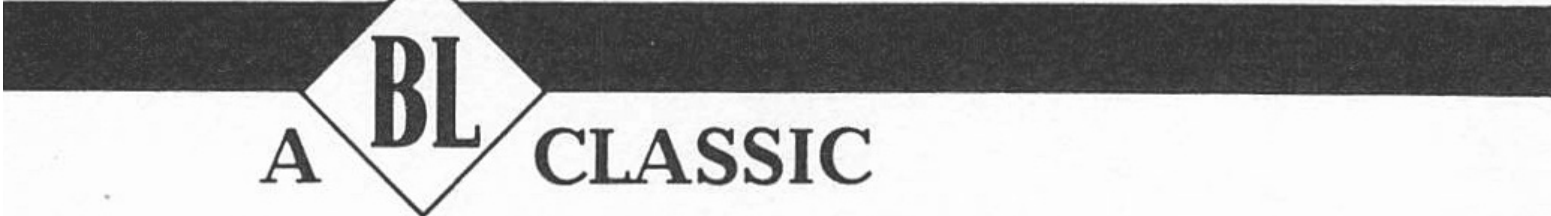


**THE CHRONICLES OF
THE DESERT RANCH SCHOOL
BY PETER ZUPP**

A **BL** CLASSIC

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AUTHOR'S DISCLAIMER

The situations and characters portrayed herein are exclusively fictitious and are not intended to represent any actual persons or places. The Desert Ranch School does not exist and never has existed, alas. Anyone who sees in himself Headmaster Holroyd should report himself immediately to the Authorities. No one, of course, who in the course of his boyhood had experiences like those of Jeff, Billy, Ralph or Jody will be reading this book, since modern psychiatry has conclusively demonstrated that they would be dead, in prison or under perpetual custodial care.

Chapter One

At a pool in the little mountain stream I splashed cold water on my face and then, as the surface stilled, looked at it in the first gray light of dawn. Nothing very remarkable there – an average enough face for a fourteen-year-old: fairly long sand-colored hair conventionally mussed, smooth forehead, strong mouth and chin, a kid's nose that I guess some day I'll grow out of, short sideburns petering out like a pair of commas in front of my ears.

Nothing there to make you suspect there was the blood of two human beings stiffening on my Levis. Which I had a horrible compulsion to shuck off and bury, as though by getting rid of Mr. Holroyd's and Billy's blood I could make it really not have happened at all.

I got back on my horse and rode down the canyon to Little Spread, found the bunk house and crept into Ralph's room. Ralph was sleeping naked on his back, covers kicked aside, one hand resting above his head on the pillow, the other covering his cock and balls. His face was turned towards me. I could see his chest breathing slowly, deep and even.

I stripped as quietly as I could. My cock popped up out of my skivs already hard. Then I went to the bed, shivering a little, lay down, pulled the sheet Ralph had kicked off over my shoulders and breathed the old familiar smells of his great seventeen-year-old body.

He drifted awake. "Well, hi," he said. He pulled me into his arms.

"Hi."

A hand went into my hair and played with it at the spot he liked best. I could feel his cock hardening up beside my own. I dropped my chin onto his shoulder, pressed my cheek against his face.

"I sure didn't expect this tonight," he murmured. "How come you're here?"

"Long story."

"Trouble?"

"Yes."

"Want to talk about it?"

"Later."

Ralph rolled onto his side and I slid off of him, our cocks briefly dueling as I did. He raised his head on an arm and stared into my eyes.

"You smell of horse," he said. "Did you ride here from school?"

I nodded. I put a hand on his cock, which was full-hard now, and began to pull on it, thumbing the end and the little fold of nerves just below its slit. Even in the dull light of dawn I could see fire leap into his eyes.

"Oh, Jeff," he whispered, "I've missed this!"

His hand came to my cock and began to stroke it. I closed my eyes and gave myself up to the double joy sweeping through my body: the wonderful warm, hard penis filling my grip and starting to make it slippery, and the firm, knowing beat that Ralph was applying to my cock that flooded my groin with passion.

"Man, does that feel good!" I murmured.

I felt lips on my lips. I opened my mouth. Ralph's tongue touched my lips, then my teeth, which parted to accept him, and then our mouths were one, our tongues a single warm and slithery monster writhing in a single bed of mingled wetness.

I pulled away and backed my cock out of Ralph's hand and held my breath until I had my feelings under control.

"Wow, that was close!" I gasped. Then I was shifting and he was helping me and the smooth, soft end of his cock was teasing around my mouth and bobbing against the tip of my nose. Its scent was sweet, with just a hint of the stronger smells of down below. I licked my lips and opened them and ran my tongue tentatively around the rim. And then, as the head swelled and pulsed, I sucked it in, just as I felt his mouth take mine.

They say that when you have just been through hell you can't possibly make love. But I'd never had the sex feeling keener than I did that night. I'd never felt the joy of taking another cock in my mouth more thrilling. As I wet his shank lower and lower I could let it slip in deeper and deeper, until the front was riding well back in my throat and my chin was buried in pubic hair.

It was over much too soon. That final falling-off-a-cliff feeling just couldn't be postponed. I thrust with my hips, worked with my mouth. Our two cocks rode smooth and warm and true, slipping in and out through spitty lips, beating harder and faster with each pulse. My feelings broke away from the little bed in the bunk house and soared up into the brightening dawn, higher and swifter, like the beat of wings of some legendary dinosaur-bird. And then it was out, into my mouth and Ralph's mouth, our sperms, spurting and squirting in wild, sweet gushes.

I reversed position and folded myself into Ralph's arms. "Okay," he said, "tell me about it."

I did, but the real beginning goes back to the fourth of September of the year before.

I was standing at the gate at O'Hare airport getting ready to kiss my parents goodbye when I saw this other couple waving frantically at us and pushing through the crowd. The woman fell into my mother's arms, the man shook hands with Dad and it was then that I saw Billy Bowden for the first time. He was wearing maroon slacks and matching sport jacket and tie and he was holding back a little, not embarrassed exactly, just reserved. As we were introduced I remember thinking he was the most handsome boy of my age I'd ever seen.

The plane had already been called. Billy and I squirmed through the parting parental hugs and lined up at the ramp.

"So, you're going to be in the eighth grade, too," Billy said.

"I guess so."

"You ever gone away to school before?"

"No."

"It's not so bad. Last year I was hardly home-sick at all."

"I wonder what kind of plane it is," I said, steering the talk in a safer direction. We were walking down the ramp, sandwiched between businessmen grasping their attache cases.

"707. Are you going economy?"

"Yes."

"Figures. My folks always buy the most expensive, whether it's worth it or not."

When we reached the cabin, Billy dropped into one of the wide first-class seats and said, "See you later, Jeff. Maybe they'll let me come back once we've leveled out."

I had a window seat near the tail. When the plane lifted off the runway and shoved its nose into the clouds, I suddenly knew that everything was going to be changed from now on. Of course, there'd been changes in my life before, especially when we'd moved from Chicago to northern Michigan when I was ten. But this was the first time I was going to be really away from my parents and on my own.

For a minute or two passing through the clouds, the plane shuddered and shook, and then we broke out on top into a sunny airspace of tall towers of cumulus and valleys deeper than any I knew of on earth. The safety belt sign went off. I looked around for Billy but the plane was pretty crowded. Two young soldiers had the seats beside me. They had been up all night on military stand-by and they were soon sound asleep, one's head on the other's shoulder. Somehow that looked nice and I envied them their closeness.

We had to stop at Denver. While we were on the ground the ground crew found something wrong with a fuel pump on one of the engines and after fiddling with it for an hour or two, they gave up and the airlines sent us all to a motel with instructions to check on departure time at seven in the morning.

Billy and I were given a room with one double bed. I had never slept with another person before. It seemed kind of funny to crawl under the same sheets with a boy I had never even met until that afternoon, naked except for my undershorts.

I asked Billy what it was like at the Desert Ranch School.

"Okay," he said. "You'll get used to it. The kids are pretty great. Oh, we have a few dinks in our class, like Jody Wentworth."

"Is he ugly or something?"

"No, his looks are okay. He's just, I don't know, bratty. With a dirty mind. I feel sorry for him, actually."

"And the teachers?"

"Most of them are nice guys. They got rid of one sour apple last spring."

"Was he mean?"

"No, he *loved* kids. Only a little too literally."

"What do you mean?"

"Come on! You're not that square, are you?"

I still didn't know what Billy was talking about, so I asked him about classes and if he got good marks.

"I guess so," he said. "How about you?"

"So far it hasn't been hard. There's exactly one other kid in my grade at home and she's a girl and I couldn't let a girl beat me."

Billy questioned me about life in northern Michigan, the woods and streams and game, the Finnish people who were our neighbors. Billy was a city boy and the Desert Ranch School was as close as he had ever come to living in the country. He told me it was only thirty miles as the crow flies from Tucson, but it was right next to the mountains. You could ride up a canyon and camp and really lose yourself in the wilderness.

It was midnight before we stopped talking. I remember thinking how lucky I was to have run into Billy at O'Hare. Always, or ever since I've been old enough, I've had this thing about a best friend. I've never run with a crowd or needed lots of buddies around me, just one kid that I can be close to, talk things over with, no holds barred. Whenever I don't have such a best friend I feel a little unsure of myself and somehow incomplete. The last friend had been Rusty Haikannen, but he had moved away from the village two years before. Now, as I lay in the dark getting ready to sleep, I wondered if Billy would want me for his best friend. I would be new at school and he was coming back and knew the ropes and that could help me a lot. I was beginning to like him very much.

The telephone rang at quarter to seven. I was closest, so I answered it. Then I got up and went into the bathroom to piss and rinse my mouth out. Then I called the airline. Billy was next in the bathroom, and when he came out I gave him the good news. "We can go back to bed and check with them again at

nine."

Even tousled and half asleep, Billy was a handsome kid. His hair was blond and had a marvelous luster. He wore it medium long, front lock, when it was brushed, crossing his forehead sideways. His eyes were sky blue. His nose was straight, mouth full and ready to smile upon white, even teeth. His body was lean and graceful, skin pale pink like most city people but clear and smooth.

"That's good," he said, managing a sleepy smile. He crawled under the covers and turned to me. I watched his eyes close, then long blond lashes fold down on his cheeks. A fist rested on the pillow beside his face, his lips lightly grazing a knuckle. Somehow I wanted to reach out and touch his face, run my hand along his shoulders and neck.

His eyes opened and he stared at me seriously. "You know you were all over me last night," he said.

"How's that?"

"Lying on top of me and stuff."

"Gee, I'm sorry," I said. "I'm not used to sharing a bed, I guess."

"You really were asleep?"

"Right until that phone rang. I'm sorry if I woke you up."

"That's all right. Did you have any dreams?"

"No. Why?"

"Cause you were horny as hell."

"What's that?"

Billy stared at me as though I was trying to put him on. "You had a... You..." He turned away from me and said with a little edge to his voice, "Oh, forget it."

"Forget what?"

"I want to sleep now, Jeff. Okay?"

I got up and showered and dressed and walked to the terminal, vaguely uneasy about what Billy had been trying to say. I was sorry he was annoyed. But why hadn't he awakened me and told me to move over?

I bought a comic book and went into the coffee shop and had breakfast. The two soldiers I had ridden with from Chicago were sitting at a table near me. I caught the eye of one of them and waved, but they were in some sort of argument, I could see, so they ignored me.

At nine o'clock I went back to the room. Billy was dressed and packed and he smiled at me when I came in, which made me feel a whole lot better. "Jeff, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings," he said.

"You didn't."

"I guess you really didn't know what you were doing."

"I didn't. I still don't."

"I believe you. Well, our plane leaves in half an hour."

We checked our bags at the terminal and went to the breakfast counter for a cup of coffee. I was just starting to question Billy some more about school when there was this terrific crash behind us, the sound of a table being upset and all the plates and silverware falling to the floor. We swung around and there were the two soldiers squaring off to fight. One had coffee running down his face and soaking into his uniform.

"Okay, you sonofabitch," the other was shouting, "throw yourself at Kevin! Just don't expect me to..."

He was cut short by a fist slamming into his stomach and another cutting up to his chin. MPs materialized out of nowhere. The soldiers were dragged off.

"Poor bastards," Billy said and sighed. "The authorities will probably know about them, now."

"Court marshal them for fighting?"

"That's the least of their troubles," Billy said, but he wouldn't elaborate.

In the clearest autumn weather we flew to Tucson and stepped out into the hot, dry desert and its sun-filtered air.

I heard myself saying, "Well, here we are. This is it." Billy put his hand to my shoulder and gripped it and smiled.

Chapter Two

It must have been a hundred degrees. We took a bus to Cochise Junction which wasn't much more than a gas station, a general store and the No Delay Cafe, where we ordered a couple of chocolate shakes and Billy telephoned the school.

A little later, as we were sitting at the counter, a couple of hands gripped Billy's shoulders. A voice behind him said, "Despair, punk. Leave your freedom behind."

That was the first time I saw Ralph. He was wearing blue jeans and a straw hat and he had a fun-teasing smile on his face, but the sort of smile, and the sort of face, that told you he was the boss and you'd better know it and although you could joke and mess around with him up to a point, you'd better find out what that point was and not try to go past it.

"Hey!" Billy said, jumping up, recognizing him. "They sent *you* to get us?"

"Yup."

"That's right, you're a prefect now."

"What's a prefect?" I asked.

Ralph shifted his gaze to me. "A senior that you gotta do what he says. Like bubble up the last of that shake – we gotta hit the road."

We loaded our bags into the school Wagoneer and climbed, the three of us, into the front seat. Ralph pulled out onto the main highway, drove a few miles and then turned off and followed a dirt road that wound over dry hills covered with cactus and chaparral rising steadily toward the dark shoulder of a mountain range.

I looked at Ralph again. He was steering the car easily with one hand, the other elbow resting on the bottom of the open window. His hair was dark brown, a lock of it straying onto his broad forehead from beneath his hat. His eyes were deep greenish blue, his nose straight, jaw firm, teeth even and white. I realized with a little shock of excitement that Ralph was an outstandingly good-looking guy.

"How's the food at school?" I asked.

Ralph met my eyes quickly and grinned. "They tell us it's nourishing, and there's lots of it."

We popped over a rise and suddenly the school lay in front of us. First we passed the stable with its satellite sheds and corrals dotted with drowsing horses, then the dirt playing field, bare of grass but oiled brick-red to keep the dust down, finally the school buildings themselves, a sprawling Spanish chain of one-story wings with garden patios enclosed.

Mr. Holroyd greeted us at the front door. The first thing I noticed about our headmaster as he came down the hall toward us was his walk. He seemed to lead each step with his elbows and knees and forehead, while the rest of his body followed behind. He had a high forehead covered with wisps of mouse-colored hair. He wore octagonal glasses framed in steel and they sat a little too far down on his skinny nose, so he was constantly peering over them, like some kind of a big-beaked bird.

When I took his hand it was soft at first, then, as though remembering, he squeezed to the point of pain.

"Yes, yes," he said. "I just talked with your mother, Jeffrey, and told her you had arrived at Cochise Junction. A day late to be sure, but that can't be helped."

Billy was detained in the office on something or other and Ralph was told to show me where I would sleep. The building seemed awfully big on that first walk, when I trailed Ralph carrying my suitcases to the eighth grade hall. Every boy in school seemed to be standing in his door looking at me. My assigned room was a spartan affair. There was a small bureau, closet, wooden chair and desk, a narrow bed and a

thin mattress on open springs.

"Let me know if you need anything," Ralph said. Then he turned on his heel and left. I lay down on my bed and waited for Billy to come back, feeling very alone. And, I had to admit, a bit homesick.

I met my other classmates: Tim Bannion, a smaller tow-headed boy with hazel eyes, Jock Danforth, who was a year older and quite a bit bigger than the rest of us (he had been set back a grade by a bout with hepatitis) and Jody Wentworth, the kid Billy had called a brat.

After supper I decided to shower off. There's something about warm water falling on your shoulders and running down your body that's just got to be the most sensual non-body-contact thing that can happen to a guy. I stood there in the eighth grade shower room with my eyes closed, lathering my chest and head and crotch, just plain enjoying myself. At that time in my life the very first blond hairs were beginning to appear in a little semi-circle about the root of my penis. I got an erection, but the bathroom was empty so I didn't care. Besides, I didn't really know what an erection was.

People assume nowadays that no kid pushing puberty is totally naive in sexual matters. Well, I was. Small towns are very conservative. I had grown up with almost no companions of my own age – thus my "thing" about getting a best friend. Sex talk, the "gutter", had never existed for me.

Still, when I slowly became aware of somebody else in the shower room, I got embarrassed. I really wasn't sure I wasn't the only male in the whole world who had a penis that got hard and stiff and stuck out in front of him like he was riding some sort of hammer stuck between his legs, trying to show off that he was a boy and not a girl or whatever. I didn't think my cock was nice, especially when it insisted on embarrassing me. Anyhow, I washed the suds from my eyes, and when I opened them there was Jody Wentworth sitting on a basin across from me, watching me and grinning a chubby grin.

Just my luck. And on my first day at school. Jody was the sort who would tattle and talk. He would try to lord it over any new boy he could get something on. I had to stop him, and do it quick.

I was holding a cake of soap so I pegged it at his face. He ducked, too late, for he had been ogling my stiff penis. I caught him in the mouth, the soap bouncing off his face and careening down the shower room floor. Jody gasped and started to say something, but the door to the shower room banged open and a whole crew of kids stormed in. I stared a warning into Jody's eyes, then turned my back, penis quickly going down, rinsed off, got out of the shower stall, put on my bathrobe and retreated to my room. For some reason which I couldn't understand at all, I was trembling.

"Sorry I stopped your fun."

I jumped and turned around. Jody was standing at my door. He laughed and said, "Can I come in?"

"No."

Jody came in anyhow and started staring at my crotch. "That was a good boner you were making in the bathroom," he said.

"A what?"

"This." Jody's hand shot inside my bathrobe and grabbed my penis and gave it a pull. I knocked his hand away and gasped, not just out of embarrassment and anger, but because Jody's aim had been just about perfect and the feeling that I got from his touch was new and strange and delicious.

Jody stood back and looked at me. A maddening, bratty grin spread across his face. Jody was a good-looking, well-coordinated, graceful kid, but he had the knack of getting under your skin. I gave him a shove toward the door but he groped me again through the slit in my bathrobe, and again I got that wonderful new feeling in my cock.

This time I walked past him and slammed the door to my room. I was mad, but excited, too. I turned around to face him. I didn't know what the score was, or what was going to happen next, but I was darned sure I didn't want anybody watching. Jody was right there behind me, and now when he reached for me he

had a hard handle to hold.

He didn't just hang on. He moved his fingers over the loose skin, thumbing the sensitive tip. He stared into my eyes, catching fire from the fire he saw. I was trembling harder, now. Goose flesh tightened the skin on my chest and thighs. The feeling in my penis rose, stronger, sweeter, higher, more demanding all the time.

In a moment the tension was unbearable. I pulled Jody's hand away from my cock and gazed at myself in the mirror. There was my familiar mussed hair tumbling down from the peak of my head like a hay mound. I saw my blue eyes staring back at me, inquiring. A new flush had come into my lightly tanned cheeks and was spreading a downward across my throat and neck. Was I becoming soiled, whatever that meant? What would have happened if I had let Jody keep on rubbing my pecker? Would I have burned up, gone crazy? Jody's face appeared behind mine in the mirror.

"Scared?" he asked.

I shook my head, lying.

Jody reached in front of me and once again put his hand inside my bathrobe. But as soon as he touched my cock I whirled around, grabbed *his* bathrobe by the neck and forced it down across his back.

Of course I had seen boys naked before, but their penises, both the little ones and the older ones with hair, had always been limp, down-hung and sometimes shrunken to a button. Now here was Jody standing in front of me in the altogether with his cock in as stiff a state as any thirteen-year-old's cock could ever be. I devoured it with my eyes, from its darkened wrinkled ball sack, up through the white root, along the blue-veined shaft, up to its end at the lavender, heart-shaped head. Like me, he had the beginnings of a pubic thatch. Like me, the reach of his erection was about four inches. With quite a feeling of relief I realized that Jody's prick was acting just the way my own did when I woke up having to piss or something gave me that tingle feeling. I wasn't the only boy in the world with a stiff cock. I wasn't unique.

Jody took one of my hands and pulled it to him. I shook my head. Jody moved toward me. The grin on his face was gone. His lips were parted a little and he was breathing more deeply than usual. Suddenly I heard the door handle turn. Jody and I jumped apart. My bathrobe closed. Jody snatched up his and held it to his crotch. Ralph Mason came in.

"What're you kids doing?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Jody.

"Nothing," I said.

"Well, one of you doesn't live here. Jody, go to your room and get dressed."

Jody slipped into his bathrobe and scuttled out. Now I was left standing in Ralph's steady stare, alone with my fright.

"Was Jody annoying you?" Ralph asked.

I shook my head.

"Well, it doesn't matter much anyhow." When he turned around and left it seemed to me that he was smiling.

Adapting to boarding-school life wasn't going to be all that simple, I could see. For one thing I wasn't used to the desert climate. Our little rooms got hot during the day and were slow to cool off in the evening. That first night, with Jody on my mind, I had a hard time getting to sleep, and when I finally did it seemed no time at all before I was being awakened by the angry electric bell that was to rule our comings and goings for the next nine months. After breakfast classes started. In the afternoon we were assigned our horses and in the tack room checked out the saddles and bridles which we were to care for during the rest of the year.

But that evening after lights out I visited Billy and crawled into his bed for the first session of what we soon began to call "The Talk Show": a general review of everything that had happened to us during the last twenty-four hours, when we commented, joked, sometimes made up wild fantasies, such as Mr. Holroyd being propositioned by the Chicago Ballet for the lead role in *Swan Lake*.

I didn't say anything about Jody in the Talk Show that night. He knew that Ralph had kicked Jody out of my room the day before and I think Billy suspected something strange had been going on although he didn't question me about it.

Saturday afternoon there was a track meet in Tucson for the younger boys of the Desert League – made up of several nearby private schools – and afterwards we were allowed to go to the movies. I sat between Jody and Tim Bannion. The man in the seat in front of me was tall and I had to peer around him all the time to see the action. Beside him was a big, good-looking boy, a junior or senior, wearing his high school sweat-shirt. Although the two hadn't come in together, they soon began whispering.

Jody nudged me. "They're making a date."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

Jody grabbed my hand, stretched out a finger and played on it with his fingers as he had played on my cock earlier in the week.

I snatched my hand away. "You don't know that," I said.

"You'll see," Jody whispered.

A few minutes later the boy got up and started walking to the back of the theater.

"Come on," Jody said, grabbing my hand.

We followed the boy to the men's room and waited while he used one of the urinals. The boy turned around, zipped up. Jody caught his eye and said, "How much is he going to give you?"

"Who?" the boy said. He stood looking at us with his mouth open, a golden lock of hair spilling across his forehead.

"Your mark," Jody said.

The boy rolled his gum and smiled, a little crookedly. "You're too young to know about that sort of thing."

"Bullshit. How much you get?"

The boy laughed, his white teeth flashing. "Where you kids from?"

"Desert Ranch."

"You let the teachers swing on your dicks for change?" the boy asked.

"Nope."

"Grades?"

"Maybe."

I was shocked and looked at Jody. I still didn't know what they were talking about but I figured it was dirty. Why else would Jody be interested?

