doesn't matter to them, isn't serious, and before you know what's happened you're in prison for thirty years for violating some dumb law you didn't even know existed.

But Mr. Darcy didn't seem the type. He was better than most of the other teachers. He wasn't the worst dorm master you could get, even though he didn't have a wife you could go to for comfy back-rubs and stuff when you were a little kid like in some of the dorms. But he was fair. He didn't patrol the hall hours after lights-out to ride herd on night-crawling. He didn't pass out gigs just for the fun of it – like old Needham in the South Dorm passed out gigs as if he was a Jehovah's Witness guy and gigs were *The Watchtower*.

But what kind of an example did Mr. Darcy want?

I asked and he said, "Anything. Anything at all."

And then I thought of something that seemed really, really strange. "Okay, you know you teachers are always saying how some kid or other is developing real good. 'You're growing quite a pair of shoulders,' or 'You sure added a few inches over the summer,' or 'Is that the beginning of hair there on your upper lip?' Well, you see us all naked in the shower every day, or almost every day, and Coach sure does. But there's a lot else that's changing, too, and you never *ever* mention it."

And Mr. Darcy said, "Mention what?"

And I said, "You know."

And Mr. Darcy said, "I suspect I do."

And I said, "I mean, *why?*"

Mr. Darcy just looked at me. I mean, he didn't *just* look at me, it was like he was reading me, or trying to read me. And I wasn't scared, like he'd see something he'd got to punish, not like that at all. I felt warm and kind of excited. I felt like we were getting somewhere. Maybe you had to get sick with pneumonia and be stuck up in the infirmary for a week to be able to communicate with a teacher.

All he said was, "Let's see."

And very slowly, very gently he pulled the covers back.

I hadn't realized it, but our talk had gotten me big, not that it takes very much to get me big these days. Just sitting in the average class I'll usually pop at least one stiffy, half the time for no reason at all. I always wake up that way. If I'm late getting down to the bathroom to brush my teeth it's usually because I got to let the thing get back to socially acceptable size.

Anyhow, it was sticking out of the slit in my pajama bottoms, pretty obvious, eh? Was Mr. Darcy embarrassed? All he said was, "Let's see more." And he loosened the draw strings and laid back the two flaps of blue cloth.

I was so surprised I didn't know really what to do. I'd asked for it, right? I'd asked for comments, and how could you comment if you couldn't see anything? I wasn't about to yell for Nurse. I wasn't about to stop him. But it was, well, the first time anybody'd *looked* at me down there, and I felt really *really* strange.

He tugged on the pajama bottoms, direction down. I let him, and raised my butt a bit to make it easier. When it was all slid off onto my legs, I just lay there, looking at it, and then him, and then it again, and then him again.

I thought something like, 'Mr. Darcy, the ball's in your court now, 'cause I haven't the faintest idea what's up.'

Then he said, "You know, in any pre-industrial society you'd be ready for life. You'd start taking your part in the world of adults." He looked sort of dreamy and gave a big sigh, like grown-ups do. "In any rational society, too."

And I said, "What's that supposed to mean?"

And he said, "Look, lie back, close you eyes, dream. I don't want to know your dreams – they're your private treasure. I think I know what's wrong – right now, anyhow – and what will help. This is something you can't do very well with those hands." He meant the bandages on my rope bums. "What I'm going to do for you now I don't think will surprise you

all that much."

I suppose I ought to have at least half figured out what was coming down. I'd heard kids talking. I'd caught a peep of something going on in the showers once. I knew there was more to some night-crawling than attack. But I'd never suspected a *teacher* even *knew* about such things, much less had any kind of interest in them. So, when I'd laid my head back on the pillow, folded my hands over my tummy and tried to put out of my mind all sorts of troublesome thoughts, what he did came as one big surprise. He touched me – *there* – and I jumped a mile. He didn't just touch me, he wrapped his hand right around it. "Fuckin' *what?*" I gasped out.

But Mr. Darcy shushed me quiet. "You'll bring in the whole school, plus the fire department."

I bet my eyes were as big as a stripper's boobs. I watched his hand start to move back and forth, up and down. I wanted him to stop. I didn't want him to stop. I'd have killed him if he'd stopped. It was more like *he* was killing me! I was dead already, and anyway I couldn't breathe.

His other hand came to my forehead and gently pushed my head back down onto the pillow. "I told you, relax. Enjoy. Everything's going to be okay. Let me take over. It's only something you've done a thousand times – before you damaged your hands."