"Well, gotta go," the boy said.

"How much you gonna get?" Jody persisted.

The boy smiled again, patronizingly. "Depends on what he wants to do. Isn't that the way it goes?"

"Oh," said Jody. "What does it usually run, for all night?"

"I don't stay out all night. Can't get away from the establishment that long."

"Makes sense," Jody said. "Will you get fifteen bucks?"

"Could be. Now is that all you want to know?"

"I guess so." Jody turned to me. "You want to ask him anything?"

"N... no," I said in some confusion.

"Then, can I go now?" the boy asked.

"Sure," we both said, and the boy bound out the door.

When Jody and I returned to our seats, both man and boy were gone.

"Where you been?" Tim asked.

"In the can," I said.

"You missed the best part of the picture. This plane was coming..."

But I wasn't listening to Tim or paying attention to the movie either. I was remembering the boy who stood tall as a man. Shutting my eyes I could see his face. When I got a little older I would let my hair grow as his did, stand the way he did, with my feet a little apart, wear tight jeans that showed off everything I had in my crotch.

"Where they going?" I whispered to Jody.

"How do I know?"

"What're they going to do?"

"Screw."

"What do you mean?"

"What I said."

"How?"

"Use your imagination."

I slumped down in my seat and tried to get interested in what what was going on in the movie. A few minutes later Jody whispered in my ear, "If you really want to know what those guys are up to, I'll show you tomorrow."

"You're not getting me to do anything dirty," I whispered back.

"Oh yeah?"

That night, after the Talk Show, back in my own bed, I decided to try out on myself what Jody had done to me. I wrapped my fingers around my dick, which was already hard with anticipation, and started pulling on it, rubbing the skin up and down. The feeling came back and it was nice but not as strong as it had been with Jody. I kept on rubbing, remembering Jody's cock, the way it stood out, the way he got nervous and wanted me to take hold of it. The feeling got stronger and stronger, sweeter and sweeter. I was sure what I was doing was somehow wrong. It certainly was dirty. But I couldn't seem to stop. A great warmth was spreading out in me, a feeling like I was discovering something that was new but old at the same time, and that would answer a hundred longings and questions. My grip became stronger, my stroke faster, my thoughts more free. I thought of the kids in the shower fooling around the way they always did when they came in from football practice. I thought of older boys like the kid in the theater and Ralph stripped to the waist and tossing a football. I wondered if their huge cocks ever grew hard like Jody's and mine did.

And then the feeling got so strong that I couldn't think about anything but my flying fist and what it was doing to me. I probably was sweating. I certainly was scared. The feeling rose and rose, until I was a trembling, panting, nervous wreck, but then it peaked and, with a series of little clicks, it resolved itself sweetly and left me in peace.

A moment or two later I noticed that my hand and prick-tip were wet and slippery. I assumed that I had somehow pissed a little at the peak of my excitement.

Sunday dawned clear and hot and still. By early afternoon we were sweating and irritable and there

was a fight between Jock Danforth and a ninth grader who had wandered into our hall, and somehow or other we all got involved in it. Ralph was the prefect in charge, and he broke it up by hosing us down with cold water. We walked away like wet cats, mad at the world.

I was still mad a half hour later when I found myself standing under a mesquite tree some distance from school staring at Jody, who was explaining to me how he was about to further my education.

"Let's cut the crap," I said, after listening to him for a few minutes. "Let's have it."

"What?" Jody teased.

"I don't know," I said. "You talked about that kid in the theater doing things you'd tell me about today. We're alone, so shoot."

Jody grinned. "I'm going to do you a big favor. I'm not going to tell you anything. I'm going to show you."

He grabbed my hand and pressed it against the front of his Levis. Even with the back of my hand I could feel, underneath the rough cloth which covered the area between his fly zipper and his pocket, the ridge of his excited cock, like some kind of fat cigar, only bent a little. It was clammy warm and it seemed a little wet. Although that was probably only from sweat, the first thing that went through my mind was that he had pissed his pants a little, like I did at the end the night before.

Anyhow I was all of a sudden fighting mad. I yanked my hand away and spat in his face. And that made me feel real good for some reason. I knew Jody wouldn't fight, so I crossed my arms over my chest and watched him. The spittle, and there was a lot of it, clung to his face like a flock of little burrs to a sock. It stippled his cheeks, bridged his nose, hung on his eyelashes and began to gather at the point of his chin. I thought suddenly of the soldier in the Denver cafeteria standing up with coffee running down all over his face.

"Cheez!" Jody exclaimed, grinning through the spit. "Are you ever a dirty guy!"

Then I attacked. In a few seconds I had him down, lying passively under me while I held his wrists spread-eagled in the sand. "Give?" I said.

Jody shrugged, which in his position came off more or less as a wiggle. I interpreted it as a yes and let go of his wrists. Immediately his arms came about my back, but softly, not as though he wanted to continue the fight.

"Let go," I told him.

He grinned back and shook his head. "Make me," he teased.

"Damn it, do you give or don't you?"

"Neither."

I lifted myself off him, but he still tried to cling to me. While I was busy figuring out how to break his grip and slip out of his hug, one of his hands came to my crotch and began to move.

All the old feelings flooded back. I froze. I held my breath, flushing, knowing Jody saw my reaction. I hung there on elbows and knees, blood pulsing loudly in my ears, staring down on Jody's wet face, while inside my faded blue denims my cock filled with a couple of quick jerks. Jody's hand went to my zipper and was soon inside, running along the surface of the underclothes, probing for its slit.

I gave up. I didn't let myself think. I rolled onto my back and drew an arm across my eyes. Jody tugged on my Levis. I unweighted my hips and he pulled the rumpling denim down my thighs. My undershorts followed and at last Jody's fingers came bare around my cock.

"Oh!" I stifled a sob and bit the flesh of my forearm.

Slowly, delicately, Jody's fingers built a huge bonfire in my cock and in my balls. I didn't move, except for the slow involuntary contraction of all my muscles. I hardly dared breathe. At last I felt the final rise approaching. I closed my eyes, clenched my fists, gritted my teeth.

And then Jody stopped. I held my breath and bore the decline of passion the way you bear the declining pain of a stubbed toe.

"What did you do that for?" I asked, after I had mastered my feelings.

"Cause," Jody said.

"I thought you liked... doing what you were doing."

"I got tired of it."

"Well, it's a dirty trick to start and then stop."

"I know, but there was nothing in it for me."

"Christ!" I stood up and started pulling on my clothes.

"Hey, where you going?" Jody asked.

"Home. I'm fed up."

"Look. The idea is that I do you a little while and then you do me a little while and then we do it together a little while, so no-one is left out at the end. Come on, Jeff..."

But I was running now, away from him and back to school.

Chapter Three

A couple of nights later, long after the Talk Show was over and I had returned to my room, I woke up to find someone sitting on the side of my bed.

"Who is it?" I asked sleepily.

"Jody."

"Christ, not again!" I opened my eyes. "What do you want? It's the middle of the night."

"I couldn't sleep," Jody said.

"What's wrong? You sick?"

"Naw."

"Homesick?"

"Hell, no. I got a hard-on." Jody's hands started to grope me through the top sheet.

I moved away and sat up. "I thought we went through all that before."

"We fouled up," Jody said quickly. "I forgot you didn't know the score, so it was kind of my fault..."

"Where's Ralph?" The prefect in charge of our hall always waited around an hour or so in the rec room after lights-out.

"Asleep, I guess. It's late." Jody slipped his hand under the sheet, caught my cock and began to pull on it gently. "Besides, doing this is nothing new to him."

"You're kidding. He's a grown-up, just about."

"Got one of these, hasn't he?"

Once more the strong, sweet feeling rubbed off the tips of Jody's fingers and went off like a bomb in my crotch.

"You gonna stop again?" I wanted to know.

"Depends." Jody released my cock and stood to skin himself out of his undershorts. For a half-second I saw his erection dancing in front of me, reflecting the dim, soft light from the hall.

"Move over," Jody said. I made room for him. He slipped in beside me and took my cock again. "The thing is," he said, turning his face to mine, "you can't just lie back the way you did. You gotta do it to the other guy, too."

"Is that why you quit on me?"

"That's what I been trying to tell you!"

"Oh."

"Come on, let's have a little action." Jody grabbed my hand and put it on his cock.

At the first touch of his soft and velvety cockhead my heart lost a beat, then began to pound. When I pressed on the shaft it clicked, and amplified shivers bounced around from one end of Jody's body to the other. I moved my fingertips, exploring the trunk, the root, the wrinkled pouch, pressed the squishy head.

"Man," Jody said, "you act like you never done this before."

"I haven't."

"Even to yourself?"

"Well..."

"Oh come on. Nobody's never jerked off."

"What's jerked off?"

Jody stilled his hand. "Are you dumb or are you putting me on?"

"Not every guy's got a dirty mind."

Jody closed his hand around my fingers and tightened the pressure on his cockshaft. Then he guided me in the strong stroke he wanted.

"There," Jody said. "If you screw up I'll screw you up." He took my cock as I had his and we began to move to the same rhythm.

Then everything was quiet, except for the sound of rubbing on the sheet over us and heavy breathing coming out of Jody's mouth.

"That's lots better," Jody whispered. "You tell me when you're getting close, okay?"

"Okay," I said. I lay back and gave myself up to that great new feeling that even now seems to me like rushing toward a cliff and then falling over it. It wasn't just in my cock and crotch but spread out all through my body, to every nerve and bit of hair. What had I been missing all these months? Where had I been?

A moment later Jody sucked in his breath. It hissed between closed teeth. "Speed up," he said.

I turned to look at him in the faint light. His eyes were half closed. He started to bite his lower lip.

"Are you getting there?" he whispered harshly.

"Yup."

"Okay, don't stop."

"Don't you stop!"

By now our hands were whirling like windmills. Jody started to moan, very softly, low in the throat. I inhaled deeper and deeper as the feeling exploded in my body. Then I flew over the top and so did he. I felt his cock pulse and throb between my fingers and get wet, even as my own was moistening and pulsing in Jody's hand. Our motions slowed, then stopped. We lay beside each other, breathing free and calm.

"Aren't you going back to your own bed," I asked after a little while.

"Nope."

I didn't care. I was terribly sleepy and strangely pleased with myself. I turned my back to Jody and slept.

The bed was small and it wasn't more than an hour before our bodies tangled and I awakened with Jody breathing in my face.

"It's pretty crowded in here," I said. "Why don't you go over to your own room?"

"Huh?"

"Don't flatten me against the wall."

"Sorry."

"We're awful close"

"I don't mind if you don't mind."

I straightened the covers, folded my arms over my chest and closed my eyes.

"Jeff?" Jody said.

"Yeah?"

"Do you really mean you never jerked off before?"

"Nope"

"Even on yourself?"

"Okay, I've done it to myself. Does that make you feel better?"

"It makes me believe you. But tonight was the first time you ever done it with another boy?"

"That's right."

"I've done it lots of times."

"Big deal."

"It's not bad for you, in case you're worried."

Once again I slept, but this time I dreamed. Jody and I were riding a horse bareback together. The horse was cantering and Jody was sitting behind me holding onto my belt with both hands. Ralph Mason came up on a huge black stallion that towered above us and shouted, "Hey, kids, get off before you're killed!" An abyss opened up in front of us. We started to fall. I woke up with Jody shaking me by the shoulders. When I touched my cock I found it was wet.

"You been fooling around with my dick?" I growled.

"I guess so."

"What's this guck?"

"I don't know."

I sniffed my fingers.

"Maybe it's sperm." Jody said.

"Don't you ever think about anything except pulling on people's peters?"

"Sure, occasionally."

"Now let's get some sleep."

"Okay."

"Or, better yet, you go to your own room."

"I guess I'll stay here."

"What do you like about sleeping this way, anyhow?"

"Sooner or later you're going to want to jerk off again."

"So?"

"I want to be here when you do."

There was gray light coming through the window. I glanced at my watch and then at Jody. He stirred, removed a thumb-knuckle from between his teeth and licked his dry lips. His eyes opened to a squint.

"What time is it?" Jody asked.

"Six-thirty."

"I wasn't really asleep. I was just dozing. Let's do it again." And I felt Jody's fingers coming around my morning erection.

"That's not hard because of you," I said. I got out of bed and slipped into my bathrobe and walked with the unsteadiness of waking down to the shower.

Everything seemed different that early morning: the deserted hall, the twilight seeping through the windows. I had to pinch myself in order to make my erection go down.

"You pissed off your hard-on?" Jody asked when I was back in my bedroom.

"You'll find out." I stripped and slipped into bed.

"This time," Jody said, "let's not do it dry."

"What do you mean?"

"It's better slippery."

"How you going to make it slippery?"

"Don't you know?" Jody grinned his chubby grin and wrapped his fingers around my cock.

I shook my head.

"Use your imagination."

"I guess I have some hair tonic in the drawer," I said.

"Not that!" Jody whispered.

"Then what?"

"Think."

"Look, Wentworth..."

"What do you always got with you...?"

"I don't know."

"...that's slippery and never leaves a mess?"

"You tell me."

"What you always got in your mouth."

I didn't say anything at first. Then I pulled back from him.

"Fuck it," I said, "that was what was on my dick when I woke up."

"I guess so," Jody whispered.

I remembered our fight, if you could call it that, in the wash, and suddenly I understood. "You like it," I said. "You like it for what it is."

"I..."

"It gives you a boner, Wentworth. You're that kind of a dirty guy. But I don't get a charge out of anyone else's spit, leastways not yours. And I don't like waking up finding you've got it all over me."

"Shh. Don't get sore. It wasn't all over you. I just rubbed some on *down there*, which is what a lot of guys do. We can use yours, if you want."

"I don't want and we're not going to."

I got up and grabbed the hair tonic and pulled back the sheet and doused Jody's stomach.

He grinned. "You're gonna mess up your sheets."

"That's better than what you had in mind," I threw myself on top of Jody, caught his neck in the crook of my elbow and started to squeeze.

"Oh!" Jody said, but his arms came lovingly around my back.

I drove my cock down into Jody's slippery stomach. "That's for spitting on me while I was asleep." I put my hand over Jody's mouth and cut off his air. "Promise you'll never do it again."

He nodded under my hand. I stabbed twice more with my prick, then released his mouth. He panted into my face, his morning breath mingling with the smell of hair tonic on our stomachs. I tangled my fingers in his hair and pulled.

"Hey, cut that out!" Jody said.

"That's for stopping yesterday."

"You're hurting me!"

"Good!"

He opened his eyes now and looked at me with special excitement. "And are you going to do to me what you first did to me out there in the wash?"

I almost did. The filthiness, the contempt of it: just the memory turned me on. Instead I covered his face with my hands and began to pound him with my hips, driving my cock hard, down into his stomach as though I was trying to rip it open.

Jody thrust against my beat. I dug. Jody returned. I spaded. Jody reached. I clamped down hard on Jody and Jody arched. We rose now, both of us, cloud high, groaning, sobbing, twisting, sweating, and came.

Things had reached the point where I had to tell Billy what was going on. I decided not to bring up such disturbing matters in the Talk Show. Lying under the covers with him would make it all a lot more

difficult. So I got him out in the desert the next day after football practice and said, "Billy, I don't know how you feel, but it seems to me a guy should be able to tell his best friend all kinds of things, even things that are kind of embarrassing, right?"

"Right."

We were sitting on a pair of rocks under a mesquite tree. The desert birds were getting used to the sound of my voice and started hopping around feeling safe.

"And you are. My best friend, I mean."

"Of course."

So I launched in, starting with my hard-on in the shower, Jody's visit to my room, the scene in the theater John, getting my first climax in bed, Jody in the wash and in my room last night.

When I was all through Billy said, "I can't believe anybody almost fourteen could be so much out of it. You mean you'd never jacked off before you came here?"

"No."

"Never had feelings in your cock?"

"A few. I didn't understand them."

"But it felt good when you had those feelings to rub your prick, didn't it?"

"I was afraid to. Besides, I've always been, well, clean. And this, where it happens, seems so damned dirty. A *penis*, for Christ sake!"

"Didn't you ever talk it over with your dad?"

"Gosh no!"

"Why?"

"I was ashamed, I guess."

"Do you know where babies come from?"

"Sure."

"Where?"

"A mother's womb."

"How do they get there?"

"They grow."

"Of course dummy, but what starts them growing? What's the father's part?"

I shrugged. "It has something to do with the wedding ceremony, I guess. Besides, what's that got to do with jerking off and all that?"

Billy's jaw dropped. I saw a smile start to come to his lips.

"Goddamnit, Billy, if you laugh at me I'll punch you in the nose!"

Looking back now, I don't see how he was able to keep a straight face. But he grabbed my knee and said, "First you got to understand the biology of reproduction. Come on."

We checked a book out of the library and went to his room and he seated me at his desk and started thumbing through the pages. "Here," he said. "Forget about the flowers and the salmon jumping up those goddamned falls and the croaking frogs. This is what you want. Human beings. You are a human being, aren't you?"

"Last time I looked."

I spent a couple of hours with the book, which was reasonably well illustrated as far as the anatomy went, and it answered a lot of questions, but it still didn't tell me much about what had gone on between me and Jody. So later, during the Talk Show, Billy told me that if there was nothing handy for a male to copulate with the pressure was still there in his crotch and if he had any kind of imagination at all he could find a hundred ways to satisfy himself, some pretty simple and some pretty kinky.

"Is what Jody and I did kinky?" I asked.

"Jerking each other off, no. Although a lot of people think it is, especially grown-ups. The way I see it is that if you don't want to fool around with some other man or boy you're either lying or you can't get it up."

"What about the odd stuff that turns Jody on?"

"Spit?"

"Yes."

"That's not the end of it with him."

"Jesus. Isn't there a normal way it can happen between two guys? I mean, it felt awful good to have another stiff one in my hand, to have it get hard because I was touching him there, and other places, and all. Does it always have to be so dirty? Can't you do it so it's not disgusting but just nice?"

"Sure."

"How?"

Instead of answering me he put his hand on my crotch and let it rest there. I jumped. My cock stiffened and rose into his palm.

"Man, Billy!" I said between my teeth. "Do we want to start this?"

"We're best friends, aren't we?"

"Yes."

"Then we got the right to do it if we want. Unless you... well, unless you don't feel about me that way."

"Oh, gosh, Billy, it's not that."

"Then I do turn you on. A little, anyhow."

"Can't you feel that?"

"Could be mechanical."

I put my hand on top of his hand and gave it a squeeze. "No, it's a lot more than just the touch."

"I don't mean we gotta do it every night. It would cut into the Talk Show. But whenever you're horny, like I can feel we both are horny now."

He had my cock out of the slit in my Jockey shorts and was working on it with his fingers nice and slow and gentle. I reached for his dick and wrapped my hand around the loose skin of the shaft just below the end and started to pull on it as Jody had shown me.

"Oh, Jeff, that's nice!" Billy whispered.

"It sure is."

"Feels like Jody was a pretty good teacher."

The excitement grew, and with it a strange feeling that everything in the whole wide world was okay. It was so nice to be doing this with a boy who was not just good-looking but my best friend, too!

We didn't talk for a while. Slowly, patiently our hands worked on each other's cocks. The skin was dry and our touch was light, and for the longest time our feelings remained on a high, warm plateau, a kind of sex-subsidary to our friendship.

At last Billy allowed as how our level pleasure was coming to an end.

"It won't be much longer," he whispered in my ear.

"Okay."

"What about you?"

I smiled in the dark. "I haven't got the experience you've got. It's hard for me to tell."

"It'll be soon for me, Jeff."

"Fine."

I felt Billy's cock grow harder, the tip swell a little and the muscles of his stomach tighten as though in pain. And feeling Billy's rising excitement seemed to work on my feelings, too. Both of our fingers tightened and our beat on each other's cocks became heavier and faster.

"I'm getting there now... I think," I whispered.

"Good, because here... I... Oh, man!"

A second or two after Billy had his peak I had mine. And then we were falling gently and for five minutes longer we lay there, me holding on to his softening cock, not saying anything but feeling that terrific tug of friendship that is almost better than sex.

Chapter Four

I've never been an all-around athlete, but if there's one sport I'm good at it's tennis. My dad, when we were living in Chicago, was some kind of a local champion. He belonged to a country club that had a couple of indoor courts, and the first thing he did when we moved north was to build a covered court in the barn behind our farmhouse. Of course nobody up there played, so he was stuck with teaching me. I took to it like the proverbial duck. My father was a gentle man. Those days I spent half my life being afraid I would disappoint him or hurt him with some kid thing I'd do, but on the court I could slam balls at him and the harder I played the more pleased he was. By the time I left to come to Arizona I was beating him one set out of three.

At Desert Ranch none of the younger kids was much of a match for me, but there was one senior, Washburn Higgins, who played a pretty good game and wasn't too proud to take on an eighth grader. Wash had a strong backhand but his net game was weak. We were working on it one afternoon; I was driving balls at him and he was smashing them down into my court, when I caught sight of Mr. Holroyd standing in the desert not far away, hands folded behind his back, watching.

The next time we played, which was the following weekend, Mr. Holroyd was there again, only this time closer. When I picked up a ball near the net, I said to Wash in a low voice, "I think you have an admirer."

Wash shook his head. "No, you have," he said.

That night in the Talk Show Billy and I discovered in *Theater Arts* magazine that Mr. Holroyd was opening on Broadway as Romeo opposite a boy Juliet.

Wednesday afternoons were free time. No classes, no sports, no rehearsals. Some of the kids took horses and rode into the mountains, a few studied, most just goofed off.

I was coming out the eighth-grade hall dressed for hiking the next Wednesday when I saw Mr. Holroyd in white shorts and T-shirt, knobby knees and elbows flying, forehead leaning, his whole unathletic body moving down the path in my direction.

"Hello, Jeffrey," he said. He was swinging a tennis racket. "What, no match with Washburn this afternoon?"

"No, sir," I said.

"You mustn't let your game get rusty."

I said something modest about it not being much worth saving.

"Oh, you're wrong. You're wrong. You have real potential. I know I used to coach the tennis team."

My disbelief must have shown on my face, because he quickly added, "Back in Fenway, of course, when I was new on the faculty."

"Oh."

We stood there awkwardly confronting one another for a minute. I had the strong feeling he was waiting for me to ask him to play.

"Jeff, you probably don't realize it, but I've been observing you. Oh, just now and then when I happen to pass by the court. My training makes it possible for me to tell a great deal in a short time. For example, your serve."

"Yes, sir?"

"It isn't up to the rest of your game."

My jaw did drop then. It just happened that my serve was one of my really strong points.

"I thought, Jeff," he continued, "that you might want me to help you with it a little."

"That would be very nice, sometime," I said, without much enthusiasm.

"Remember, we have a Desert League tournament coming up in Tucson this fall."

"I thought that was for the upper school."

"You're right, it is. Well, with such talent as yours, we'll just have to change the rules. What about now?"

"For changing the rules?"

"No. To begin working on that serve. Strike while the iron's hot!"

"Gee, sir, it's sort of our free afternoon."

"And?"

"I was just on my way to meet Billy and Tim, and we were going..."

"Yes?"

"...to take a walk up the canyon."

"Jeffrey, my boy, you can walk in the canyon any time. Tell your friends to come and watch us turn you into a veritable Bobby Connors."

I found Billy and Tim by the school gate and told them what had happened. They doubled up with laughter and insisted on watching.

"Besides," Billy said, "I think you need a bodyguard."

I went to my room and changed and when I stepped onto the court, Mr. Holroyd was pacing around swinging his racket in the air. We started to volley. I hit the balls nice and easy to his forehand and he returned them first to one side of the court and then to the other. I kept trotting back and forth, working up a sweat in that hot sun while he stood stock still like a wooden Indian swatting me balls, pleased as punch with himself. I didn't dare make him work the way I was working. I was afraid he'd have a heart attack or something.

Finally, because I was getting tired, I decided to try him on a backhand. He chopped at it like a woman and missed.

"Oh, sorry, sir," I said.

"No, no, that's all right. I want you to serve, now. I won't try to return it. I'm just going to watch."

Fine, I thought. I wound up and pasted a ball just inside the line near the rear of the court.

"Again," Mr. Holroyd said.

I sizzled another into the opposite court, this time with a high spin.

"I think I see that you're doing wrong," he said.

"Weren't those okay?"

"Too risky. Here, let me follow you through."

He crossed to my court, then stood behind me and put his bony fingers around both of my wrists.

"Now, let's try that again. Up with the ball. Back. Down with the racket. Again. Up with the ball. Back. Down with the racket."

I didn't dare look at Tim and Billy. Every time he went back he would almost yank my arm out of its socket, pulling me hard against the front of his body. My head kept coming up against his chin and I could feel his breath in my hair. Of course, half the time we missed the ball, and when we did connect it went wild. This didn't discourage him, however. We must have kept at it for at least ten minutes.

We went back to volleying. Tim finally got bored and wandered off, but Billy stayed with me to the bitter end, which was a good hour later.

"Well, young man," Mr Holroyd said as he was leaving, "do you think you learned something this afternoon?"

"Yes, sir," I said, glad he didn't ask me what.

"Good. Now you keep practicing that serve."

When Mr. Holroyd was out of earshot, I turned to Billy and said, "Special news feature on the Talk Show tonight!"

"It'll have to wait until tomorrow," Billy said.

"How come?"

"I'll tell you sometime."

There was a kind of secret smile on Billy's lips. I tried to get out of him what was going on but I had no luck. Billy was that way. When he didn't want to talk about something it was no use pushing him.

There was a disciplinary system at Desert Ranch, administered by the senior council, where the younger kids accumulated "gigs" for minor rule infractions. We had to work them off on a hot shoulder of the mountainside building a short-cut from the school to the horse trail down in Cochise Canyon. We all seemed to spend a lot of time on that trail. It never seemed to get any longer.

I wound up on it with Jody Wentworth the next day. Ralph was the prefect in charge, but he had gone off with our canteens to refill them with water. I was swinging a pick. Jody was shoveling. Both of us were stripped to the waist. Sweat was pouring and pouring off our bodies. I had a handkerchief tied around my forehead to keep some of the sweat out of my eyes.

"Hold on. Slow up," Jody said. "There's nobody watching us now."

"So what?" Working on trail was better than listening to Jody.

"Look, I want to talk to you." I turned around and leaned on my pick and stared at hm. "What I mean is," he said, looking beyond me, "I know what's been going on between you and Billy."

"Like what?" I said.

"I've come into your room a couple of times after lights-out and you haven't been there and then I've gone and listened outside Billy's door..."

"You have?" I said. "Did you think it was any of your business?"

"I couldn't really hear what you were saying. The door was closed."

"That's lucky for you."

"But... You're doing it with him now, aren't you?"

"Doing what, exactly?"

"What we used to do."

"You mean jerking off? Is that what you're stumbling all over yourself trying to say?"

"Yes." Jody's face was flushed. "Jesus Christ, Jeff, I like what you do. Listen..."

"I don't want to listen."

"I'm willing to pay you for it."

I stared at him. Disgust rose in me, and anger, too. "You haven't got enough money," I said.

"Yes I do. I have a hundred dollars in a checking account in town. My family's rich. They'll put more in it if I ask them."

"Do you really think I'd take that?"

"Why not?" Jody dropped his voice and came closer. "Jeff, I really got out of myself, that last time, near the end..."

"You're... polluted!" I exploded.

"Then so are you!"

We were both shouting now.

"How do you figure that?"

"You liked it."

"When?"

"While it was going on!"

"I didn't know any better!"

"I showed you something nice!"

"And you made it filthy!"

"You came, you bastard!"

I threw down the pick and lunged for him. This time he met me and he fought like a demon. We were locked in battle, slipping bit by bit through the cholla cactus down the hillside, when Ralph came back and hollered at us to break it up.

"There ought to be a law against people like you!" I panted at Jody.

"There is!" he returned. "And it's against you and Billy, too."

"You've said as much about Billy as I want to hear!" I made for Jody again.

"All *right!*" Ralph hollered. He threw me down on the ground with one good shove on the neck. "Get up there and back to work. And pick the cactus out of your ass."

Jody was right about one thing: I was "doing it", after a fashion, with Billy. During the Talk Show we had gotten into the habit of holding each other's cocks while we lay together. Our erections would come and go, cued to the conversation and the wandering of our fantasies. It was wonderful to have a friend you could do this with, who could feel in his hand your sexual response to any thought in the world. Usually at least one of us could cum off during each session.

"You know," Billy said that night, which was the first time we had gotten together to talk over Mr. Holroyd's tennis lesson, "I'm not sure this is as funny as it seems."

"I don't know either."

"Are you positive he had a hard-on?"

"Yes," I said. "I could feel it against my butt."

"It wasn't a pipe?"

"No."

"Or anything else?"

"It was a boner. A big one."

"Do you think he had a cum?"

"Gee, I never thought of that."

"Here he is, with his nose buried in your sweaty hair, with his rod on your butt, your back arched against his chest. It seemed to me he started off a little limp on that second volley business."

"Isn't there a Mrs. Holroyd?"

"There used to be."

"What happened?"

"She died. I think a couple of years ago."

"That's... Wait." I heard a sound outside in the hall. I got up and crept to the door, eased its latch, then suddenly swung it open. Jody Wentworth fell in on my chest. I put a hand over his mouth and held him until he got over his surprise and stopped struggling.

I had told Billy, of course, all about my confrontation with Jody on the trail. He hadn't thought much of what I'd done. I asked him what he'd do in my position and he said he would have at least tried to make

Jody feel better, not dragged him into a fight.

Now I closed the door with my foot and whispered in Jody's ear, "Christ, Wentworth, do I have to warn you about everything?"

"You don't own the hall," he said. "Let me go!"

"Let him go, Jeff," Billy said. "Do you want something. Jody?"

"Yeah."

"What?"

"He knows."

"And you know what the answer is," I told Jody.

"Jeff, you sound like a preacher," Billy said. "Can't you help him out a little?"

"Are you kidding? Jody, get your goddamned ass back to your own bed and pound it off there, not outside Billy's door."

"You better go," Billy said to Jody. "We're making a lot too much noise."

"All right." Jody walked to the door.

"And, Jody, snooping isn't very nice."

"I wasn't... Oh, hell!" He stalked out.

I climbed back in bed beside Billy.

"Boy, you're hard," he said, meaning my cock which was in his hand. "You know, you really owe Jody this cum."

"I *what?*"

"Keep it cool. He's obviously upset. He's really not a bad kid, but if this goes on much longer he could be dangerous."

"I can't believe what you're telling me to do."

"Go on, Jeff. It'll only take a minute or two."

I got up. That shows how much I trusted Billy. Nobody else would have gotten me to go to Jody.

"What is this, be kind to your bent buddy week or something?" I said, getting into my bathrobe. "Next thing I know you'll be sending me up for fun and games with Mr. Holroyd."

I hated to leave Billy, but once I was out walking down the hall I felt my heart skip a beat and my cock grow hard again. I came to Jody's door, turned the handle, stepped inside and closed it quietly.

"Quit beating off," I said.

"Jeff! God, I can't believe it!"

There was a moon that night and it poured in his window and lit up the little room as though it were day. Standing in the full, silvery flood, I dropped off my bathrobe and looked down on my bobbing, swaying prick. I was getting bigger there, longer and harder, and already there was quite a respectable little thatch of hair curling around above it.

I stepped to his bed and lifted the covers. He was lying on his back, cock hard and reaching for the sky. I knew what he wanted and I put it on his cock and on the stomach skin beside the cock. Then I knelt above him, knees on either side of his knees, and lowered myself onto his body. My cock-tip slid into the warm, slippery pool. There was the welcoming pressure of his parallel cock lifting itself hard into my stomach.

Jody was trembling. He hugged me around the back and tried to bring my cheek down next to his. I resisted with my neck and shoulders. He started a tentative thrust with his hips.

"Lie still!" I commanded.

"I'm about there," he whispered.

"Then don't move a muscle."

"Oh, man, this is torture!"

"Good."

I carefully moved a hand up and wound my fingers in his hair, getting a good grip.

"Are you going to do what I think you're going to do?" he asked.

I didn't answer, just stared down into his face.

"I don't know as I can hang on much longer." he whispered.

"Yes, you can." I said.

"How?"

"That's your problem."

A shadow crossed the face of the moon. I looked up. It was a night bird wheeling overhead looking for prey. I returned my eyes to Jody's face and tightened my grip in his hair.

"Ready?" I said.

"Yes. Oh, God, yes!"

I did it, and clamped both hands over his face so I wouldn't have to look at him. Then I started to thrust my cock into his stomach. The slide was smooth and warm and sweet, so different from the churning feeling of disgust Jody's perversion gave me. As I drew back for another one Jody pushed upward against me. I felt him gasp through my fingers, felt his quick rush of breath on my palms.

Jody's hands were flying all over me, neck, shoulders, hair, back, buttocks. He didn't need to tell me how close he was to cumming. He was falling, right then, and so was I. Somehow it was exciting and disgusting and worrying and powerful and maddening all at the same time. And then it was over and we were just a cold and rather wet pair of thirteen-year-olds who didn't like each other very much, one on top of the other in bed.

I got up and went to my room, feeling spent and dirty, mad at Jody, even a little mad at Billy. It wasn't one of my more Christian nights.

The next day Billy caught me at recess and told me to sign out for hiking in the afternoon.

"I don't feel like hiking," I said. "I thought maybe I'd look up Wash and see if he wanted to play tennis."

"Wash is going with us."

"Then maybe I'll do something with Tim."

Tim was going too; they all planned to explore the old Oldenabi mine. I decided to join them.

We set out on foot at one o'clock. The weather was beginning to cool off at last. It was early November. The pounding autumn heat had given way to comfortable days and chilly nights. It had rained the night before; the desert smelled fresh and almost green.

Our trail led past Cochise Junction, so we stopped at the No Delay Cafe for a pop and a hot dog, which was against school regulations. We took a booth. Wash and Billy sat next to one another opposite Tim and me. They seemed flushed somehow, with a kind of excited joy sparkling in their eyes, especially when they looked at each other. I figured they were just excited about exploring the mine, and even didn't think much about it when I dropped my napkin once and, when I dived under the table to grab it back, saw them holding hands.

It took us an hour to get to the mine from there. We came around a bend in the trail and there were the bare wood buildings baking in the sun. It had been a gold operation of some sort, abandoned fifty years earlier.

We walked into the ruin of the crusher mill. The floor was littered with pieces of rusting machinery. A huge horizontal wheel that must have been belted to some drive shaft rested in the middle of the room.

Its bearings were so well made and durable that we could still turn it with our hands. Tim climbed onto it and stretched out on a spoke, with his feet at the hub and his head resting on the rim. We spun him until he got dizzy.

"Hey, neat!" he said. "This is better than an amusement park ride."

There was an electric fence around the tippie building, probably to keep stray cattle from wandering in and falling down the mine shaft. It was active, too, clicking away from a set of batteries hidden in the building. We tested our nerves by hanging onto the wire to see how many pokes we could stand. I got through five before I couldn't take it any longer. Wash beat me with seven.

The mine itself was a disappointment. We roped ourselves down the shaft some twenty feet, found the only drift that wasn't blocked by cave-ins and rubble and followed it until it ended after about three hundred feet.

"Well," Wash said when we came back out, "I guess Billy and I are going to explore the bunk house for a little while." He looked at his watch. Let's say we meet back here at four. You guys can find something to do, can't you?"

"Sure," Tim said quickly, then, to me, "Come on."

So that was what was up with Billy! An affair with Wash. I felt jealous and disappointed and somehow frustrated.

Tim and I went to the crusher shed and poked around. There was a kind of loft above the ground level and we were able to get into it by swinging up timbers and scrambling through holes in the broken siding. Finally we reached a little platform where we could sit and dangle our legs high above the crusher wheel with sunlight striking us through a rent in the roof.

"Well," I said, jerking my thumb in the direction of the bunk house, "I hope they're having fun over there."

"They are," Tim said.

"That's good." I said it as though I meant just the opposite.

"And what's wrong with that?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all."

"Oh, come off it. You're been there once or twice yourself. With Jody, for instance."

"How do you know about that?"

"I have the room next to him, remember?"

"Jody turns me off."

Tim laughed. "Me, too. You don't, though."

I stared at him, quite surprised. "I suppose that's a proposition?"

"We have an hour to kill."

For the first time I saw Tim as a boy with sex. He was nice looking. His smile was tremendous. He was kindly and clean and even though he was small he was well-built. I knew from seeing him under the shower he wasn't retarded in the cock department. At least for an eighth grader.

Then, sitting beside me, swinging his legs and smiling, he reached over and groped my dick, as though it was the most natural thing in the world.

I shoved his hand away. "I don't know, Tim," I said.

"Come on. Wash and Billy are getting theirs off. Why shouldn't we?"

The truth was I was still kind of hurt about Billy "betraying" me. But sex certainly was in the air. I could already feel my prick tingling. I pushed myself away a bit from the brink and stretched out on my back, with the shaft of sunlight warming my waist. I folded my arms behind my head and stared through the hole in the roof into the hot, blue desert sky. Tim's hands came back to my crotch and began to move.

"God, does everybody in our class do this?" I asked.

"Yup. Maybe Jock doesn't, but that's all."

"Jesus."

Even through the double cord of blue jeans and Jockey shorts, Tim's rubbing hand felt awfully good. He had located the front of my cock and was drawing his fingernails back and forth across the top half of the bulge.

"Am I starting to get to you?" he said.

I grinned at him and took a hand from behind my head and hooked my fingers over the top of his Levis and pulled him closer.

He stretched out beside me. I found the form of his cock soon enough and fingered it back through his pants. For about five minutes we lay there just stroking each other that way, nice and friendly, not talking, just enjoying the slow warmth that built up in our bodies.

"This is nice," he mumbled at last. "I'm glad you're not allergic to hand jobs."

"How many guys have you fooled around with this way?"

"Gee, Jeff, I haven't kept count. At home, I suppose I'd be trying something with a girl, but there aren't any girls here and most of the guys think that makes it okay. That also makes them pretty available."

His hand left my fly and immediately my cock began to want it back. Instead of returning to the same place, his fingers went to the buckle of my belt. He undid it slowly. I began baring him, too, unbuttoning his Levis and folding back the flaps. In the triangular patch of white shorts I could see the shape of his boner lifting the cloth, wetting it pink over its tip.

We pulled down our pants and underwear to below our knees and then wrapped our hands around each other's erections and began to stroke. Both of us were aroused to the point where our cocks were crying their own tear into the contact between fingers and penis, and the glide of Tim's slippery gripping hand on my nerve was incredibly sweet and exciting.

I looked over at the cock I was holding. It was about a half-inch shorter than mine and less massive. The tip, which peeped out wet and shiny from the circle of my thumb and first finger, was deep purple and soft to the touch, making a nice contrast to the hard shaft below. Each time I brought my fist down the little slit hole in the top gaped open and oozed out some more of its slippery pre-cum, sometimes blowing bubbles when I came back up with my hand and it closed.

"Hold it. Cool it," Tim said after a couple of minutes. I stopped the motion but didn't release my grip.

"That's better. I was getting close and it was too soon. Let's save it as long as we can, okay?"

I don't know how many times we started and stopped and started again. I think we were at it for a good half hour before we finally had to admit it had become more of a torture to hold back than a pleasure to continue. Next time we had to bring each other over the top.

"I want to watch it, Tim," I told him, "when I do you, from up real close. Do you mind?"

"Hell no. Go ahead!"

Tim released my dick and I leaned over him, lodging an elbow on the other side of his hips and resting my head on that propped-up hand, while my other hand juiced up with his pre-cum and wrapped itself around his cock.

"You ready?" I said.

"You bet!"

I began to beat it, with a strong grip, hard and fast. The little head nodded as my flying finger bounced it back and pulled it down, the little mouth opening and shutting, opening and shutting to the rhythm of my beat.

"Oh, man, Jeff, here I go!" Tim gasped.

And then I felt the hard, shuddering clicks in his prick and I saw the white sperm shooting, at first clear of my hand to land well above his navel, then the other spasms squeezing out less and less and dribbling down over my thumb knuckle to collect on his stomach.

"Okay, stop whacking," Tim panted. "Wow, that felt good. Now I'll get you."

So I lay back, my curiosity satisfied if not my cock-longings, and let him take me off like I'd taken him. But instead of watching my cock as I came, Tim watched my face, which I found embarrassing. So I closed my eyes and gritted my teeth, and then I, too, was falling off the cliff, starting to shoot sperm, what I had of it then, but just at that moment Wash's voice came from outside the crusher shed: "Okay, kids, time to head for home!"

What a horrible sense of timing he had.

I knew then, of course, that Billy was in love and so was Wash. Now we'd often have to skip the Talk Show. Those were the nights when, after everyone was in bed, Wash would make his way over the rooftops from the senior hall to ours and climb down a downspout and in Billy's bedroom through the window, and he wouldn't come back out until dawn.

Chapter Five

I'm not a big believer in portents or finding some mysterious significance in coincidences, but it did just happen that Billy and I had been born on the same day, the seventeenth of November.

Billy was a music buff. He had a stereo setup in his room and a collection of opera that used to drive the other kids in the hall up the walls. I sent away for a complete recording of *The Magic Flute*, which I knew Billy didn't have and loved. It didn't arrive, and this made me really nervous, until the very morning of our birthday, when I managed to smuggle it out of the front office mail bin and wrap it up without him knowing anything about it.

At dinner that night we were honored with two birthday cakes. Ralph was in charge of our table and I was conscious of him staring at me through the twenty-eight blazing candles with a kind of personal interest he had never shown before. Later, as I was getting ready for bed, he came into my room and closed the door.

"It's happened, hasn't it?" he said. "Growing up. Becoming a sexual person."

I didn't know what to say. I must have flushed because he continued, staring seriously into my face, "Don't be embarrassed. It's normal. We've all been through it. As a matter of fact it's making you a much more interesting kid."

"Thanks," I said softly.

"I think," he continued, "that you and I ought to explore this, if you haven't already done so with some older boy." He waited for me to respond, and when I didn't he said, "Have you?"

I shook my head.

"Okay, let's figure on Sunday. We'll both check out box lunches. I have a back pack and I know a very special place." He paused for a moment, then went on. "I'm not talking about talk, Jeff. I know you know plenty now. I'm talking about doing things." I felt his eyes searching me, probing for fear, trying to figure out whether I was as trustworthy as he'd supposed. "You do want this, don't you?" he asked.

I raised my head and stared into his face. For the first time in my life I saw the glow of mature desire turned on me. It was completely different from the guilty lust of Jody, different even from the sunny warmth of my hand-job sessions with Billy. I felt something stronger, harder, a whole lot more important.

"Yes," I said, with my heart going like it was about to thump right out my throat. I did. I really did. I was pleased all to hell! Ralph smiled a quick smile and left.

When I brought my present in to Billy after lights-out, he took it to his desk and started leafing through the libretto and brochure and the records, all the time with his back to me and not saying anything. I began to think he didn't like it, so I said, "Gee, Billy, I hope it's all right."

He turned around. There were tears in his eyes and some earlier ones had been running down his cheeks. He put his arms around me, and then we were kissing, not just a friendly peck, but a real kiss. His mouth opened, warm and wet, and my mouth opened and our teeth touched, and then I felt his tongue pressing inside mine and mine hardened to meet it and rubbed against it like a cat arching its back against your leg. We hung there on each other for almost a minute, exchanging breath, warmth, spit and closeness.

What a night this was turning out to be: first Ralph, now this! Already, on the first day of my fourteenth year, my sexuality was intensifying, my capacity for feeling growing even faster than my body.

And my first kiss was turning out to be one of those perfect moments that life is all about, I guess, when you're completely one with somebody you really love, unembarrassed, unprotected.

At last we broke apart and Billy gave me my present, a beautiful new tennis racket that was just about all a guy could ask for.

We crawled into bed and took each other's cocks in hand. I told him about Ralph.

"So my horny friend is starting to get around."

"Got to keep up our class reputation."

"Ralph's okay. You can trust him." He gave a little squeeze to my cock, which was steely hard, and said, "You want to get this off or save it for your new lover?"

"Hell, it's our birthday, Billy."

"I was hoping you'd say that."

"Besides, I'm such a sex addict now I couldn't possibly hold my load till Sunday."

After that, though, all week I tried. I had some silly notion about not being spent when the time came, as though a healthy, happy fourteen-year-old can't make enough spunk and get up enough energy to cum off at least five times a day if he wants to. All I got for my trouble was a permanent hard-on and, with my imagination going overtime-overdrive, a severe case of the jitters. I was always running to the John and splashing cold water on my face. And most nights, to get any sleep at all, I had to jerk off anyway.

Except for Saturday. I cut the weekly movie and ran in the desert for two hours. When I came back I drank a gallon of water and dropped into bed and, with aglow but not the excitement of anticipation, closed my eyes and didn't open them until the riser bell rang. I got up with the usual solid steel hard-on and for the first time ever it didn't go down when I brushed my teeth. I kept my bathrobe on and didn't shower. I couldn't even piss until after I'd dressed.

At breakfast my stomach was back churning again, but I ate twice as much as I usually do; I figured I'd need the energy. Chapel was interminable. The one good thing about it was when we read that psalm where God's rod and staff would comfort us, which I found definitely applicable. At the word "rod" I stole a glance at Ralph. Our eyes met and he had to drop his chin into a hand to cover his smile.

At last we picked up our lunches, threw them into Ralph's back pack and set off up Cochise Canyon. The sky was clear, the air unseasonably warm. Ralph set a brisk pace that kept me practically running. The rock walls closed around us. Water appeared in the wash. An hour later Ralph stopped at the base of a great, gray cliff.

"Holy smoke, we're not going up that!" I said.

Ralph uncoiled a lariat and looped me about the waist, fastening the free end to his belt. In the face of the wall there was a vein of light colored, crumbling quartz. It formed only a shallow crease in the bottom of the cliff but toward the top it gave back into a tight, natural chimney. Ralph went to the crack and began to climb. I followed, and somehow with his help I made it to the top.

What we came to there was a private, open living room carved from granite, polished and swept clean by the occasional flash flood. A little water ran down the living rock above us and collected at our feet in a shallow pool.

Ralph sprawled on the floor and leaned against one of the smooth, fluted walls. He took off his hat. His light brown hair was wet and matted. He stripped off his damp T-shirt and mopped his face.

"You'll get used to that climb," he said.

"You mean we're coming back here again?"

Ralph grinned. "Depends," he said.

"On?"

"How things go."