It was fine for him to say those things, but how could I relax with *his* hand doing what it was doing? And he was wrong about the thousand times. About the only thing my bandaged hands had gotten me out of was football practice. I tried to picture the ocean, on a not real stormy day, not a real calm day, either, but an in-between sort of day, with deep blue waves moving toward shore, a gentle wind, the sailboat rocking, that great smell of the sea and the wind on your skin. But it was no use. All I could think about was Mr. Darcy's fingers giving me a feeling a whole lot more exciting than any faculty wife's back-rub ever had when I was a little 10-year-old. I'd never have believed one man's hand could do that to a boy, never in a million years. 'Cause no fingers had ever been there before, except mine, of course, and then only to hold and squirt. I'd never night-crawled to jump into another kid's bed. I'd never played soap and suds games with my classmates in the shower room. Who'd want to do that, I'd figured, and why? Well, I was finding out fast.

Suddenly the feeling got just an awful lot... how shall I say it... sweeter. Not stronger exactly, but sweeter. I looked down and everything was wet. I still don't know what he'd done, but I have my suspicions. His fingers were

sliding over me down there, not just moving the loose skin back and forth. He saw me watching his hand and our eyes met. "Tell me when you're getting close," he said.

And I said, "Huh?"

And he said, "To coming."

And I said, "Oh, yeah, okay," like I knew what he was talking about.

I suppose you're going to tell me, "What you should have said was 'stop!'" But there was no way I could have.

His hand was tearing me up inside, but at the same time it felt *so good*, and the feeling was only getting better.

Well, I decided to trust him and just let him go ahead. He *was* a teacher, after all. Teachers were like parents, weren't they? They had charge of you. They were supposed to know more than you did (even though they wouldn't tell you anything about what you most wanted to know). And Mr. Darcy was my *dorm master*, which gave him some sort of right, didn't it?

Anyhow, his hand was going faster, now. The feeling down there was stronger and stronger. All kinds of little thrills ran through my gut. I twitched, all over. I bit my lip, jerked my head to one side, cramped my toes, held my breath. I heard myself groaning out some dirty words I'm still embarrassed Mr. Darcy heard, and then it happened: he brought me, for the first time in my life, off.

First times are always special. I remember my first ride in an airplane. It was a small two-seater flown by my uncle. I was maybe eight years old. It felt like the whole sky was crowding into my stomach when we broke ground and the plane's nose with the whirling propeller on it pointed us up into the sky. And the first time I rode a big wave in to the beach. And the first time I saw the Rocky Mountains. I probably had a stiffy all those times, too, but even the airplane ride was nothing compared to this. That feeling from Mr. Darcy's fingers just broke out of the stiffy they were working on and shattered all through me, like icicles exploding in a rainbow, but it was so *warm*, so *good*, so *beautiful*, like it satisfied and answered everything I'd ever wondered about and longed for. And then it just sort of faded away, like a song's got to end, and it's time, so the engineers turn the volume down real slow.

I wasn't sure what had happened. "Man, what'd you *do to me*?" I said, once I'd got my breath back. But not mad – definitely not mad!

All Mr. Darcy said was, "See? You're getting some already."

And I said, "Some what?"

And he said, "Some sperm. Look. Here on your belly."

Well, there was a lot of wet down there, but he pointed to a few drops lying apart from all the rest, around my belly button. I touched one with my finger and moved it around. It was slippery and sticky at the same time. I said, "This is sperm?"

And Mr. Darcy said, "Yes. You know about sperm, don't you?"

And I said, "Of course."

I must have sounded not very convincing because he said, "Was this your first time?"

I didn't see any reason to lie about that, so I nodded.

And he asked, "But you've done that to yourself?"

And I said quickly, "No!"

Now Mr. Darcy was the one who looked shocked. "You mean it? You've never masturbated – jerked yourself off – when your hands were okay?"

I shook my head.

And he said, through his teeth, "Oh, shit!"

And I said, "Sir!", because I wasn't used to hearing teachers use that kind of language.

And he said, "Listen, we've got to talk."

And I thought, 'Oh, no, here come those salmon again jumping up those goddamned falls.'

And he said, "First of all, you don't tell anyone about this, right? Second, I didn't mean for it to happen." Now, that I *didn't* believe. It was *his* hands that were down there doing the thing to me, right? I must have had my 'oh, come off it' look on my face because he said 'shit' again, which made me giggle, but he was so serious I straightened my face as best I could, and he went on, like he was apologizing to me, "What I meant to say is, I'd no idea, no *suspicion*, you were still *innocent!* Oh, Lord, what a mess!"

Meanwhile, I'd grabbed a Kleenex and was mopping up the goo. If that was what he'd meant by mess, I didn't mind. Talk about salmon – *my* totally new little wiggles were in that stuff, wagging their tails, all hot and bothered about finding *their* kind of egg! For once a teacher had taught me something, not with all his talk talk talk, which was still going on, but with his live attached-on hands.

Then I heard him say, "So, I'll bet you have a lot of questions now, don't you?"

And I said, "Yes, sir, one anyhow."

And he said, "Well, let's have it."

And I said, "When are we going to do this again?"