I broke away and ran to the brink and stopped, my heart pounding with excitement, and looked at the scene before me. There, fading into the purple distance, was the huge valley to the east, the little town of Cochise Junction, the creosote flats, the roads and railroad tracks, the pediment slopes and, right below me, the Cochise Canyon wash. Feeling powerful, like some kind of giant or eagle, I kicked off my shoes, locked my knees and spat outward and watched the white fleck fall, forever it seemed, until I lost track of it in the winds. I picked up a rock to chuck after it, thinking of Jody, but Ralph came up behind me and stopped me with a hand on my shoulder. "This is a secret spot," he said. "Let's keep it that way."

"Has anybody ever been up here with you?"

Ralph shook his head. "You're the first." Then he told me how he'd discovered our little notch from the other side of the valley and how he had almost killed himself finding a way into it.

All of a sudden Ralph left me and sat again against the rock wall. "Come here," he said. He spread his legs and beckoned me to sit against him. "We won't take anything too fast."

I dropped down and leaned back on his chest and rested my head on his shoulder. His chin brushed against my temple and his arms folded themselves around my chest.

For several minutes we didn't speak. I felt wonderfully warm and happy. It was strange, this mood of peace, coming just after the violence of my early morning feelings as I tried to tell my cock to behave, but it wasn't long before it turned into arousal, as Ralph's hands took an inward turn. One strong thumb was resting on the front of my Levis, moving ever so slightly. The other fingers joined it and carefully undid the top button of my fly, then the second, third, fourth, until my trouser flaps were laid aside and my cock showed its upward push under the white cloth of my Jockey shorts. Ralph cupped the area snugly with his palm and I sank down closer against his chest.

"This is nice," I said and sighed.

Ralph ran his fingertips up and down the cock form. "That good?" he murmured in my ear.

"You know it."

With both hands on my hips, Ralph shoved down my jeans and shorts. I stood up to kick them away and then stripped off my shirt as well, so that I was now standing free in all the out of doors, defiantly naked and aroused, the sun and wind touching every part of me. I hollered like an Indian and stood on my head. Then I went to the pool and stared in it at the mystery of my own reflection. I had developed a lot since I'd come to Desert Ranch: my shoulders were stretching, my arms lengthening, muscles thickening. Above all, my cock was a lot bigger now, and fully crowned with a fresh thicket of golden curls.

I glanced over at Ralph, full of shy pride in my body. He was leaning easily against the rock wall, every bit as naked as I was. My eyes traveled down from Ralph's face, across his spare, sun-roasted chest. Then I came to him with sudden enormous emotion and curiosity, for standing tensely out from his hair-matted crotch was the first mature hard-on I'd ever laid eyes on.

"Man!" I exclaimed. "Is that ever huge!"

I dropped to my knees in front of him. I gazed at the amazing length and thickness of his cock. I touched, sort of shyly at first, its heart-shaped head. A clear drop of fluid that had been resting in its eye streamed slowly down on its own sticky cord and dropped on my knee, giving it a little prick of cool as it evaporated. I ran my hand down the length of the cock to its root, where brown hair curled into my fingers and a trail of it sprouted upward toward the sun-tan line at his navel. My heart began to pound, blood rush to my ears. Ralph's hands came to my shoulders, and then his whole body bent down and sank with me into an embrace that was so close and intimate that I almost melted right there on the spot. He grabbed my cock and drew it smoothly against the front of his.

"Wow! That feels super-good!" I whispered.

Ralph's mouth was in my hair which ruffled to his breath. My nose and lips were pressed into his neck. He began a hip motion that sent his huge cock gliding against mine in the snug, slippery security of his hand.

Again it was as though I was falling. The motion grew and we pressed together and sighed, and yet I felt completely free, falling back, deeply back, like into something that had happened before I'd even been born. I was falling into discovery, growing up, learning about love. Ralph was my leader. Ralph thrust and I counter-thrust. I bit Ralph's neck. The skin was salty on my tongue. Ralph gripped my ass in one huge hand as I hugged into his body, my fingers playing over his muscular shoulders, mussing around in his hair, knuckles sinking into his back.

That sweet fire that had started only in our cocks broke out now and started burning all through us. I didn't know if I could stand it. I gripped Ralph and held on, as tight as I'd ever held on in a roller-coaster car. That great final falling-off-the-cliff was getting near. I was terrified, but I couldn't stop any more than you can stop and get off in the middle of a coaster ride. Then the cum exploded like some super H-bomb that annihilated all our bodies. It swept us and we held the peak, thrashing, gasping, gripping, biting, moaning. Our balls overflowed with hot, quick jets of relief. Slowly our feelings bottomed out; our breathing slowed up; we sprawled in a loose embrace on the sun-warmed rock.

"Was that better than with Jody?" Ralph asked a few minutes later.

"Good grief, does *everybody* know about me and Jody?"

"Was it?"

"It's the greatest thing that's ever happened," I said. "It's like I could die now and it wouldn't matter."

"It would to me," Ralph said. Then, seeing my eyelids getting heavy, "Go to sleep."

I woke up ready. I was lying on my back with my hard-on pointing to a pair of buzzards circling slowly overhead.

"They think you're dead," Ralph said. I shaded my eyes and saw him squatting by the pool, his face still wet from drinking.

"Are they ever wrong!" I said.

Ralph got up and came to me and then hunkered down by my waist and took my cock in his hand.

"I can see that," he said. He stretched out on his side next to me and, propping his head on an arm, stared into my eyes. "Any regrets?"

I shook my head. "Should there be?"

"I don't think so. But then I'm not you."

"You're the next best thing."

He smiled. "What's that?"

"What Billy calls a hand pal."

Ralph broke into laughter. "Are all you eighth graders so horny?"

I shrugged.

"Hand pals! Well, if that's all you do... Is it?"

"What else is there?"

The smile left Ralph's mouth and a flush came to his face. "Oh, Jeff, there's more, believe me!"

"Like what?"

His fingers wandered back to my cock. His face slowly lowered. "Don't worry about it. We'll just let things happen in their own time, okay?"

"Sure."

I closed my eyes and then his lips were brushing my forehead, moving down over an eye, along a

cheek. I could feel his breath on my skin, coming cool and going away warm. One of his hands touched my neck and worked up along the other side of my face, catching the hair at my temples between gentle fingers, grazing softly the top of my ear.

I gave a great sigh of happiness and turned to face him. His lips came to mine, moist and slippery. They opened on my mouth and sucked in my lips, stiffened and slid on my teeth. I opened my jaw and our tongues touched, tentatively at first, then pressing inward, running back and forth. Pretty soon the whole bottom of my face was soaked with our mingled spit and sweat which felt hot and then cold as we breathed over it. Ralph's arms came about the back of my neck. We began rocking our heads from side to side to spread the contact, the sweet slipperiness of skin on skin.

"Wow!" Ralph said when we finally broke apart. "Where at the Desert Ranch School did you ever learn to do that?"

"I was going to ask you the same question."

His head dropped again and I felt his mouth on my throat, moving down to the little pit where my collar bones joined. A tongue explored it wetly and warmly, tickling as it moved still further down to my right titty. His mouth stayed there for almost a minute, moving, sliding, tonguing, until I began to shiver and felt the whole area get hard and raise a little into his lips. I put my hands in his hair. It was the first time I had ever felt it, that wonderful light brown, light textured hair that moved as his head moved around my stomach, going lower, lower, always lower.

His tongue sank into my navel. His lips sealed around it and he began to suck. The skin on my stomach was cool from his saliva evaporating quick in the dry desert air.

And then it happened. Those wonderful warm lips I'd just got used to covering my face and chest and stomach were closing around the tip of my cock.

"Hey!!" I said.

I couldn't believe it. That anybody, especially an older boy, would want to do such a thing to my penis. I was shocked... but enormously excited, too. Of course, it felt incredibly, mind-blowingly, nerve-wrackingly great!

"Julius H. Christmas," I groaned, "what are you doing? Is this the... what you..."

But I couldn't go on because his tongue had come into the little fold of nerves just below the slitty eye in my cockhead and was moving in the greatest way in all the warmth and slipperiness of his mouth. I started to really shake, now. My hips jerked, and so did the rest of my body. Both of Ralph's hands were down there holding on to things. One was cupped around my balls and fingering down the crack in my backside; the other held onto the base of my cock, stretching the loose skin tight and feeding the tip and upper shaft straight into his mouth.

The jerking of my hips gave way to a businesslike rhythm. I thrust into his mouth. He, too, started a bobbing of his head that brought my cock sliding in and out, sweetly, quickly, between wet lips that clasped and held and let the tongue tickle the tip each time it came nearly out.

"Oooooo!" I moaned. "Man!" With my fingers in his hair I moved his head against the thrashing of my hips.

Then suddenly I had to either stop or race hell bent for leather to the end. I pulled up Ralph's head and gasped, "Wait, wait!"

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"I'm... right there!"

"Good." He started to lower his head again.

"No! I'll come in your mouth."

"So?"

"You don't want to eat sperm, do you?"

"Sure."

"But... isn't it dirty?"

"Where in hell did you get that idea?"

"Well, look where it comes from..."

"Jeff, will you just lie back and enjoy it and let me do all the worrying, okay?"

"Gol, if you don't mind..."

His mouth came around my cock again and it took only two thrusts of my hips and bobs of his head to have me falling off the cliff and shooting out-of-control cum down his throat.

After the longest time of holding my softening cock in his mouth, Ralph pulled away and took me in his arms. We rested longer this time, with my thighs wrapped around his hard-on. He was so very patient, waiting for me to recover for the next round. In the hot sun sweat began to trickle down the contact between our chests.

"Whew!" Ralph got up, hard cock bobbing, and waded to the pool. He knelt and began to splash water over his chest and cock and balls and when I laughed at him he started splashing me, too. I crawled over to the pool and attacked. We rolled in a kind of play-wrestle in and out of the water, giggling, jumping, grabbing cocks, the water flying like it wanted to join in the fun. Finally we tired ourselves out and lay in the pool and puffed.

"Let's eat, Ralph said. "I'm hungry."

We dried off and broke out the lunches and demolished them with the appetite our sex had given us.

Ralph said he wanted to explore the ravine back of the notch. I put my toe on his cock, which was showing signs of getting hard again, and said, "What about that?"

"It can wait."

"Does it want to?"

"Sure. It'll do as it's told until it's got hard company again."

We dressed and set off. We had to use the lariat again over the next dry falls. After that the ravine opened up and went back and back into the mountains. We began crawling over gigantic boulders. At one point there was a pocket of sand with a couple of palm trees shading the watercourse. We left the ravine and climbed a steep rock tower that looked out over the great valley to the east and the mountain range behind us.

"Up there," Ralph said, pointing, "is where the old Oldenabi mine trail goes. It follows that dark ridge right over the saddle with the pinion pines, and on the other side is where I live."

Ralph, I knew, was an orphan. His guardian was a banker who had a small ranch just outside of town. "It's only a three-hour ride, four hours on foot. I used to sneak over here sometimes when I was a little boy just to watch the football games."

We returned to the notch, sweaty and thirsty, and stripped down and plunged in the pool.

"I wish we never had to leave here," I said. "I wish we'd brought sleeping bags and steaks we could cook so we could spend the whole night camping, with just the old stars for a ceiling."

"We might do that some day."

"Yeah," I said. "Someday! Everything's someday."

"That's why you have to play things for now."

We crawled out of the pool and sat on the hot rock basin, feeling our skin tingle in the dry air. And then we were once more in each other's arms and kissing and my cock was hard and thrusting on his belly. He rolled on top of me. I found his weight the most lovely heaviness in the world.

It's funny how I was getting used to kissing. Until I had done it with Billy a few nights before, I had

never thought much about mouths. I knew people kissed but I didn't know why. Mouths weren't especially appealing. They were wet with saliva and who wanted to get into that? Jody's hangup over spit was actively repellent to me, although I seemed to get some sort of twisted pleasure out of humiliating him with it whenever he taunted me.

But here I was kissing as intimately and naturally as an old married man. It seems that between a boy and a girl, sex starts with a glance and a touch of the hand, goes on to necking and climaxes with putting your cock and that thing the girl's got together. My experience was that between boys it was just the reverse. First you get it on with cocks, and it's only later – if then – that, with all those good feelings being repeated and repeated, that you start to get sloppy romantic. I know that in our eighth grade there were boys doing absolutely everything with each other's cocks but never thought of touching their lips together.

"I can't believe I'm so lucky," I whispered into Ralph's ear when he broke up our long smooch.

"I feel the same way."

Our cocks were moving slow and sweet and smooth beside each other in the warm clasp of our stomachs.

"I don't know what a senior like you sees in a young kid like me."

"That's the way it usually is, Jeff."

"Usually? You mean this is some kind of pattern?"

"Uh huh. The Greek one – man and youth, or older youth with younger boy. I'll tell you all about it on the walk back home. But now I'm too busy..."

I pulled his face down onto mine and we kissed again. His breathing became more congested and I felt him raising his hips.

"Close?" I asked.

"Yeah."

He settled down beside me and took my cock in his hand.

"You remember what I did to you?" he asked shyly.

"With your mouth?"

"Yes."

"I couldn't do that, Ralph," I said. I saw the disappointment in his eyes. "I don't mean never; just not this afternoon."

"Too soon?" he asked gently.

"Yeah. Do you mind a lot?"

"Not a lot. I know it takes a little getting used to."

"Yeah, just the idea."

"I'm sorry I even brought it up."

"Gol, don't be. It'll give me something to think about until next time."

"Besides, what's really important is not what you do but who you do it with. Let's make it simple, and just as nice as we can."

He rolled onto me again and lodged his cock beside my cock in the spot that was all slippery still from where they had been flowing their pre-cum.

We kissed. We moaned. We held each other's backs and necks and heads. Ralph's hair fell full in my face, shading the sun and gently scenting the air I breathed. Our legs tangled. Thighs moved on thighs. Feet rubbed on souls, locked and unlocked. It was like a great sun that got up in our cocks and then rubbed all our bodies with its rays. It climbed and got brighter, until it blinded us to everything but what our cocks were up to, the slide and release of slippery nerve on slippery skin. I felt Ralph gasp and

shiver, and then he was cumming. He soaked the dark crevice between our stomachs, jerking and shivering, and I was spending, too, although it wasn't much compared to his, but at least our sperms were mingling, and running down my hip to pool on the clean granite beside me.

Chapter Six

The great tennis tournament in Tucson was scheduled for the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. As T-day approached I found myself on the court every afternoon from two until four. Mr. Holroyd was obsessed with my training. Most of the time he just let me play with Wash, who admitted to feeling like a second stringer, but occasionally I would have to endure another one of our headmaster's famous serving lessons.

I needed a ball-boy, it seemed, so Mr. Holroyd assigned one of the seventh graders to us, Bobby Breen, probably because, dripping wet, Bobby didn't weigh more than ninety pounds and on the football field he was hopelessly under size.

One afternoon walking back from the courts Bobby said to me, "Gee, I wish I could play like you do." I said something to the effect that if he kept at it he'd soon have a real good game going "I don't mean just in tennis," he replied.

"In what, then?"

"Everyone thinks that because I'm not very big I'm not very old, either. Emotionally."

"No, they don't."

"Well, I sure get left out a lot."

"Of what?"

He looked up at me and then down at his shoes. "You know."

I was pretty sure I did know, but I just said, "Come on, cheer up. Let's take a shower."

We got back to the hall long before the other kids came off the football field. We stripped and met in the shower room and stood beside each other under adjacent spigots. I lathered up and looked at Bobby. He may have been a small boy but he was very nicely put together. His waist was thin, his shoulders well muscled for a twelve-year-old and in good proportion. There was no spare flesh on his chest: you could see every rib, every element of structure. His navel was shallow, with the little interior cone rising above the skin of his stomach—an "outie" rather than an "innie", as we used to say. There was no hair on his crotch or, for that matter, anywhere else below the neck. His limp cock, streaming its load of shower water, was about two inches long, white, smooth, the shoulder, shaft and base beautifully symmetrical.

The warm water falling on my shoulders and running down smoothly all over my skin was having its usual effect: my cock started to rise. I decided not to fight it and see what Bobby's reaction would be.

Pretty soon he was gazing at it, then away, then his eyes locked on it and he said, "See what I mean?" He pointed with his hand. "See how much bigger you are than I am, there?"

"Give yourself a little time," I said, then, looking at his hand, "Go ahead."

"Huh?"

"Take hold of it."

"You serious?" The color rose nicely into his cheeks.

I laughed. "Sure, I'm serious. Use a little soap if you think I'm not clean."

"Oh, Jesus, Jeff, it's not that."

"What's wrong, then? Never fooled around with another guy?"

Bobby shook his head and glanced around him. "I just don't know who's going to come busting through the door."

I shrugged and rinsed off and got out and toweled myself dry. A plan was taking shape in my mind. I

knew next time I went off with Ralph he would want me to use my mouth on that great big cock of his. The whole idea of cock sucking was going to take a little getting used to. Maybe the first time I should start small, on a clean, hairless one, and see how I did.

So I said to Bobby, "Quit feeling sorry for yourself and come out of there and get dressed. We got an hour to kill before supper and we're going out in the desert for a little..." – I let a smile play around my mouth as I dried off my cock and balls and pubic hair – "...a little talk."

I led him to the same protected spot where Jody had almost given me my first orgasm a couple of months before. We stripped and made a pad of our clothes on the loose sandy bottom of the wash and lay down upon it facing one another. Bobby's cock was already hard. I was able to curl four of my fingers behind it and run my thumb up and down the loose skin along its front and crook a finger over its tip and tickle it.

"Oh, Jeff, I've wanted to do this with you ever since we been on the court together!"

"You sure don't let a guy know."

His hand came warmly, snugly around my cock. "I'm not used to propositioning kids."

"But obviously this isn't your first time."

Bobby shook his head. "Last summer there was this sixteen-year-old friend of my Uncle Charley's that came up to visit us on the lake. Cory. We shared a room. Almost every night he'd climb into my bed and we'd give each other nice long leisurely hand jobs."

"Is that all? Did he ever hint around about putting his boner in your mouth?"

The color rose in Bobby's face: I couldn't tell if it was from embarrassment or excitement or both. "Cory said anything more than what we were doing was queer and he wasn't queer."

"Then why did he need your hand to jerk him off?"

"I didn't ask him. Cory was four years older than me."

"Do you agree with him, that sucking cock is wrong?"

"I don't know what to think."

"Have you ever wanted to? With the right person?"

Bobby hesitated, so I went on: "I had it done to me once. It was really, *really* nice."

"Yeah?"

"It was out of this world."

"Man!"

I waited a moment, looking him over, sizing him up. Then I plunged in. "Bobby, I'm going to do it to you and let you see how it feels. And then if you like it as much as I think you will, I want you to try it on me, too."

"Gosh, Jeff... I don't know." Bobby looked away from my eyes. "Isn't that kind of dirty?"

"We both just took showers. I soaped it up real good, and so did you."

"I mean, your mouth... down there."

"Don't knock it till you've tried it."

I smiled at him and scooted down and put my hands on his hips and stared at his hard-on. It was so cute and warm looking as it bobbed in the sun just a few inches below my face! He wasn't developed enough yet to ooze any pre-cum through the eye in his cocktip, so all its skin was feather-dry and smooth as talcum powder to the touch. I was beginning to think sucking on it wasn't going to be half bad at all.

"Are you really going ahead with... what we talked about?" Bobby asked.

"Yup."

"I guess it would be all right."

"Just let me know when you're getting close, huh?"

"Okay. Not an awful lot comes out when I cum." He sounded ashamed of himself.

"That's not what I'm worried about. I don't want you getting your nut off while I'm still hanging in there."

He smelled sweet, a little of skin and a lot of soap. I lowered my head until my lips were just lightly grazing his soft, lavender cock-tip. It jerked a couple of times in welcome and excitement. I could feel its shape: the little crease in the head where the eye was and the two miniature cheeks on either side. I opened my mouth and lovingly wet the whole corona.

"Oh, man, that's so slippery!" Bobby gasped.

I licked my lips and began to move them all around on the front of his cock, which I suspected was standing up straighter than it ever had in its whole life. I moved my mouth up over the cap and got my tongue under the rim on one side and ran it around to the back. Bobby started to shiver. He had such a small body and it felt so completely helpless underneath me! His hand came into my hair.

"Oooooo, what are you doing?"

I squeezed his hips, digging fingers into his small buttocks. Then I opened my mouth and sucked his whole cock deep inside.

"Yikes!" he yelled. He told me later three birds took off in terror from the mesquite tree above us. I started moving my head up and down and he began thrashing his hips, raising them higher and higher all the time. I was amazed at the strength in that little body of his, how much force I had to use to keep his hips level and somewhere near the ground.

It was only a few seconds before he was yelling at me to quit. "Get off! Get off it!" Then, when I did, "Oh, God, I can't hold it! I'm... I'm...!"

Damn, here he was going without me – just what I wanted *not* to happen! For his sake I made the best of it. I sucked his swollen cock back in again and began rapidly bobbing my head and tonguing up and down the front, just as I remembered Ralph doing to me. And then he was trembling and shaking and his penis was clicking hard in my mouth, but if anything was coming out it wasn't much. Slowly he unwound and settled his hips back onto the ground.

"How was it?" I asked a few seconds later.

"Man, you let me cum in your mouth! You took it!"

I nodded, smiling.

"Was it awful? Did it taste... terrible?"

Taste what, I thought, but I said, "It was real nice. Now it's your turn to find out."

"I suppose fair's fair. But I'm sort of out of the mood."

"Okay, we'll wait a few minutes."

Bobby started talking about his hand jobs with Cory. The sun went down behind the mountain range. It got cold and because we were bare-ass we came together for warmth. When his cock was up again we switched to the 69 position and then it was my turn to feel hot, wet lips coming around my hard-on and beginning to move. Man, just doing this was heaven on earth! Bobby wasn't as skilled as Ralph, but a guy can learn to suck cock a lot quicker than he can learn to play tennis, thank goodness. All it takes, I guess, is enjoyment.

I was quick, too. When I felt myself getting close to the point of no return I told Bobby, but he just grabbed the base of my cock and cupped my balls and kept right on sucking. I couldn't believe my good luck, that he was going to go all the way with it. And he knew in my case there would be a lot of juice cumming into his mouth. Anyhow, I wound my fingers in his hair and made him move his head just as I needed during those last frantic seconds. And then with a big upward thrust of my hips I came, shooting my sperm hard and quick into his mouth. I held his head still and felt him sucking and sucking. I heard

him swallow once, twice, three times. All other motion between us had stopped except my slowing heart and breath.

"That was great," I said. He pulled his mouth off my cock. "I'm really proud of you, Bobby. You got guts."

He smiled. "It was good for me, too." His lips were shiny with the mixed fluids, his and mine, from behind them, "I came again, too.!"

Just before study hall that evening, I ran into Ralph. He pulled me into the science lab and closed the door. I could tell by the bright-eyed way he was looking down at me that he was horny as all hell.

"Tomorrow's Wednesday," he said.

"I know, but old Mr. Holroyd's going to have me up there on the tennis court in the afternoon sure as anything."

"Damn!"

"There's always late at night."

"I've been trying to avoid that. It's so darned risky."

"It's been done before."

"I know it's been done before. Let me think. Jesus, I can't go on much longer this way, that's for sure."

"Last Sunday makes a hand job seem awful tame, doesn't it?"

"Jeff, jerking off is something I don't do much of any more."

"I can't say the same."

"You're fourteen and I'm seventeen and that's the difference. Okay, so if tomorrow's out we'll have to cool it till the weekend."

Sure enough, Wednesday afternoon Mr Holroyd was waiting for me. He and Wash and Bobby and I went to the courts. I got another serving lesson. But around three o'clock, as I was running back to catch a high ball Wash had hit me, I tripped over my own big feet and fell and wrenched a muscle in my back. It wasn't really bad, but for Mr. Holroyd's benefit I made a big thing out of it. I wouldn't be able to play the rest of the day, I told him, or tomorrow either, I was sure.

At study hall that night Mr. Holroyd came in and handed the proctor an envelope. On my way out the proctor gave it to me. I opened it and read, "When you are ready for bed and in your pajamas, come up to my apartment. We will do something about that old back of yours."

Mr. Holroyd was all prepared for me when I came in. There were towels and powder and alcohol and a plastic bottle of Lubriderm he must have got out of the infirmary.

"Well, Jeffrey," he said, "how does it feel, the sore muscle?"

"A little better, maybe," I said.

"Fine. Now take off your bathrobe and strip down to your pajama bottoms and stretch out on your stomach there on the sofa."

I did as I was told and pretty soon a cold glob of guck was being squeezed onto my backbone and his hand followed to smear it around.

Then he started rubbing my back in earnest. It really didn't feel bad, I had to admit, if I just forgot who was doing it to me. I grabbed the wooden arm of the sofa and dropped my head onto the scatter pillows he had provided for me and just let myself relax. It did seem odd to be receiving all this attention from the headmaster of our school, me a rather insignificant eighth grader.

I darn near dozed. But pretty soon I noticed that Mr. Holroyd's hands were getting pretty far away

from the complaining muscle. One seemed to be working around my neck and shoulders while the other was spending most of its time on the small of my back, with the fingers occasionally tucking under the pull-cord of my pajama bottoms and lingering in the top of the crease between my buttocks. The worst of it was that I was getting sort of a hard-on.

He squeezed more Lubriderm on my back and started in again. Now he was working one hand under my side, probing with his fingers without pretense of massaging. I tightened my grip on the arm of the sofa and pulled my body down to stop him. I was getting a little scared, and more and more aroused, too, not by him but by what he was doing. Under my hips my squashed semi-hard cock was quickly becoming hard-hard.

I pretended to sleep and continued to resist his probing, my knuckles turning white as I held on for dear life to that sofa arm, pulling more than my own weight onto my hips to keep his hand away from my cock. To make my erection go down I tried to think of all the disgusting things I could, but it was no use. The motion of his one massaging hand kept moving my body back and forth. My hard-on had found the slit in my P.J. bottoms and enough pre-cum was soon out on the Naugahyde underneath me to make it slippery as a wet mouth. Man, I thought, suppose I actually cum and leave sticky stuff all over his couch!

But I managed, just, to keep control of myself and after a while Mr. Holroyd gave up groping me. He switched to alcohol and toweled me dry and then scattered powder on my back. One last time he tried to get underneath me but again I resisted him and he finally sighed and slapped my ass and said, "All right, Jeffrey, you can rise now."

I pretended to wake up. I turned my head around and looked at him. He was seated in a chair staring at me with this kind of glazed look in his eyes, as though I might be a piece of prime rib and he was all set to dig in. I glanced at his crotch but I couldn't really see it because he had a towel balled up resting on his legs.

How, I wondered, was I going to get out of there with a roaring hard-on? I caught sight of another towel on the floor beside me. I grabbed it and sat up and at the same time pulled the towel into my lap.

"Better?" Mr. Holroyd said.

"Yes sir. Thank you, sir."

"Fine. Now, get a good night's sleep."

He rose and when I was least expecting it he pulled my towel away. There I was with my fourteen-year-old cock in full erection sticking out straight from my pajama fly, bobbing at him, its tip even a little wet.

"Jeffrey!" Mr. Holroyd said looking at it and then at my face

"What, sir?" I tried to cover my crotch with my hands.

"Look at your... condition!"

I was so embarrassed all I could do was stammer "I'm sorry, sir. This just... happens sometimes to me."

He began to soften a little. "It won't if you keep your thoughts clean."

"I'll try, sir." My cock was thoroughly limp by then. I got up and pulled my pajama top over my head, glad to hide for a moment, ostrich-fashion, from Mr. Holroyd's stare. Then I put on my bathrobe and pulled tight the belt. By now he was pacing around the room in a sort of agitated state

"Jeffrey, all of us have our own demons to fight," he said. "Perhaps I was too hard on you just now. After all, you're barely fourteen. You'd better take a cold shower before you retire. I'm sure I needn't lecture you on the dangers of self-abuse."

I got out of there as soon as I could, and it wasn't until I was back in our eighth grade hall that I realized how completely he had turned the tables on me, how all of a sudden I had become the person

guilty of sex, not him. Billy told me in the Talk Show that night he was beginning to think our headmaster was a little off his nut.

The next day my back felt perfectly fine, but whenever I saw Mr. Holroyd I walked kind of crooked and that got me out of tennis practice. At three o'clock in the afternoon I was up in the notch with Ralph and we were throwing off our clothes and laughing in the bright sunshine. It was a little chilly. Ralph had brought along a blanket. We rolled ourselves together in it like a pair of papooses and settled on the smooth rock floor.

"Man, this week has been hard!" Ralph said. "Pun definitely intended!" I could feel his enormous erection lifting itself between my legs. I clamped my thighs together on it and his body shivered with pleasure.

"I wish at school we could just be with each other once in a while," I said.

"I do, too. This caste system of going around only with guys in your own grade is dumb."

We kissed. Ralph rubbed his mouth back and forth over mine and then he wet his lips and opened them a little and clasped them over the tip of my nose. His tongue roamed around the entrance to each nostril and entered. Then he moved down again and took my lips in his and I was nose-breathing once more and the sweet smell of Ralph's mouth filled my lungs, my whole body, my life.

And it was then I realized I was in love. I really didn't want to be. There was too much going on in my life just then and I was too young for one more uncontrollable emotion. But it came to me, then, like the proverbial light bulb snapping on, that ever since our day in the mountains my relationships with everyone had been different, subordinated to my one important attachment to Ralph. Now that it had happened there was no hope of turning back.

I pulled away from him and sat up and shook my head.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

I closed my eyes, afraid that tears might be welling in them. "Nothing," I said. "This is just too perfect, that's all."

I felt his arms come around me again, and then I was diving for that great long, hard lever that suddenly ruled my feelings.

He was on his side and so was I and the blanket was half over his hips and my face. I could smell him, the sweetness of his skin and the scent of sweat from our walk and climb to the notch.

There, right at my fingertips, was his wonderful dense, curling pubic hair, and growing out of it, like a rocket from the Cape Canaveral swamps, was his cock, pulsing, dripping, huge as ever, closer than ever to my face.

I licked my lips and put them around the cap. It was enormously bigger than Bobby's, hotter, it seemed, slippery and salty from sweat and pre-cum. I heard him gasp. Perhaps it was a sob. I opened my mouth a little wider and sucked in all of the head.

And then I felt hands in my hair, grasping my skull and shoving me deeper and deeper into him. The hard, hot shaft moved inward. Suddenly I felt his mouth come onto my cock, too, warm and wet and tickling with his tongue.

He started a motion with his hips and hands, drawing his hard-on most of the way out and plunging it back until its end was riding on the soft red lining at the back of my throat.

I, too, started to thrust, and felt his head bob in counterpoint to my motion. I began to melt. Even though I had cum at least a half-dozen times since Ralph's lips had last been around my cock, I felt the tension gather in my balls and flood out right down to my toes. And it wasn't just strong. It was deep, too, and right, like it suited everything in nature, both mine and Ralph's. I began to beat harder with my hips,

as the flood exploded into a wonderful warm downpour, sweeping me away and drowning me in its fall.

Right then, as I was rushing toward climax, I felt Ralph begin to cum in my throat. It was far different than with Bobby. Ralph's cock seemed to swell to twice its hard-on thickness, and then the pulses started and the sperm shot out, hard and slippery and tasting salty and a little like bleach. It kept coming and coming and drowning my tonsils, and then I was at my peak, too, my smaller cock jerking and pouring out its lighter load into Ralph's mouth.

When it was all over I straightened up and looked in Ralph's face. I saw tears in his eyes and running across one cheek and the bridge of his nose. And then I, too, was crying, folding myself against his body and feeling his arms and the blanket come around my back, both of us sobbing our souls out for what we just had and what we thought we would always have together.

Chapter Seven

As well as not wanting love, I was quite unprepared for it. For the next couple of weeks my performance in everything was super-uneven. There were days on the tennis court when I was a hell-fired demon, others when I was listless and full of lead in my ass. One class would slip by with me in a dream world and not hearing anything the teacher said. In another I would find in a single fact, equation or line of poetry an amazing parallel to some aspect of my feelings for Ralph, and, if given a chance, I would babble on and on and not without some weird kind of insight, much to the delight of my classmates.

Fortunately T-day found me in one of my more inspired moods. On the University of Arizona courts, before several hundred kids, I trounced one senior from a private school in town and then went on with Wash Higgins to win the doubles match, too. Mr. Holroyd was beside himself. He followed me into the showers, smiling and talking all the time, and I knew he was just dying to soap me clean and towel me dry, but he didn't dare with all the other boys milling about.

And then it was Thanksgiving. Arizona was a long ways for parents in the east and midwest to come for what amounted to no more than a long weekend, so the school offered a caravan trip to Mexico, which I took. Billy came along, too, and we spent most nights in the same bed holding each other's cocks and making them spurt and even kissing occasionally to make up for being away from Ralph and Wash. Then we were back at school again and back to the old routine.

I had become so involved with other matters the last month or so that I'd almost forgotten about Jody. It seemed now that he had two faces he wore: one a bratty grin when he was cooking up something dirty, the other a long-faced mope for people he had a crush on, like me, or a case of hero worship for, like Ralph and Walsh and the other good-looking seniors.

He still bugged me about 'doing it' with him – and by that he meant doing his perversion – but when you are in love the idea of twisted sex with somebody you don't really care for at all is about as off-putting as you can get.

"Can't you find someone else to ball with?" I asked him one day when he had been bugging me especially hard. "What about the other guys in our class? Do they all turn you off?"

"No," he sulked. "There's only five boys in the whole goddamned school that I wouldn't get a hard-on from, especially if they... you know. You're the only one that'll do that with me."

"Used to," I said. "And only twice."

"Three times."

"And never again."

He brightened up for a moment. "You said that once before, and then one night there you were in my bed."

"Yeah, well, things are different now."

"Why? Is Billy so much better? Or is there somebody else that's getting your rocks off?"

It was amazing what we were able to keep hidden from Jody. For a while.

Meanwhile, my love for Ralph continued and grew. The weather was frequently too cold for outdoor love-making, so we had to invent other ways to get together.

It was usually midnight at Desert Ranch before all the masters were safely in bed and their doors closed and their lights out. About every third night Ralph would get up and stuff his bed with clothes and junk to give it the shape of a sleeping boy, then pull on a pair of cut-offs and creep out his window onto

the slant roof below. The seniors' rooms were at the opposite end of the school from where we slept; it was the one second-story hall in the building. Once outside he'd walk crouched past the other seniors' windows until he could pull himself up onto the main system of flat roofs which he could now run along easily until he came to our hall. He took with him a lariat. When he was above my room he would snug the loop over a steel pipe and throw the free end down the wall. Wrapping it about his waist, he would lower himself like a mountain climber to my window.

I've always been a heavy sleeper. Usually Ralph was beside me in bed before I drifted into consciousness to feel his strong arms coming about my chest, cradling me spoon-fashion from behind. Often his hands would already have found my cock and be caressing it into stiffness before I really woke up. Then I'd just lie there and let the sex feeling slowly bloom in my body, not moving an awful lot and saying nothing, until the first brilliant climax was on me.

One measure of our love was that after we'd really drained all the sex out of us we had the hardest time separating. It wasn't just that Ralph didn't want to face the cold trip back along the roofs, or that we both knew if we waited long enough our balls would fill up again. We just slept better against each other. No air was sweeter than the air surrounding Ralph's body, into which he'd breathed. No blanket was warmer and cozier than Ralph's chest and legs close against mine. So on many mornings dawn caught us all unawares, and Ralph had to creep home in the crisp twilight air, and in my half-awake dreams I'd see him running crouched along the rooftops silhouetted against the coming light and rising star of morning.

Pretty soon Christmas was just around the corner. All of us were looking forward to seeing our mothers again, and our dads, eating home-cooked food, sleeping late mornings. A kind of laziness crept into everything we did. Even discipline loosened up a bit. Neither Ralph nor our hall master giggered us as often for being a little late to bed or wandering around in the hall after lights-out.

For example, nothing happened to any of us as a result of the great circle-jerk furor. I was lying beside Billy one night and we had just launched the Talk Show, when suddenly we heard this terrific crash followed by the unmistakable voice of Jock Danforth yelling and cussing. We sprang out of Billy's bed and ran to Jody's room, where we found Tim and Jody and Jock and a couple of other boys in one big tangle of sheets and blankets and a mattress and bed frame in the middle of the floor. Jock was furious. He was slugging away at the other kids who were holding their stomachs with laughter or rolling on the floor, despite a few bloody noses and a growing mouse under little Timmy's left eye.

It wasn't until the next day that Billy and I found out from Tim what it was all about. A week earlier Jock had walked in on him and another kid in the middle of a mutual hand job. Instead of getting lost or ignoring what he saw, Jock chose to make himself thoroughly obnoxious. He called them perverts, queers, all the usual stuff, and day after day he just wouldn't let it die. Until finally they decided to play a little trick on him.

Jock was very proud of his big body and mature sexual apparatus. They challenged him to a circle-jerk competition and bet him that he would lose. He fell for it. They gathered secretly in Tim's room. Each boy put five dollars in a straw hat. Then they knelt on Mike's bed, snapped off the light, and Jock, taking command, said, "Ready, get set, go!"

There was a great commotion of rubbing sounds and hard breathing. Bed springs squeaked. Elbows knocked against elbows. After a short time Jock caught his breath, gasped and said triumphantly, "There! I just shot. Turn on the lights."

They did. Jock was holding onto his swollen hard-on with sperm still oozing out its tip and running down his knuckles and dripping onto the blanket below – but he was the only one. All the other guys had just made a lot of noise but hadn't even taken their cocks out to beat.

"Well, you won," Timmy said in a sort of disgusted tone of voice. "Here's your money. Take it and go tell your problem to a shrink." And that's when all hell broke loose.

Fortunately Jock's anger was over quickly. He's a pretty good-natured guy. I suppose he'd made himself a pain in the ass about catching Tim and the other kid only because he secretly wanted to do the same thing himself. Anyhow, after that he started joining Timmy in bed at night, and soon Tim allowed as how Jock Danforth was just as handy with his hand as any of the rest of us.

So now we were one hundred percent. All of us in the eighth grade fooled around. It kind of cleared the air and for a few days we were all somehow closer to each other. There is nothing to knit a group together better than a shared secret you all feel just a little guilty about.

As for Billy and me and Ralph and Wash, we sometimes made it a foursome, going places Wednesday afternoons or Sundays. Ralph was interested in taking pictures of wildlife. He and Wash rigged up a bird feeding station not too far up Cochise Canyon with an electronic attachment that was so sensitive that even the weight of a small wren would trip the shutter of his camera. Checking the film, of course, had to be done by all four of us, and was accompanied by a round of love-making on the sand or by the stream.

It was so nice to be able to walk as pairs holding hands, kissing, hugging. There's something about being a couple that makes you want to show you are a couple, if only to one other couple. I'm awful glad we had that time together. I didn't know it then, but it was coming to an end, sadly soon.

Chapter Eight

It was the night before vacation. Some of the boys had already started to pack. Billy and I skipped the Talk Show because Wash and Ralph were coming early. About ten-thirty I heard the familiar sounds of Ralph lowering himself down to my window, and then he was folding his warm arms about me and shoving his hard-on between my legs, where I could feel it press against the underside of my balls. I tightened my thighs around it. At the same time my lips mingled with his lips and our tongues played tag in the double tunnel of our linked mouths.

This would be our last chance to make love in some two and a half weeks. Ralph was going back to his guardian's ranch the following afternoon. The rest of us would sleep an additional night at school and board our various planes on Monday morning. Ralph planned to stay in my bed until dawn and we didn't figure on sleeping a whole lot.

The first time, as always, was over in a hurry. We sixty-nined, swallowed each other's sperm and then righted ourselves so that Ralph was lying on his back with his head on my pillow and I was snuggling half onto his side and half upon his chest, with my cheek resting on his shoulder and his chin lightly grazing my forehead.

We were murmuring, talking about nothing, I suppose just enjoying that perfect peace that comes after one tremendous climax and before you start to work up toward another. My hand was around Ralph's semi-soft cock and he had a palm spread over my butt.

There was a sound outside my door, like someone turning on the cement with gritty-bottomed shoes or hard-soled slippers. I sprang up and rushed into the hall, but no one was about when I got there. I checked all the doors. Jody's door was the only one open. I peered inside and could just make out his quiet body in bed. I went back to my room, half-convinced it had been my imagination. Ralph had heard nothing, but then he had been whispering when my ears had caught the sound.

We came back into each other's arms. Ralph wrapped a hand around our two erections and squeezed them together. They were soon slippery, and we made little hip motions that ran the sensitive part of our cock-fronts by each other, sending the greatest feelings outward all through our bodies.

We continued to kiss. Ralph licked my face. I ran my hands all over his strong body, as though I didn't know every square millimeter of it already, hadn't felt every hair of his a hundred times, from the cowlick at the top of his skull, down through the sprigs peeking from his armpit, the train that started just below his navel and widened into the fragrant tangle of pubic bush and ball fur, to the lowest hair on each ankle of each leg.

As our feelings climbed higher and higher, Ralph moved more and more onto me. Finally he released our cocks and although I hated to lose the feel of his hand, I welcomed the weight of his body, especially that part of it born by his penis point, which probed down into my stomach like a bayonet.

We were getting tortuously close to cumming. Our motions were regular and serious, our hips dragging his bigger penis in long, smooth glides across my flesh side by side with my own cock which worked upward in the same sweet slickness against his skin. Our arms held each other in the tightest embrace. Ralph's teeth took one of my ear lobes between them and he whispered, with that wonderful final desperation, "I'm about there. How about you?"

"Yes," I said. "Oh, man, this is beautiful! I'd like it to go on forever!"

But that was just what didn't happen. There was a sudden bang: my door crashed open and slammed

against the wall. Lights burst on. I jerked my head around and there stood Mr. Holroyd. His face looked like cold oatmeal. His lips were moving but no sound came out of them at first.

Ralph sprang out of bed and confronted our headmaster. I had never admired Ralph as much as at that moment, when he was standing there in all his magnificent nakedness, clenching his fists, his penis slowly falling from heady erection to its normal full downward curve.

"What is the meaning of this?" Mr. Holroyd finally managed to get out in a hoarse voice. He made a motion toward Ralph, but Ralph stood his ground.

"Don't come any closer," Ralph said. He went to the chair where he had discarded his clothes and pulled on his cut-offs.

"You filth!" Mr. Holroyd breathed. "Get out of here!"

"I am," Ralph said.

"Don't ever let me see you again!"

Ralph had the presence of mind to smile, a bitter, sad smile that twisted down the corners of his mouth. "You probably won't," he said. Then he sprang out the window and was gone.

Mr. Holroyd stood for a moment gazing at me. I hadn't moved except to pull the covers up around my neck, unless you would call shaking all over moving. Because Mr. Holroyd had a look that really frightened me. It was like an actor on TV twisting his face when he was supposed to be having a stroke. He was breathing hard, sort of panting. I thought he was going to go after me with his fists or snatch up a chair and beat my brains out with it, or even strangle me with his long, bony fingers. Instead he made a sort of gasping sound and breathed out four quiet words: "Jeff. How. Could. You?" Then he turned on his heel and left. I heard footsteps going down the hall and the door at the end squeaking open and banging shut and he was gone.

Sunday was a throwback to the days of fall. A brilliant sun rose out of the eastern ranges and into the still blue sky and cooked us all during the morning outdoor church service.

Years ago teachers and boys had built a few rows of rock seats in a natural amphitheater in the hills a half-mile from school. Later it was consecrated as a chapel. It was a lovely place, surrounded by saguaros, edged with barrel cactus and prickly-pear, looking across Cochise Canyon to the full mountain shoulder on the other side.

After the service all of us eights hung around behind and waited. Jody tried to walk back to school in a group of seventh graders, but we pulled him away and kept him until there was just us on the chapel trail, and Wash and a few other seniors who were close to Ralph. I didn't want to hear his confession. I knew what it would be; I knew his reasons. I told the others I needed to be alone; I'd meet them at the old Oldenabi mine.

The desert had been a kind of comforter in the past, a natural place I could pour out my heart in when it hurt. Yet I stumbled through it like a sleep-walker, resenting its calm, its clarity, the clean order of rocks and sand and vegetation, the sharp outline of mountains against sky. The hugeness of my loss of Ralph was just beginning to seep into my sleepless brain, along with the power of my hatred of Jody.

At the mine I went to the crusher shed and got everything ready. I put the fence electrifier on the hub of the huge horizontal wheel, connected up Ralph's camera shutter trip to one of the leads and settled down to wait. It was hot in the old building. Some birds nesting in the loft chattered and flew about. Pretty soon I heard the sound of footsteps; the boys were there.

They pushed Jody in. His shirt had been yanked off. His chest was streaked with rivulets of dirty sweat. A gag had been tied across his mouth. When he saw me his eyes opened wide and he began to shake. I realized then that I had absently picked up a short piece of metal strap and he thought I was going

to brain him with it.

A couple of the seniors unfastened Jody's belt and the buttons of his fly and yanked down his Levis and undershorts. His cock was shrunk to the size of an acorn. They got him out of his shoes and lifted him onto the wheel and laid him along one of the spokes where Timmy had playfully rested and we had spun him earlier in the autumn. He was too terrified to put up much of a fight. We bound his arms along the rim of the wheel, his body to the spoke he was lying on, his ankles to the hub. Through his gag he kept whimpering at us.

At last it was time to hook him up.

"Go ahead," Wash said to me.

I stepped inside the wheel, between the spoke Jody was tied to and another. I pulled one of the leads from the fence electrifier, wrapped it around his scrotum and secured it with a couple of turns of adhesive tape. The other lead, into which Ralph's shutter trip was connected, I taped to his shriveled cock, just below the head. I adjusted the length of the trip string so it was just snug. Then I eased the wet gag out of Jody's mouth, stepped out and joined the circle of boys surrounding the wheel.

I had this weird feeling of a kind of Inquisition, like we were in some sort of time warp back to the Sixteenth Century when everything was different, the rules of life were different, what was okay and not okay in sex was completely upside down. I saw the kids taking off their shirts through a kind of haze, trying out the motion of the wheel like they were cranking up a torture rack on which our victim would be slowly torn apart for his sexual heresy. Jody's wails ("What are you going to do to me?") were pleas for absolution. He was looking up at us, seeing us upside-down, the back of his head just barely supported by the wheel's rim, his long chestnut hair falling away from him – beautiful hair, lustrous and electric dry in the desert air.

And then it was anything but dry. The wheel had made its first revolution, and each of us had done *Jody's thing*. I was watching his cock. As arousal beat out his fear, it started to get longer, first growing down toward the hub of the wheel, but then, as the blood rushed into it, there was only one place it could go and that was up. Slowly it lifted, bending in the middle, then straightening, the purple head, squeezed from below by the adhesive band, rising and rising, until at last the shutter string lifted off his leg, grew taut. Finally, with a little jerk in Jody's cock, the trip snapped tight.

There was a sort of soft click. Electricity shot from the battery capacitor through the upper lead to the cock-tip, where it flowed against the the direction his sperm wanted to come, down the shaft to the cock-root, across to his ball sack and back along the other lead.

Jody screamed. His body writhed in agony. Twice a second, in time to the little clicks in the capacitor, the shocks electrified his genitals. After a few seconds his cock fell limp, the string loosened, the current switched off and the torture stopped.

"Please, *please*, don't let that happen again!" Jody whimpered.

"It won't," Wash said. "Not if you keep yourself from getting a hard-on."

"I can't!" Jody gasped, "if you... do this to me!"

"Then get ready for another jolt!"

Wash grabbed the wheel and we put Jody through another round. Again Jody's cock rose. Again the fence electrifier did its job and sent Jody screaming and writhing and, at last, his cock drooping.

That must have gone on for about twenty minutes. By then Jody's body was glistening, glowing in the sunlight filtering in through the ruined roof. His arms and his hips dripped; his hair dripped. He looked older, somehow, stretched out that way with every muscle snapping-tight across his chest and shoulders and arms and thighs. Gone was his baby-fat, his appearance of chubbiness.

Slowly he began to wear out. His hard-ons came less often and when they did they were less hard and

went down quicker when the current snapped on.

"Man, I gotta take a leak," Wash said.

He started to go out of the shed, but one of the other seniors touched his shoulder and pointed to Jody and said, "If spit does this to him he'll probably pop his nut and electrocute himself over piss."

"Okay. Spin him over here."

Wash unzipped and brought out his cock. When Jody's face was below it he let go. We watched the hard stream shoot out the piss slit in a raggedy, hissing stream, hit Jody's face, splash everywhere and run off back over his forehead and down into his already wet hair, foaming a little as it did.

At first Jody was too shocked to move. Jaw-dropped in amazement, he even took some of the piss in his mouth before he reacted. This time his cock rose fast; this time the shocks and the writhing went on for almost fifteen seconds.

All of us took our turns. I knew now what Billy had meant last September when he'd said that spitting wasn't the end of it with Jody. How much more turned him on? I looked at Timmy Bannion, and we must have both had the same idea at the same time. We left the circle of boys, the wheel and our soaking, screaming victim, and walked into one of the other ruined rooms. We lowered our pants and hunkered down.

I'm not a pervert. I don't have any fetishes. Sure, with someone you like real well, spit is okay and is all involved with kissing and licking, which is really nice, and with making the skin your cock is going to ride on more slippery. But I'd never want anyone to just plain spit or piss or shit on me, I think. Anyhow, that wasn't the point. It was the time-warp aspect. I mean, it was like we were back in one of those super-Christian ages when torture was what everyone did; the revenge was where the charge was, not in my cock, which in any case wasn't hard.

Timmy and I came back each with a loaded shingle, and then we smeared our shit with it all over Jody's body and face. And that brought up his cock like nothing we had done to him before. The current snapped through his genitals for almost a minute. He screamed and screamed. When his cock finally did go down it was only seconds before it was up again. Jody yelled and jerked and sweated and stank, brown as any black man.

After a while he sort of went into a hard-breathing faint, and then all of us, I think, felt our anger sort of go out of us, as though we'd come back to the Twentieth Century and down to earth.

"Okay," said Wash, "I've had enough of this." He shook the wheel a little to get Jody's attention. Jody opened one dazed eye and looked backwards up at Wash. "I hope for your sake someone comes by pretty soon, 'cause we're going home now. You can holler all you like but only a few jack rabbits and maybe a lonely coyote is going to hear you."

We went out of the shed. The other boys walked back to school but I sat down in the shade outside the door and listened to Jody.

First he yelled after us all by name and fell to sobbing when nobody answered him. Then he called to Mr. Holroyd, then his mother and finally to God. I had no idea he was religious. The sun rose to its high-noon hotness. Jody grew thirsty. He began to pray and sing hymns. He promised to give up sex forever if some miracle occurred. He begged Ralph's forgiveness as though Ralph were standing right there beside him. Finally he just shut up and I dozed.

I was awakened by a shriek. "Ants!" I jumped up and went into the shed. Jody's head was tossing back and forth in terror, his fingers splayed against the wheel rim. I stood above him, smelling the excrement, looking down into his brown-smeared face which I saw was crawling with small red things. Terrified blue eyes blazed at me. I pulled out my hunting knife and cut the lines binding him to the wheel. He jumped up, clawing at the ants, and then he was down on his knees, grabbing me about the legs.

"Thank God you came!" he sobbed. "I didn't know anybody stayed around. I thought..."

I kicked my legs free and started to run. I flew down the trail toward Cochise Junction, cut off it to a wash, took the wash back up toward the mountains for a few minutes, stumbling in the deep, sandy bottom, until my lungs were screaming for air. Then I fell down and was violently sick. Afterwards I started to cry, long wails of desperation at my abandonment, horror at my cruelty, sobs that rose from my throat into the thin desert air and echoed all around me in the hills.

Chapter Nine

The next morning they drove us to the airport. I had been terrified that Mr. Holroyd would want to see me before I left, but he stayed in his apartment the whole time, or behind closed doors in his study. He didn't even show up for meals.

My plane was one of the last to leave. No one stayed around to make sure I boarded it and at the last moment I decided to go looking for Ralph. I cashed in my ticket and began to hitchhike. I stopped at a short-order stand and ate a hot dog and a chocolate malted and followed this with a root beer and another malted and a split. Then I started thumbing south and east, around the mountains.

My last ride was in an old Chevy that smelled of tobacco and grease. The driver was a young mechanic with dark, curly hair, handsome enough but dirty.

"Where you heading?" he asked, staring at me.

"Ajo."

"That's back," he said.

"Douglas."

"Where's your home?"

"In the mid-west."

"What're you doing for money?"

"I... got enough."

The young man swung the car off the road and stopped. I opened the door and started to run, but very soon he caught up and slipped a hand over my face. It was no clean, sweet-smelling hand like Ralph's that had so often moved over my cheeks and nose and lips; it was horny and musky and reeked of cigarettes. And then I found myself down in the sand struggling beneath him.

"What's your name?" he asked, smiling down at me as soon as I was still.

"What does that matter?"

The man shrugged. "You going to give it to me or am I going to have to take it?"

I thought he meant my money. All I could think of was that wad I'd collected for my ticket stuffed into my back pocket.

"How much are you going to leave me?"

A blunt-lipped smile came over his face. "I'm talking about your ass. I bet you been cut. All rich kids got bare-headed pricks."

I started to struggle but his hand came back to my face and threatened to cut off my wind. He was lying full on me. I could feel the rib-like hardness of his cock pressing into my crotch. He brought down his lips. I turned my face away, disgusted at the smell of tobacco breath. But he grabbed my skull and forced my face back until his lips clamped on mine. He tried to force his tongue into my mouth but I shut my lips against him with all the strength they had.

Suddenly he was hitting me, rapidly, both sides of his hand slapping back and forth on my cheeks and chin.

"Open up, you little horny toad," he panted. And then, with my face stinging and a little blood trickling from my lips into my mouth, he dropped his head again, and this time I had to accept his kissing.

A minute later he was sitting beside me, stripping off his clothes. He eyed my crotch and the mound of soft organs cupped by my Levis. "How many mouths you plowed with that thing?" he asked. He loosened my belt and pulled down my pants and shorts with one strong pull. "There." He took my limp penis

between his fingers with real delicacy, like it was a valve stem, something he understood and admired. "I knew they'd snipped it," he said. "Well, the cut ones are cleaner."

He dropped his mouth to my crotch bone, opened up his lips and started stirring my cock with his tongue-tip, twisting it round and round upon its root. To my surprise it began to stiffen. I stopped fighting him, then. I just lay back, worn out, and let the man do what he wanted. He might be a crumb, but I was pretty sure he wasn't going to cut me up in little pieces.

The sun was low on the horizon. We had come to rest in a creosote flat and the green bushes filtered the last rays of the afternoon and softened them as they fell on my cock-sucker's back and shoulders. One of his hands had plunged to my scrotum and was stroking my balls which seemed to move like little purring kittens against his fingers. The other was grabbing his own dark cock and jerking it off hard and quick beside my shoulder.

His slick tongue, the touch to my balls, was having its effect. I spread my legs to accommodate his exploring hand, catching breath as my feelings shot up. One of his fingers dropped below, found the little pucker in my ass, pressed in and tickled some new nerve I never knew I had. It figured, it seemed just right that a dirty man should get in me back there for the very first time – a place I'd every so often, and guiltily, thought of Ralph some day shoving his cock up. Now, however, the feeling was driving me crazy, tickling me, exciting me, making me thrash and groan, so I was turned on, even, by the sight of him jacking off.

"Oh, Jesus," I heard myself moaning, "don't stop now! Finger me! Finger me deep! Here I go!"

Suddenly, wildly, I rose to orgasm, ejaculated hard and wrackingly into his mouth, just as he came himself, splattering his jism all over my neck and shoulder.

We cleaned up as best we could and got back in his car. He sat there for a moment licking his lips.

"You bastard," I said. "That was the cum I was saving for Ralph."

"Who's Ralph? Another little cock-sucker?"

"A big kid you'd better stay clear of. The least you can do is take me to his place."

"Okay." He lit a cigarette and offered me one. I shook my head. The last thing I wanted for Ralph was to reek of tobacco.

A half hour later we turned off on a gravel road and a few miles further on stopped at a gate with a sign reading, "Little Spread. Henry Adams."

It was full night. I got out and slammed the door and started walking toward the yellow square of a lighted window several hundred yards away. As I approached, it grew bigger. I could see the dark outline of the house, and the larger bulk of a barn shouldering up into the sky. There were no cars outside, no sounds of life. In all the dark building there was only the one lighted window. Ralph's guardian must be away, I thought. But with the light on Ralph himself must be at home.

I stepped to the window and peered into a bedroom decorated in a rather fussy style. There were flower-print curtains, pictures of boys, some autographed, on the walls, lots of closets and a couple of bureaus and a chaise lounge. But everything was in one big mess. The spread and blankets had been ripped from the bed and thrown in a heap on the floor. Pieces of men's clothing were scattered about.

And lying on the bare bed, naked, facing me, so I could clearly make out his familiar sleeping features, was Ralph. And against him, almost under him, partly in his arms, slept another boy that was blond and as old as Ralph. And Ralph's hand was gripping the other boy's penis, which was as big and hard as the two of them were still.

I made it away from there as best I could and walked in the mountains until dawn. Later, when the sun got up, I began moving south. I found water holes and drank where cattle drank. By late afternoon I had

blundered onto a main road and started hitchhiking. When I got hungry I gorged myself on pop and hot dogs at a roadside stand. By then I was so tired I was punchy.

Evening found me back in Tucson, standing under a hotel canopy, reeling with faintness and my stomach going like a washing machine set on the rough cycle. A group of high school boys in blue suits and looking stiff and formal in their fresh country haircuts watched me as I walked into the hotel and asked for a room.

"Do you have any baggage, young man?" the clerk asked.

"No."

"Then you'll have to pay cash in advance. Unless you're with the church group, of course."

I nodded vaguely.

"What school are you from?" The clerk sifted through some papers. "Northern?"

I nodded again, not really knowing what I was doing.

"Then you must be Larry Webster. I thought you had canceled."

I shook my head.

"Changed your mind at the last minute, eh? Well, good. I'm glad to see you boys come to gatherings like this. I understand Reverend Eubanks takes a strong line against all this permissiveness which is poisoning the world you boys must grow up into."

A woman in some kind of uniform led me to the elevator, then up, then down a hall filled with noisy boys. She stopped at a door and knocked "Tac?" she called.

"Yup," came a voice from inside.

"I've found you a roommate."

"There's only one bed in here," said the voice.

"It's a double bed."

"Oh, Christ!"

"Tac!" She turned the handle, opened the door a crack.

"I'm sitting here buck naked paring my toenails," the voice said, "but come on in if you like that sort of thing."

"Oh!" She closed the door and bit her lip. "This boy is awfully tired."

"Well, tell him to wait till you're out of the hall."

She left and I leaned against the door jamb. When I closed my eyes my head spun.

"Okay," the boy said from inside. "If the coast's clear you can come in."

I turned the handle, opened the door and looked at my new roommate. He stood naked and natural before the bed, arms folded on his chest. It was the boy Jody and I had seen in the movie theater and tracked to the men's room many months before.

"Hello," he said. "I'm Tac Jordan. You look like you're going to heave your cookies."

He was right. The room tilted. Sickness rose in my throat.

"It's over there," he said.

I ran to the bathroom and buried my head in the toilet bowl and threw up all the pop and hot dogs and gosh knows what else my churning stomach had rejected. And then I was terribly tired. I felt Tac pick me up and strip me and put me in the shower. I felt the shower go from warm to cold and I remember swearing at Tac and then I was being dried and walked to bed and that was all I remembered.

I slept all through the evening and well into the following day. When I finally woke up I could see the bed and been shared. There was a Crumpled pillow beside mine and a pair of pajama bottoms were draped across the footboard.

There was a note on the table:

Dear Roommate (I don't even know your name):

In case you really were asleep, the doctor looked at you and said you were probably just tired and we could relax if you didn't barf again. You didn't and I paid the doctor fifteen dollars. But, boy, you must be starved for affection.

– Tac

I dressed, reread the note, crumpled it and went downstairs to eat.

"Did you miss Eubanks' sex talk?" a boy asked me.

"I guess so."

"It was great. He was for God and against boys fooling around."

I left the hotel and walked around town and didn't return until evening. Tac smiled at me when I came into our room. "You *must* be feeling better," he said.

"Yes. I'm sorry for all the trouble I was."

"You don't know the half of it."

I told Tac my name. He nodded and I sat down beside him on the bed.

"I guess last fall we didn't bother to introduce ourselves," he said.

"You remember?" I was embarrassed.

"Of course. You still running with that wise guy?"

"No!" I said. "Oh, here's fifteen dollars." I gave him the notes and he stuffed them rather casually into his pocket. "Sorry I was a pest in bed."

"You weren't. It was mostly like you were scared and wanted to get close to somebody. You want to tell me about it?"

I looked into his eyes and all I could see was friendly interest. So I started to tell him, beginning too late in the story, then having to back up and skip forward. Sometimes he asked questions but mostly he just listened. When I finished he was quiet for a long time.

"What're you going to do?" he asked me at last.

"I don't know. Go back to school when it starts."

"In the meantime?"

"I can look out for myself."

"I'll bet," Tac said, getting up. "Next strange room you stagger into all shook up and barf all over the place you'll get blasted clean out of orbit. You're staying with me until tomorrow and then I'm putting you right back on that Chicago plane."

I looked at our bed. "What about that?" I said.

"Don't worry."

"I guess I got to tell you ever since saw you in the movie theater I..."

"Sure, I know."

"I can't help it."

"I know that."

"That's probably why, last night, even while I slept..."

"You didn't do anything wrong."

"I'm sorry."

"Look, stupid, *I liked it!*"

There was a bang on our door.

"Oh, shit," Tac said.

He went to the door and threw it open and two boys, naked except for towels wrapped around their middles, tumbled into the room. They looked as though they were only a year or two older than I was.

"Hey, Tac, get this," one of them said. "Show them, Corny, I mean Reverend Eubanks, sir. Share with us once more your extraordinary knowledge of... intimate matters."

The boy called Corny sprang onto the bed and balanced there like a tense young athlete on the undulating springs. He extended his hands. "Boys, boys," he said, "let us be frank with one another. Let us be utterly candid. 'Tis a gift to be simple, to be true... Let us, in short, talk turkey."

The other boy, leaning against the door, made gobble-gobble sounds.

"Ah, Waldo, my young friend, I see you agree. Perhaps you have a question you would like to ask me."

"Yes sir."

"Well, go ahead. Shoot, as young people say these days."

"Yes, that's part of it. What I want to know is, does masturbation turn your palms yellow?"

Corny turned up his hands, looked at their insides, then, reversing them, held them outward for the other boy to inspect. "Of course not, son. Observe..."

But Waldo's face was frozen, mouth open, laughing without making any noise, his body bent forward at the waist, finger pointing at Corny.

"Well, yes..." Corny said. He cleared his throat in pretended embarrassment and continued. "That should clear up *that* little matter. What else is on your mind?"

"Well, sir, you say it's wrong to grab your peter and jiggle the skin up and down to make you feel good."

"If God meant for boys to play with their peters, would he have invented girls to do it for them?"

"Then it's all right if I get a girl to jiggle that skin up and down for me?"

"Absolutely not, unless she's your wife of course."

"But I'm only fifteen. Shouldn't I wait a while to marry?"

"You should wait a while to marry."

"Like how long?"

"Six, seven, ten years."

"Sir, my testicles produce willy-nilly, three tablespoons of spermatic fluid every day including Sundays, or about a thousand tablespoons a year, and if I waited ten years to marry I'd be retaining internally ten thousand tablespoons of spermatic fluid. Have you any idea what that would do to my physical proportions? And the wedding night. Think of the injury to that poor unsuspecting person lying underneath of me when the long-pent-up flood of cum burst out of my penis and penetrated..."

"Waldo, Waldo, nature has a way of taking *care* of these matters. A *natural* way. You believe in ecology, don't you?"

"I certainly do."

"And you're against pollution?"

"Of course."

"Pollution of self is as bad as of air and water, and man's hand only *despoils* the nature it touches."

"Then what, sir, is the answer?"

"The mercy of Morpheus, the release of the dream."

"The *wet* dream?"

"Yes."

"Do *you* have wet dreams, too?"

"Well," Corny said, suddenly all chatty and confidential, "just between you and me and the Kleenex, I

usually wake up to give it a couple of good jerks."

"And that's all right?"

"Well, when Mrs. Eubanks goes away on a trip..."

"Would you show me? I mean, just between you and me and the..."

"I think, Waldo, that you already have sufficient knowledge gained through pubertal experimentation..."

"But, Reverend Eubanks, sir, if there's a wrong way, or ways, there must be one or more right ways, too."

"Yes, I suppose that's true. Amazing how direct and logical you young people are these days."

"Thank you, sir. Now, do you suggest the two-finger method or the full fist fuck?"

"It depends on the hand, I'd say."

"Take *my* hand."

"I will."

Waldo stepped to the base of the bed, reached up and felt under the towel wrapped around Corny's waist.

"Yes," Corny said, a flush of pleasure coming into his face, "as we were saying, the two-finger method has... Ah, that's nice! ...certain advantages. It utilizes the digits with the greatest coordination and muscular control, the fingers you point with, write with..."

"Pick you nose with."

"...turn the pages of your prayer book with, and it puts them, moves them... Oh, yes, yes! ...on the most sensitive area of the whole penis, the little fold of skin and nerve on its ventral surface lying just anterior to the *corona glandis* where... Oooo, that's slippery! ...it sweeps upward and threatens to bifurcate the very lips of the *urethral meatus*, as that little mouth, under stimulation, supplies the ideal wetting and lubricating agent to the whole area, the whole operation, which technique at the same time allows occasional excursions, for the sake of variety of sensation, of the index and sometimes even the middle digit as well, up and over the sensitive, yielding, bulbous surface of the glans."

By now the towel about Corny's waist had parted and exposed not only Waldo's hand and wrist and forearm but also Corny's cock which had come up well past horizontal as Waldo did on Corny exactly what Corny was talking about.

"Is that right, sir?" Waldo asked, his face full of sober respect.

"Yes. Now, let us examine the technique of the full fist."

Waldo's hand closed snug around Corny's cock.

"This gives the onanizer an immense feeling of power and *inness*. Not only is the erection fully buried in the enclosing fingers and palm, but the hand has a full firm grip upon the entire span of the organ. So the cycle is complete: penetration coupled with possession. There is almost no limit to the tightness with which the hand can clasp. And now the hips can hump as well, simulating the motions of intercourse."

"Like this, sir?"

"Like that, son."

"And this, sir?"

"Ah, yes, that little twist is... *very good!*"

Tac and I were laughing at the flying fist and the grinding hips. The towel had fallen. Corny, the orator, had sunk back a little on his heels, thrusting forward his knees like a limbo dancer. Obviously the final moments were approaching. His head came back. His arms raised, palms turned up, a messianic vision transfixing his face.

"I believe, son, what I am experiencing is not a degradation of the flesh but a genuine, glorious... miracle!"

Sperm shot out of his penis. The first jets cleared the bed and plopped on the carpet, the rest whitening and running down over Waldo's knuckles.

"But it fades," Corny said and sighed. "Ah, Waldo, the vision fades. It's leaving me."

"It's not leaving *me!*" Waldo said, trying to shake the semen from his fingers.

"I recall something radiant, warm, but now... Boys, if you'll excuse me, I'm suddenly a little tired. It's my calling, I suppose, all this responsibility...."

Tac shoved the boys out of our room and locked the door. He grinned at me and opened his shirt and unfastened the big leather belt at the top of his Levis.

"Come here," he said.

I walked to him. He put a finger under my chin and raised my face.

"Are you ready for it? Can you forget Ralph, just for tonight?"

The answer, of course, was no. I didn't forget Ralph, but the sex with Tac was like a promise given ages before now coming due. It started slow, then built sure and steady with the piston beat of his beautiful slippery cock between my legs, in my mouth, where it first came, then pressed on my belly as we lay in full embrace, sleeping and loving in long cycles through the night.

The next day Tac put me on the plane for home.

Chapter Ten

I won't bore you with the story of my parents' concern over my late arrival or the lies I told them to get myself off the hook. Let me just say that Mr. Holroyd was keeping quiet about the sex scene he had walked in on and he now knew more about that aspect of my affairs than my own mother and father.

Meanwhile, it was good to be home again, to play tennis with my dad, whom I beat almost all the time, to go skiing, to fall asleep evenings on the couch in front of a blazing fire with the wind and snow sifting around outside trying to get in.

On Christmas day Ralph called me. I refused to speak to him.

"What was that all about?" Dad asked me after he'd hung up. "Who's Ralph?"

"A kid at school."

"He said he was a friend."

"A false one."

"I gathered you'd had a falling out. He had a message. Do you want to hear it?"

"Not especially."

"Well, I'll give it to you anyway. Otherwise later you might get curious and change your mind and then I'd have forgotten. He said he's sorry. He ran into another boy called Tac, I think, and he understands everything. And he wishes you a merry Christmas."

"Good for him."

My father sighed. "Wait, son, until you get a little older and begin to have these problems with women." What could I say? That I *was* old enough? That this was one of "these problems," but it was over another guy? For the first time, but not the last, I felt lonely in my sexual affairs.

At the end of vacation we came back, Billy from a world of junior high social events in Chicago, Timmy from a Baja California skin-diving trip (and sporting a tanned, freckled, peeling face), Jock from skiing.

Jody didn't return, for which I was thankful. But in his place came an eleven-year-old boy named Greg Stoddard. Greg's father was Brett Stoddard, the TV horse opera hero, and his mother was Christie Morrow, who just missed getting an Emmy a couple of years ago. The two were divorced when Greg was five or six.

A lot of people have told me how lucky I was to have been thrown together with the son of movie stars, even if he was three years younger than me, but my happiness was reduced by two facts: one, Greg was a behavior problem, and, two, he was my roommate.

"Too much privacy," Mr. Holroyd explained to me in his office, "can lead a boy astray. I have assigned Greg to your room in the hope that you and he can keep an eye on one another. Obviously *you* need more supervision (which, incidentally, I intend to see that you will get), and I understand from his mother that Greg does too.

That, about Greg, was the understatement of the year!

The first week Greg was homesick. He moped around the room, which didn't bother me too much, but he also refused to brush his teeth, change his shirt and undershorts or even bathe. When the smell got too bad, Timmy and Billy and I took him into the locker room and stripped him and threw him in the shower and soaped him and then made him brush his teeth by twisting an arm behind his back.

I learned that Greg was a fighter and for his size could be pretty tough.

He could also be mean, I returned to my room the next day to find that a little statuette of mine, of a dog sort of like old Pitch at home, had been smashed. Also some of my clothes had been ripped up, my bed dumped and the last fifty pages torn out of the paperback I was reading.

"Yeah, I did it," Greg said.

I wanted to paste him but instead I asked him why.

"You know."

"Like hell I do."

"Because of yesterday."

"Listen, that wasn't just me. It was everybody. That goat smell is more than you can ask people to put up with."

"If I want to stink, I'll stink."

"Not around here, you won't."

I went to our hall master. "How come I got to room with a fifth grader, anyhow?" I complained. "Especially with Jody's room lying empty."

"Mr. Holroyd thought it advisable," he replied, with a look that said I won't go into this any more if you won't.

"So I can move him out?" I said.

"Not now, no."

It was about then that Mr. Holroyd instituted the great junior high limited self-determination scheme.

Eighth graders were now considered seniors in the lower school. There was an election, which Billy and I won. The two of us became lower school prefects (or mini-monitors, as the upper school kids took to calling us). One of our most un-favorite responsibilities was to take over the disciplinary work squads of the younger boys.

Greg was always on them. Usually he would try to sneak away, or he would refuse to obey whoever was in charge, or he would deliberately destroy whatever he was working on or with. Inevitably one Wednesday came along when I would be in charge of the squad and the only boy on it was Greg.

So after lunch I changed into sneakers, khaki pants and T-shirt and waited for Greg to appear. When he didn't show, I went looking for him and finally found him in Jody's old room stripped to his skivvys reading a comic book.

"You're late," I said.

"I know." Greg didn't look up.

"Get dressed. Now!"

"I'm going to finish this comic first."

I grabbed the magazine out of his hand. Greg met my eyes with a steady stare of anger.

"Get," I said, "or I'll put you on next Sunday's detail."

"I'll be on it anyway, so screw you."

I rolled the comic and walloped him across the face. Greg glared at me, eyes watering with pain.

"Out!" I said. "Move!"

It was a hot day again, the sky a pale blue, all but cloudless and breezeless. We were on the trail, about a mile above school. At first I had to fight Greg. Twice I threw him down in the hot sand for refusing to work, once for bad-mouthing me. After that he worked well enough, taking out his anger swinging the pick.

"Let's take a break," I finally said.

We had long ago stripped off our shirts and were working bare-back. I turned away from Greg and walked toward the shade of a tree. But before I reached it there was a quick, stinging blow on my shoulder and a small, sharp stone fell at my feet.

I whirled around and ran. Greg took off down a small wash, stumbled over a miniature dry falls and fell, crouching in the shady sand at its base. I had no real trouble bringing him down, but subduing him was something else. Greg struggled furiously, kicked, shouted, spat, even tried to bite me, until I finally spread-eagled him beneath me. Suddenly he went limp.

What'd you chuck me for?" I panted.

Greg's face was turned aside. "Because."

"Because why?"

"Beating me up earlier." Greg was suddenly shouting. "Three times."

"I didn't beat you up. I didn't hurt you"

"I didn't hurt you," Greg retorted.

"Then what's this red stuff running down my arm?"

Greg smiled. "Good!" he shouted. "I hope you fucking bleed to death!"

I grabbed both of Greg's wrists in one hand and with the other hand picked up some sand and rubbed it into his mouth. He sputtered and spluttered. I rolled him over and twisted an arm behind his back. Greg wouldn't give up despite the pain that arched his chest and made him gasp. I finally released him, mostly because I didn't know what to do next, and he crawled away and slumped against a boulder.

I watched him. Greg was a good-looking boy. His face was full, with perfect features that some day would evolve into the rugged good looks of a mature man. His body was lean but strong and well coordinated for a boy of eleven. The sun had bleached to chestnut his long straight hair that completely covered his ears and forehead and almost fell to his steady gray eyes. Unlike most blonds, his smooth skin had taken a deep tan.

I suddenly realized that this tousle-headed, defiant, sweat-streaked pain-in-the-ass boy was turning me on. I wanted to help him. I also wanted to subdue him in a fight and, with him struggling under me, get his pants down and rub off on that wiry little body, whether he liked it or not.

"What do you have against everybody?" I asked.

Greg just stared at me, still breathing a little hard between slightly parted lips.

"Doesn't anyone here like you?"

"No!" Greg spat out.

"What about your folks?"

"What about them?"

"Do they like you?"

"That's my business, isn't it?"

"Yes," I said, "I guess it is. Just trying to help."

"Help?" Greg suddenly stood up. "I didn't ask you to help. I don't want or need your help. I just want you to... drop dead!"

"Okay," I said, standing, too. "Let's get back on the trail."

We worked for another hour. The sun dropped lower. It cooled off. Greg worked hard and well. We paused and drank from our canteens. Our eyes met and this time there was no hatred in Greg's look.

Another hour and it was time to go back to school. I walked first, pick on my shoulder, Greg following with the shovel and the empty canteens. We came to the school gate.

"I guess I'll give a good report on you," I said. "I'll forget about our getting into it early in the

afternoon."

Greg was leaning on the gate, slowly swinging it shut. "You can write it up the way it was," he said.

Both of us went to bed bone-weary that night. As I slept a breeze sprang up from the north and the haze cleared from the skies. About midnight a half-moon rose, and when I turned over I saw Greg lying in bed beside me.

I should explain that by now the boy was showering and brushing his teeth, so he didn't lie there stinking like a piece of vermin any more. In fact, he smelled sweet and good, with that fresh-cut hay smell in his hair that kids have before they go into puberty.

I rubbed my eyes and stared at his sleeping features. Why was he there? Was he drawn to me like I was drawn to him? Nonsense, he was too young. Or was he? Better not think about it. With Billy and Timmy, I had enough cock to keep me comfortable. I vowed to leave Greg, who hadn't even reached puberty, alone. Somehow I felt fatherly to him. And fathers didn't get it on with their sons.

I put an arm on Greg's shoulder and spoke his name softly. He stirred, brought a hand to his face and wiped his dry lips. His eyes opened and he stared at me.

"What're you doing here?" I asked.

Greg looked around, confused. "Huh?" he muttered.

"You're in my bed. What's going on?"

Greg got to his feet, teetered for a moment, then fell back again, instinctively pulling the covers around his shoulders.

"No! Greg!" I swore. But Greg was beyond hearing me. I had to pick him up and haul him, as an awkward dead weight, to his own bed. Next morning it was obvious that he remembered nothing.

I hoped all of this might signal a turn for the better in Greg's behavior. But, if anything, he grew worse. He stopped doing homework. He wouldn't clean his riding tackle or eat any food he decided to dislike. He got into a couple of fights with bigger boys and came away bruised, sullen and defeated. The only thing he didn't ball up was his hall conduct, room cleaning, etc., and here I was able, just barely, to keep him in line.

Of course, Greg continued to be on all the work details, sometimes with other boys, sometimes alone. Which meant that Billy and I saw an awful lot of Greg Stoddard.

Every afternoon I was in charge of Greg there was some kind of confrontation. He would either try to sneak off or lay down his tools and refuse to work. Usually I would have to fight him and if I did I always won. Then he would lie under me passively, panting and sweating, until I would start to grow a hard-on and would have to climb off.

One day, after we had fought and I had let him up and he had crawled off into the shade of a tree, I blurted out, "You're only acting this way. Nobody could be as awful as you seem to be."

"I can be even worse," Greg said.

"I believe it. But why don't you try to be decent?"

"In return for what? Friendship? *You* sure as hell don't like me."

"No," I said carefully, "I guess I don't. You've given me no reason to."

"So you hate me, don't you?"

"Hate?" I laughed. "How could I hate you? You don't rate all that feeling."

I saw it coming and I ducked, letting the stone whir by my ear. Then we fought again, to Greg's usual defeat. But this time I began to laugh, and so, for the first time ever when I was around, did Greg.

"You seem to be making some kind of headway," our hall master told me about a week later. "This is really the only reason we haven't expelled the boy, your good work and his corridor conduct."

"I don't believe it. He doesn't even like me." I said.

"It just happens to be true."

"Well, if you buy that, how about letting me have my room back?"

That is how Greg was moved into Jody's old room and I was able to keep my hands off him for a few more weeks.

February came. The days were chilly and a little longer. Sometimes we would awaken to find clouds filling the valley and dripping rain, and when they blew away the mountains were often dusted with snow almost down to the level of the school.

Mr. Holroyd planned a camping trip for the eighth grade. "You better get sick for this one," Billy said in the Talk Show. "Three tents, two in a tent, five boys and one headmaster. You know who gets to sleep with the headmaster."

So I faked an upset stomach on Friday and retired to the infirmary, but Mr. Holroyd out-foxed me: he got another master to lead the expedition, and as I tripped down the stairs Saturday morning I met Mr. Holroyd coming up.

"Oh, Jeffrey, I was just going to look in on you, but I see you have recovered."

"Well, sort of," I said, trying to control both my exuberance and my surprise at his being there.

"I'd say you look the picture of young health. That's good, because I expect to drive to town shortly and you're welcome to come with me if you wish."

I ran to the telephone and called Tac.

"Jesus, Jeff, it's nine o'clock on Saturday morning. Nobody wakes me up at nine o'clock on Saturday morning."

But he was waiting for me in his red jalopy convertible when we got there. I jumped in.

"We're going to see Ralph," he said.

I tried to get out but Tac clamped a powerful paw around my arm and held me in.

We didn't say anything. The red car sped along the roads, spilling loud country music and the background blare of a glass-pack muffler. We came to the gate with the "Little Spread" sign. For the second time in my life I passed over the cattle bars and approached the ranch buildings in the little foothills valley, the Cottonwood trees and corrals.

Ralph was sitting on the fence outside his guardian's house. He walked to the car. I felt his eyes on me but I was staring at the dash. One of his hands came onto my neck. He spoke my name. Tac turned off the radio and got out of the car and went to the stable. Suddenly it was very quiet. Ralph spoke my name again and I felt tears begin to slide down my cheeks.

He led me to the bunk house where his bedroom was. As he stripped I noticed that his body was tanner than before, his hands rougher. There was a smell about him of leather and hard, honest sweat.

But his cock, when he shoved his pants down, was the same lovely ivory color and capped with the same lavender helmet dripping the same delicious slippery crystal fluid. I dropped to my knees before it, touched the bottom of his scrotum and watched the balls inside stir and tighten. I ran my finger up the shaft and wet it in his pre-cum, which I spread over his cock-head and frenulum. Ralph shivered and lifted me to his feet and found my lips with his lips.

I had never expected that so much could be expressed in a kiss. He was telling me that he was sorry, that he had missed me, that he wanted me, that he loved me very, very much. And I was welcoming him, joyous in my capitulation.

He stripped off my remaining clothes, gathered my pipe-like cock in one hand and pulled me down under him, into his bed. His strong arms came around me. His great cock began to glide beside mine on

the slippery surface of my abdomen.

"What are we going to do?" I asked.

"Just this," he answered. Nothing exotic, it seemed. He simply wanted to hold me, his legs clamped against mine, my cock against his, my chest under his, our cheeks, mouths, necks and shoulders touching, moving, caressing. He wanted to see my face. He wanted to mingle my breath with his breath.

We kissed, long and slow and deep. He moved his mouth all over my face, tonguing, nibbling, until my lips and nose and cheeks and eyes were soaked with his sweet-smelling spit. Then we buried our mouths in each other's necks and opened them to bite the salty skin.

All the time our hips were moving, our cocks were sliding slow and strong, beautifully slick, at the focal point of our embrace.

Time stopped, or sped, I'm not sure which, like a runaway clock with a broken escapement. All I knew was the magnificent weight and warmth of the boy on top of me, the rhythms of our bodies, the tide of life that rose and rose with every cycle of cock thrust and withdrawal.

It couldn't last, this first time; it was too important to be interfered with. I felt my arms tighten around his back, my thrust grew stronger, harder, quicker, longer. Ralph's lips left mine.

"Now?" he whispered breathlessly.

"Now," I said.

We locked our mouths and rolled with the tide that ripped through our bodies. We moaned, we bit, our breaths hissed through our noses. And then we were spending, the long-stored sperm spurting into the dark secret crack between our bellies and dripping and dripping down onto the bottom sheet of Ralph's bunk.

An hour (a week, a year?) later we emerged into blinding sunlight. Tac was sitting on the lawn with another older boy who was blond and sensationally handsome and chewing on a piece of grass.

"Jeff, this is Skipper," Tac said. "You've seen him but he's never seen you."

The blond got up and I shook hands with him, remembering his naked body in Ralph's embrace that terrible night before vacation. We were both a little embarrassed.

"Skipper wasn't at his best when you saw him last," Tac went on, "but he's a pretty nice guy. Also a pretty good lay. How about it, Skip?" And he grabbed Skipper's neck.

Skipper grinned sheepishly. "I don't know..." he mumbled.

"Sure you are. With you working on the next ranch, Ralph'd be crazy not to bed you every chance he got. Do you love him?"

"Who?" Skipper asked.

"Ralph."

"Him?" Skipper pointed and grinned as though answering a stupid question. "Hell, no!"

"There you are, Jeff. Nothing to worry about."

We drove back to town. Tac let me off by the school station wagon and I climbed into the back to wait for Mr. Holroyd and fell asleep. I was awakened by a hand touching my hair. For a moment I thought I was still in bed with Ralph, but then I recognized the peculiar smell, as of old books, that Mr. Holroyd seemed to have about him all the time, and I sat up and rubbed my eyes.

"Oh, sorry, sir," I said. I didn't know why I was apologizing.

He continued to stroke and fondle my hair, turning around in the front seat to do it. There was a faraway look on his face.

"I guess I must of dropped off," I said foolishly.

His hand left my head and he said in a kind of sing-song voice, "You're tired. You may still be unwell. I am happy that you gained some rest. Come up here with me and we'll drive home."

When we got back to school he insisted that I come up to his apartment. He gave me a coke from his refrigerator and joined me in his study with a little stemmed glass of sherry. We talked for a while like a couple of normal people making chit-chat. Then he told me to use his bathroom to take a shower.

"I can do that back in our hall," I said.

"Nonsense. That's a long ways away and all the other boys are on the trip."

"But I'll need to dry my hair and my towel..."

"I'll get you one."

Trapped. I went to the bathroom, stripped and showered, but when I finished my clothes had been removed and one single towel was left in their place on the bath chair. I dried my body, wound the damp towel around my middle and stepped into the living room.

"Your things are in the washing machine, Jeffrey," Mr. Holroyd said.

"But, sir, they weren't even dirty."

"Of course they were. Here, let me dry your hair. You'll catch cold standing around with it wet this way."

As he approached me I saw he had another towel in his hands. He dropped it over my head and began fluffing my hair.

"Do you know, Jeffrey, that you have one of the most beautiful bodies I've ever seen on a young boy?" he asked.

"I thought I was pretty average," I said.

"Not average at all. Not at all. You will have to be careful with your looks: you could get many people into a lot of trouble. Do you realize that, Jeffrey?"

I didn't like the way things were going but I felt sort of helpless, standing next to naked in front of him with a towel over my prick and with his hands doing a super ginger-job through the towel on my hair. Fortunately Ralph had so depleted my sexual forces that there was no danger of my getting a hard-on, as had happened the last time Mr. Holroyd had handled me in his apartment. "No," I said, "I didn't."

"Ah, that could have tragic consequences. I wonder if your parents realize what a wonderful and dangerous instrument they've produced. There are so many ways a growing boy can go astray. I would like to be close to you and advise you. I would even like to adopt you, as a sort of foster boy, a special kind of nephew. What would you think of that? This summer, for example, I would take you with me to England. What an experience that would be for a boy as intelligent and sensitive as you!"

I had never felt stupider or more like a klutz. And the last thing I wanted was to travel with Mr. Holroyd.

"That's very nice of you, sir," I said, "but I think my mother and father might miss me, and, besides, Dad and I have planned a couple of camping trips..."

"Yes, of course," Mr. Holroyd interrupted me "One dreams, however. One wishes to be helpful."

He pulled the towel from my head and when I glanced at his face I saw that he was off in his own world again.

"Well, it won't be long before your clothes are ready." He told me where the washer and dryer were and how to shift the clothes from one to the other, as though I didn't know. "In the meantime, here are some magazines..."

He left me, like a disappointed lover. As soon as he was gone I ran down to the basement and found my clothes just going into the spin-dry cycle, which was dry enough for me. I pulled them on and got out of there as fast as I could.

Chapter Eleven

It was one of those nights when I knew I couldn't sleep. The moon was as bright as a satellite and drenched the desert hills with its milk. It drew me outside like a handsome boy with a seductive smile.

"Come on, Billy," I said as soon as I crawled into his bed for the Talk Show. "Let's go outside."

"Let's jerk off first."

"Let's jerk off out there. It's so gaddamned beautiful!"

A half hour later we were scrambling up a huge outcropping of granite that formed a kind of giant's tower on one of the ridges leading to the mountain heights. We sank onto the bare rock at the top, panting, our condensed breath showing in the chilly air.

"Okay, Billy, open up."

"Christ, it's too cold! We should have brought blankets."

"Naw, I mean *here*."

I put my hand to his fly and unzipped, reached inside, pulled out his swelling cock and then did the same with mine.

"Now, turn toward me, on your side," I said. I stripped off my jacket and put it under our heads. Then I gathered both of our cocks into one hand, put my other arm around Billy's shoulders and pulled him into a hug. "There." I started a little motion with my hips. I touched my lips to his.

We kissed. Kissing Billy was so different from kissing Ralph or Tac: it was cool and friendly and sort of innocent, like remembering back to childhood, before hugging and caressing got all mixed up with sex and complicated by it.

"That was nice," I said. "Especially out here."

"Why out here?"

"I don't know." I squeezed our cocks. "Being joined this way makes us somehow part of the desert night, don't you think?"

Billy punched me playfully. "I think you're a sexual nature freak."

"I am."

"And a nut."

"If you have a couple, does that make you one?"

I was enormously excited by our hip motion sliding his frenulum against mine. The smooth, softer head of his cock slipped past first one, then two, then all of my fingers, followed by the harder shank, and then both moved back to begin their little trip again. I felt Billy's breath in my face, the heat of his body, even through our two sets of clothes, pressing against mine. The familiar scent of his face and hair was in the air I breathed. And all around us was the mysterious open night with us in the middle of it. We were a couple of kids sort of consecrating our sex in it, in full view of any night creatures that happened to fly or creep or slither by.

I was so deeply happy and so completely immersed in my pantheistic experience that I drove both of us right through to cumming without once pausing to savor our feelings. Billy shot a few seconds later than me and our seed dripped down onto the smooth welcoming rock.

We walked back to school, and I was ready for sleep at last. When I crawled in my window I found Greg in my bed. I closed the door and turned on my reading lamp. Greg's eyes opened and stared at me.

"Where were you?" Greg asked.

"None of your business." I was mad. "What are you doing in there?"

"Waiting for you. I got sleepy."

"This is the second time you've pulled this sort of thing."

"First time."

"Three weeks ago you sleep-walked or something and I had to carry you back to your bed."

"I don't remember that."

"I know. Now, how about clearing out?"

"Suppose I don't?"

"Then I'll have to haul your ass out myself."

"Suppose I holler?"

"You won't. You don't want the hall monitor to think we're sexing it up any more than I do."

"Any guy ever make you do queer things with him?" Greg asked, lowering his voice.

"Hell, no," I lied.

"I've been had," Greg said.

"You're pretty young."

"I'm not as young as I look. Not *that* way."

"Okay. How'd you like it?"

"Not too bad. Mostly I didn't mind."

"Well, I do mind your being in my bed, so scram."

Greg sat up and swung his feet to the floor. "One of the guys, he was probably just shooting his mouth off, said you were leaving school for a couple of months and maybe wouldn't be back at all."

I was surprised, then realized that the joke on Greg meant that kids were on to his attachment to me. I'd have to be careful. "That's news to me," I said. "Sorry to disappoint you, but there's nothing to it."

Greg looked at me quickly, then glanced aside. "So I came up here to find out. I thought maybe I'd given you such a hard time you'd decided to take off."

"And let a little twerp like you win? Hell, no."

"Okay." Greg stood up. "Just wanted to check it out."

I put my hands on Greg's shoulders. "I'm not used to you thinking about the other guy. Sure you're not sick or something?"

Greg turned his face away. "You'll never believe this, but I was close to bawling." Then he fled the room.

I still had to fight Greg occasionally, but there were also peaceful times. Once Greg came into my room just before lights-out and stood in his pajamas looking over my shoulder as I worked on my math assignment. I ignored him, and soon I felt a hand come to my neck and begin to stroke it in a kind of absent, friendly way. He leaned on the back of my chair and bent over. "Why do you take so much shit from me?" he said.

"I don't. You don't get away with much."

"But you're never mean, like the senior prefects."

"They don't have to live with you two doors away."

Greg swung himself, stiff armed, above my head. "I bet if I dropped dead you'd be the happiest guy in the world."

"Why? Do you feel sick?"

"No. Sorry."

"I can't imagine our hall, now, without Greg Stoddard."

"You can't?" Greg released the chair and began to run his fingers through my hair.

"Or a free afternoon when I didn't have to work on trail because of you."

"Just what I thought."

"In fact, you're the biggest pain in the whole school, but I seem to have taken you on as my problem, so I'm stuck with you."

Greg brought his arms about my throat and dropped his cheek into my hair. "You sure are."

I reached back and pushed him away. "Get!" I said.

Then one night I woke up to find Greg crawling into bed with me again.

"What the...?" I started.

"It's me," Greg said softly but in a wide-awake voice.

"I didn't think it was the tooth fairy. What do you want?"

"I had a dream about you. *That* kind."

"What kind?"

His arms locked behind my back. He buried his face in the sleep-rumpled breast of my pajamas. My chin was suddenly against the soft mat of his hair and I was aroused in a micro-second, naturally, enormously and so suddenly I was caught off guard.

Now I felt Greg's hard little cock jutting into my leg, moving, drawing closer to my crotch. Greg's hands came inside my pajamas and moved hard over my back and butt. Greg raised his face until our cheeks met. Without realizing it I had put my arms around Greg and was hugging him close. It all seemed so natural, so easy, so good, until Greg's fingers came around the stiffened shank of my cock, squeezed and shocked me into realizing what was going on.

"No!" I whispered fiercely.

"Yes." Greg brought his lips against mine and tried for a kiss, but I jerked my face away.

"No, Greg, it's no good!" I broke our grip and shoved him to the other side of the bed. "You're my charge, not my lover."

"Why can't I be both?"

"'Cause I say so." Somewhat painfully I got Greg's grip off my cock.

"Goddamnit to hell, you sh...!"

I put my hand over Greg's mouth and stifled the shout that was trying to break through my grip.

"Settle down," I whispered into his ear. "This is just not going to happen, no matter how much you think you want it."

Greg tried to bite my hand, moaning and snorting and spitting through the contact. Finally he gave up and I released him. He got up and stalked off to his room.

But *I* was left lying on top of my covers in a high state of sexual heat. I had recently got unused to solo whacking off, but tonight I had no other choice. With the wet and slippery hand that had just held Greg's mouth, I grabbed my cock, almost hollered when I felt the two fluids, Greg's spit and my pre-cum, meet and mingle all over my cock skin. I pumped just twice, and then the sperm shot out and overflowed onto my belly. Now, finally, at last, I was able to sleep.

I really did try to keep from seducing Greg. Now every hour with him was torture. For the first time in my life I was beginning to find younger boys sexually attractive, and, for a kid just on the childhood side of puberty, Greg was fantastically handsome – and, for all his faults, vital. We continued to fight, as the trail work continued up the canyon, but now Greg tried to turn each battle into a sexual contact as well. And every time we broke apart I was fully aroused. Once I barely freed myself before the burning

sperm shot out of my cock-tip and in a few hot jets soaked the pouch of my undershorts.

For the hundredth time, it seemed, I was taking Greg out on a solitary work detail. This time he was depressed and gloomy and wouldn't talk, but he began work right away without any unpleasantness. After a few minutes I noticed that he was crying. I stopped his pick's swing and asked him what was wrong.

"I'm leaving," he said. "I'm going to get myself kicked out."

"Oh, come on."

"I stole some money."

That shook me. "Stole money?"

Greg nodded.

"From whom?"

"About everybody in the hall."

"You've got to get it back."

"It's too late. Somebody's found it by now. Its sitting on my bureau."

"Why didn't you tell me you were going to do this?"

Greg searched my face. "Because you'd have treated me the same prissy-ass way you do about other things."

I took the pick from his hands and leaned it against a boulder. "There's a chance," I said, "that nobody's missed the money. We're going to put it back."

"You and who else?"

I cocked a finger and pointed it at his chest.

"I'm staying here. And you don't know how much I took from each guy."

"You do." I put my hand on Greg's neck and tilted his face up with two thumbs beneath his chin. "And after we put it all back," I continued, "giving exactly the right amount to each kid in exactly the place he left it, after we've made everything right, providing we get away with it, we're going to have a real blow-out with each other, and I mean physically, sexually."

Greg returned my stare with his steady gray eyes. "I don't believe you," he said warily. "If you're serious put up now."

I released him and started to walk down the trail. "Hell, Greg, we haven't got time," I said.

When we reached the school it looked as though the money hadn't been missed. We put it all back, and then I told Greg to fetch his comforter. He slipped off with a grin; I reached into my closet for my back pack. Into it I stuffed an air mattress, sheets and a pillow. When Greg returned I added the silk comforter and strapped down the top flap.

The sun was getting low when we decided on a good place. Greg claimed he couldn't wait until I blew up the mattress. "We can do that later," he said, "after the first time."

"Cool your Levis," I said between breaths.

"Well, hurry up or I'll cream them."

"You're too young to cream anything except your Fruit Loops in the morning, and then you need a pitcher of milk to do it with."

Greg picked up a rock and made like he was going to chuck it at me, then grinned and said, "Hurry up!"

At last the mattress was hard. I covered it with a sheet to protect it against pecker tracks and placed the comforter conveniently beside it. Greg was prancing about like a little boy with high bladder pressure. He had already stripped off his shirt, shoes and socks; there was a small rounded bump where

the denim of this pants pressed against his hardened cocklet.

I stood and pulled the T-shirt over my head. "Come here," I commanded. He came to within a foot of me and stopped. I put my hands on his shoulders, which were dry and soft and warm, and moved them up his neck. "Wet your lips," I commanded again. I watched the pink tongue explore the full red surfaces and leave them moist and shiny.

Our arms came about each other's bare backs and we kissed, gently, slowly and deliciously. Into my mouth came Greg's lips – lips which I was more used to having spit cuss words in my direction than feel yield in love.

We broke apart and stripped. It was great to watch him throw off his clothes, watch his beautiful body, in the last real moments of its boyhood, slowly come naked. The dark blue denim fell, uncovering tan, smooth, lean legs. Behind his white undershorts his little cock poked out straight.

We came to each other for the final mutual stripping, and then stood back to stare at each other. It wasn't the first time I had seen Greg naked or looked at his genitals, but it was the first sight I'd had of his cock hard, head ready to receive me.

It was beautiful, small, slender, white, bare of hair, its circumcised lavender head stretched tight and shiny. Below it was the tight-wrinkled ball sack, it, too, completely hairless like his legs and and the skin above his cock.

Our eyes met and our hands came to each other's cocks. Both of us sort of shivered at the first touch. We drew together and kissed once again, our hands hardly moving, hardly daring to move. Then I led Greg to the mattress and we lay down in each other's arms, our bodies at first barely touching, our skin delightfully tingling at that first hug.

"At last!" Greg breathed into my ear, a great warm sigh of relief.

"Yes," I agreed, "at long last."

From all our fighting I had got to know his body almost like a lover does. Now that we *were* lovers, how fine it was easy to feel that familiar lean chest, smooth cheeks, strong hands, spare and bony back, all at last in my arms. And how new and great to find ourselves naked below! Our hips slowly drew together and closed on our locked cocks.

Slowly our hips began to move and our cocks began to glide in the flow of my pre-cum liquid. I got on top and Greg seemed to welcome my pressure, weight and dominance. Struggling down deeper and deeper into the comforter, we thrust and counter-thrust, lips upon slippery lips, nipples moving past nipples, legs moving along each other's legs, until, with our cocks squeezed between our tummies, we fell off that old cliff and bottomed out, panting, turning aside to rest in each other's arms, as my sperm spilled off Greg's body onto the absorbing sheet and as our faces slowly dried of our saliva from all that kissing.

In my arms Greg dozed. I touched Greg's cheeks, tracing my fingers over his smooth skin. His nose still rose at the tip and I drew my fingers over it and then touched his forehead onto which light, straight hair spilled in a couple of mussed dog-licks. Slowly, dreamily, I put my lips on his and held them lightly touching a minute, breathing Greg's breath. It smelled like sleep and dry skin and something peculiar to Greg. Animals know one another by smell; maybe lovers can, too. I pressed a little with my mouth and our teeth touched. Greg stirred and turned aside his head and licked his lips. His gray eyes opened and squinted at me seriously.

"How many girls you had?" he asked.

"None."

"Guys?"

"Not many."

"Like?"

"Less than ten. But mostly it was with one person."

"How was it, with *him*?"

"Nice. It's always nice."

"Was it a boy that's here at school?"

I brought a hand stealthily to Greg's relaxed penis. "What difference does that make?"

"Get out of there!" Greg said, thrusting my hand away. "If I catch you fooling around with another kid I'll shit in your face."

"You will?"

"I'll stick a cactus up his ass."

"That would hurt."

"Damned right."

"As a matter of fact it was with a boy a lot older than me and, no, he's not here at school."

"Was it better with him?"

"Yep."

"It was!" Greg's eyes opened wide.

"You better accept that fact," I said. "You better not ask any more questions."

Greg continued to stare at me for a moment. I didn't know whether I might have another fight on my hand:. But then he smiled and said, "I guess that's your business. And history to boot. I'd rather make history than talk about it." And he pressed his hardening little cock against my hip. "I'm feeling horny again. I could do this every hour all afternoon."

"Bragger."

"I could. You want to test me?"

"Looks like we've got time for just one more."

"Then?"

"Back to school. Shower bell's in a half hour."

"Let's make it a good long one."

"If we can stand it."

"I like the way you're scared you'll cream too quick!" Greg said and smiled. He gripped me about the neck, playing at being master. "I like getting you shook." He moved on top of me and stared into my eyes, holding apart, however, our straining cocks. "Remember when I crawled into your bed?" he teased.

"That just about killed me," I admitted.

"It was your own fault. I even had my hand on it."

"You telling me?"

"Whatcha do when I left?"

I smiled into Greg's eyes and didn't answer.

"Come on, huh, whatcha do? I bet you diddled out your own jizz."

"What did you do, smart ass?"

"Not this." Greg slowly lowered his waist. "Have you ever sucked cock?"

I felt Greg's dick touch mine then begin to press. They were resting slightly crossed but frenulum pressing frenulum in tingling, precarious contact. I pressed my hands into his small, rounded butt halves. I began to knead them, touching the radially wrinkled lips of that strong-scented opening that led inside. In went a finger, as though it had a mind of its own. Greg's cock, slippery from the rush of my pre-cum, glided off mine (and with what a rush of feeling into both!) and sprang down onto my equally slippery stomach.

I was about to lose control. I couldn't afford to. I rolled on my side and pushed my body away from his.

"Careful, careful," Greg teased. "We're going to drag this out, remember?"

My finger was still buried in his asshole. I dropped my head to his crotch and quickly devoured the beautiful pointing little pecker. After Ralph's and Tac's and Tim's and Billy's, and even little Bobby's, it was only a morsel, wonderfully tender, innocent of all hair. I moved my tongue around it as my mouth sealed itself about its base, eventually sucking in both of his balls, too. Greg's fingers came into my hair and began to pull.

"Cheez, Jeff! You're gonna kill me! You're gonna make me cum!"

And then, without any urging, he put his lips around my cock and started to suck, and, man, he had technique that may have been learned but he sure was willing!

And then the waiting game was all over. I rose and shot, hard, like it was the first time that day, just as I felt the extra-hardened cock in my mouth begin to click, quicker than my own pulses, and jerk itself gradually calm.

I'm glad I had that afternoon with Greg, for it was the only time we ever made love. When we got back to school we learned that our hall master had seen the stolen money on Greg's bureau and reported it to Mr. Holroyd. While Greg and I were returning the bills to their owners, and then making out on the desert, our headmaster was talking with Greg's tearful mother and arranging for her son's return.

I was stunned. Greg just shrugged. It was the kind of deal he expected from grown-ups. As for Mr. Holroyd, despite public statements of regret, I had this sneaking suspicion that he had other reasons for expelling Greg.

"What's he trying to do?" I fumed to Billy that night during the Talk Show. "Is he going to drive out of school every kid I care about?"

"Probably," Billy said. "Which means *I* better watch my step. You know, I really think he's going... over the edge."

The next morning, right after breakfast, Greg was hustled into a taxi and we never saw him at Desert Ranch again.

Chapter Twelve

I won't bore you with a day by day account of my next few months at school. After Greg's expulsion I went into an awful funk. For the first time since fall I was indifferent to sex; I often had trouble getting a hard-on, even when I was in bed with Billy, or fooling around Sundays with Timmy and Jock.

In May the love letters started coming:

Dear Jeff:

Let me introduce myself: I am your secret adorer. Every time I see your impossibly classic face, your broad, intelligent brow, hair lit with the austral lights of dawn, blue eyes sparkling, pride and self-possession in your smile, in short every time your image swims into my gaze, I shiver. I adore the enormous grace of the movements of your wrist and ankle, elbow and knee, flowing with the vast economy of energy people call coordination but I would declare in your case the divine gift of God. I worship your body and especially that focus of your boyhood which alternately rests and stands, in halfway reach between child and man...

It went on and on that way and covered five pages of blue, perfumed woman's stationery. The matching envelope was posted in Tucson. A few weeks later another arrived, even more passionate:

How I desire the cool nectar of your lips! How I sigh for the pressure of your clean, young arms folding themselves about my body! How I long to feel your rounded nates that even through shorts and Levis I see flexing before me: I want to search that vestal crevice, press with my fingers...

At last, just before summer vacation, the letters grew desperate:

Jeff, why, why won't you let me touch you? Your rigid spear has, I know, known the scabbard of lips, the closure of cupped fists, of others so much less worthy of its erection than I!

Or:

Some nights I think if I don't drink the culmination of your sex, drawn from its tiny mouth by my own faithful and adoring lips, I will thirst, go mad, die, like the out-of-water wanderer in a desert drought!

Or, worst of all:

Please, PLEASE, come to me, save me, my darling Jeff: we have so little time: school will finish, the year will end and you will leave. Kiss me, crawl into my bed, throw your vital young body against my body, draw to my flesh your flesh, to my sword your dagger, and let us rock, rock ourselves to the only Elysium God ever granted mortal flesh!

Which wouldn't have been half bad if Ralph or Tac or Billy's lover Wash had written it, but if it had been, as I suspected, Mr. Holroyd... forget it!

That, unfortunately, was the one thing I couldn't do. The school year was drawing to its end. Spring came, and with it the quick, gentle rains that turned the desert briefly into a garden of purple verbena and cactus blossoms and the sweet-smelling flowers of the mistletoe that clung in the mesquite trees and choked out their life.

And then came the heat. As spring advanced the sun turned up and hit the desert more and more like a jack-hammer. It reduced everything to laziness. Horses, teachers and boys turned inward and silent and dreamed. We waited, mostly, for the term to end. We got sloppy; our hair bleached out, grew long and rank (the Tucson barbers were on strike) until we saw the sun-flooded world only through nose-length locks, and when these became annoying we took paper shears and hacked them off straight above the eyebrows. I deliberately tried to make myself as ugly as I could, hoping to cool down Mr. Holroyd a little.

It was the week of final exams. The Talk Show had just ended in a round of sex. I went back to my room, crawled under my sheet with the taste of Billy's sperm still on my tongue, and I must have started to doze when I felt a hand on my shoulder.

"Jeff, wake up."

"Why?" I groaned.

"At least I found you here and not in Billy's bed where you usually are."

"Only when you're not."

It was Wash, who had taken Ralph's place as hall prefect, and my mother and dad were calling me long distance. I stumbled down the hall to the phone in the rec room and got the news that a sister of my dad's was dying and my parents were going to Boston to be with her and sort out family affairs. I was supposed to stay on at school a few days until they returned. "I talked it over with that nice Mr. Holroyd," my mother said, "and he assured me you'd be no trouble at all."

That woke me up like a bucket of ice-water in the face. "Mom, you can't do that!" I cried.

"Nonsense. I know you're anxious to get home..."

"It's not that, honest."

"Well, what's the matter?"

"Can't I visit Billy Bowden in Chicago?"

"Jeff, we haven't time," Mother said.

Then Dad said, "Look, son, we've already changed your reservations. Is there any special reason why you can't stay at school just a day or two longer?"

And that's when I made my big mistake. I should have told them all about Mr. Holroyd, the tennis lessons, the massage, the love letters, everything, but I suppose I thought I would never be believed and that someone, Mr. Holroyd even, might be listening on the line. And then, too, I somehow associated Mr. Holroyd's hard-on for me with my own making out with Ralph and Billy and Greg and the others. So I just swallowed and told them no, there was no good reason I couldn't do what they wanted me to do.

A couple of days later school ended. I watched wave after wave of boys struggle to the parking lot with their suitcases and climb into the station wagons that drove them to the airport. At last our hall was empty. Billy called me from the terminal.

"I'm gonna sneak off and come back," he said. "If I can."

"Gee, Billy, don't do that!" I said, but my heart suddenly rose with hope.

"Old Holroyd's really got his eye on me, though."

"You'll get in trouble."

"So?"

"Thanks, Billy."

"You'd do it for a buddy, too."

"Sure."

"Gotta go!"

At the end of the afternoon I heard Mr. Holroyd's footsteps echoing in the hall. He stopped at my door and looked in. I was lying on my bed in a pair of cut-offs and nothing else, reading.

"Well, Jeffrey, we are alone now," he said.

"Yes, sir." I looked up into his eyes.

"Come. You'll be staying with me. We're closing the hall for summer maintenance."

I was already packed. I picked up my suitcases and followed him to the headmaster's suite. I had to struggle with them up the stairs. Mr. Holroyd showed me into a bedroom that must have been used by his predecessor's children. It was small, with one window giving onto the mountain side of the school complex. Ground level was a good fifteen feet below.

We ate supper that night in total silence. Mr. Holroyd was in one of his distant moods. Every so often his lips would twitch, like he was replying to some imaginary person, or he would stare at me steadily until I would blush and look away.

It was a relief to get back to my bedroom. I closed my door, wishing I could lock it from the inside, or put a spell on it not to open except at my command. I stripped and turned out the light and went to bed.

It was about midnight, I guess, when he came in. I was sleeping on my stomach in my skivvys, and it was so hot I had kicked off my sheet. I felt the bed sink under his weight. A hand came into my hair.

"Yes?" I said.

Mr. Holroyd didn't answer but fondled my neck and shoulders and then he began to stick his other hand under my belly.

"Please, sir. I'm sleepy," I said, which was a pretty dumb remark, but it was all I come up with at the time.

The bed sagged some more and I realized he was stretching out beside me. One hand was moving all over my back and butt and thighs. The fingers of the other hand beneath me were moving closer and closer to my cock.

I wished he would go away. I wished he would drop dead. I was afraid of him, but still his moving hands began to turn me on, and there was nothing I could do about it: my cock was swelling and lengthening. When he touched it at last it was hard.

I tried to get up. He held me down. As his arms locked around my chest I realized he was wearing no clothes at all. I could feel his hard-on, long and hot, press against my hip, wetting my skivs with its slime.

He tried to kiss me. Leathery lips dropped to one cheek, sucked in an ear, nibbled on it, breathed into it hot, loud breath. The hand inside my skivs came around my cock. The upper hand, on the mounds of my butt, lowered the cloth to bare me.

There was no way I could defend myself. I'm a normal, healthy, husky fourteen, but I was a foot shorter and a hundred pounds lighter than Mr. Holroyd. So I thought, well, if he wants a handjob or a little cock sucking, I can give him that much in order to get him out of my room. I turned on my side and reached for his prodding prick.

At the first touch he knocked my hand away. Then he rolled me onto my back and stuck his face down to my crotch and with a little moan took my hard-on in his mouth.

It was a long ways from being the greatest blow-job I'd ever had – for one thing, Mr. Holroyd just wasn't very experienced – but it did do the trick. When I felt the final rise begin, I said, "Gosh, sir, I'm gonna shoot!" And then I did, spurting out my sperm into his working mouth.

I hoped that would be all and he'd leave me alone, but it turned out his attention to my cock was only a beginning. He flipped me onto my stomach and started playing around with my butt. I really got scared then. A finger went into my asshole, then two, then three. I started to struggle and yell. He slapped a hand over my mouth to cut off my wind. It was the same hand that that been up me and it stank of my own shit.

I quit thrashing around and he let me breathe again, but he kept his hand loosely over my mouth, just for good measure, I guess. He moved his body onto mine. I felt the blunt, soft end of his pecker, slippery still, touch the little opening in my crack, enter a little with a little pain, enter a lot more with a lot more pain. I was crying, hard tears mixing with the sweat of my agony on his smelly hand. His cock went in farther and farther and farther, until I didn't think I could take any more of him, but he seemed to be only half way buried and the prick still going in and in. I had never felt such pain there, and terror and degradation, in my whole life.

At last it was up my ass right to the base of his balls. For a moment he seemed to collapse on my back. He removed the hand from my mouth and I stared calling him every dirty name I could think of. No more "sir" for me, ever again! He was a mean psychopathic monster and I would treat him as one—if I ever got out of there alive!

He wrapped his arms around my chest, rocked down his hips a little, withdrawing his cock part way, then ramming it home again. I yelled but he didn't care. There was nobody around to hear me, anyway. Again he pulled it out a little and slammed it back, accompanying the thrust with a great gulping gasp into my ear. After that the motion became rhythmic, smoother, as my asshole adapted just a bit to its violation. The pain was still there but I could bear it now. I gritted my teeth and concentrated on stopping my sobbing and the flow of tears.

In and out, in and out went his slick, hot cock. His balls slapped into the crack of my butt. His mouth gasped and drooled into my hair. I felt the end of his fuck coming. He tightened his hug into a steel trap. The lunging of his cock sped up, the stroke lengthened, until with one strong thrust he buried it as deep as it would go and I felt, or at least imagined, the coarse white jism spurting, exploding out of the slitty cock-eye and flooding my gut, pouring back along his now-motionless shaft and cooling for a time his sex drive.

Chapter Thirteen

I learned in the next few hours that a man in his fifties can be just as insatiable as a teenage boy. Mr. Holroyd locked me in my room that night and visited me at dawn and again shoved his pecker up my ass and came off in it like a firecracker.

The next time he entered my room it was to announce breakfast, all smiles, the great sophisticated, generous, witty host!

"Well, Jeffrey, how did you sleep?" he asked.

"Are you kidding?"

"How do you like your eggs?"

I decided to play along with him and see what developed. All morning he chattered about his European trip. Sometimes he assumed I was going with him and he talked about theater and concert tickets, hotel reservations, and should he change them to rooms with twin beds, or did I mind sleeping with him; everybody said he didn't snore.

In spite of myself I began to feel sorry for him. He really was off his rocker. Sometime when he wasn't watching I would give him the slip and steal a horse and ride over the mountains to Ralph. Billy, obviously, hadn't made it off his plane. It was up to me to get away.

My chance came at supper when Mr. Holroyd had to answer the phone. I pretended to go to the bathroom and then climbed out the window and took off for the stable. But I hadn't thought out the plan very well. It took time to lasso my horse in the corral, time to saddle him and put a bridle in his mouth, and before I was half done Mr. Holroyd had missed me and came running down the road. He hit me twice rapidly across my face with his open hand and my nose started spurting blood. Then he hauled me back to his apartment, pushed me into a chair and said, "That wasn't very nice, Jeffrey."

"I just wanted to take a last ride on my horse," I improvised.

"You were trying to leave me."

"No, I wasn't."

"You were running away. You shouldn't have tried to run away."

"Well, why not?" I said suddenly unable to control my anger. "You're not my dad."

He shook his head. "After all I've planned! After all I've done!"

"To what?" I shouted. "My butt?"

"Jeffrey!" He put a hand on my shoulder and squeezed, hard. "I suppose I must teach you a lesson."

He picked me up. I fought, kicked, bit, scratched, hollered, tried everything to stop him, but he carried me upstairs to that little back bedroom and threw me down on my unmade bed. His hands went to his belt buckle, undid it, unzipped his fly over the growing mound of his penis.

"Oh, no, not again!" I moaned. "I'm sore enough, and bleeding still, from last night."

But he kept on stripping, and pretty soon he was peeling off my clothes, too, and I was begging him to go easy on me this time, to use some Vaseline, or at least a lot of spit. But he was beyond hearing me, and when he raped me it was as bad as it was before.

Afterwards he locked me in my room again but came back with a pair of handcuffs and chained my ankles around the old steam radiator at the foot of my bed.

It grew dark and, hurt, weary and discouraged, I fell asleep.

I was dreaming of home, my first home in the suburbs of Chicago. It was summer. I was sleeping late in the little bedroom under the eaves and outside I could hear the cooing of a mourning dove. I opened my eyes. With a wave of sick fear I remembered where I was.

I listened to the sounds in Mr. Holroyd's bedroom. All was quiet. Maybe he would sleep until morning and leave me alone for a few hours. My feet were cold from the evening air blowing in through the open window. The sound of the mourning dove came again.

Suddenly I was up and kneeling on the window sill. There were no mourning doves in Arizona. I answered in a low whistle, and then I saw him by the light of the full moon, standing on the gravelly ground below.

"Billy!" I whispered. I was so glad to see him tears just about blinded me.

"Jeff, what are you doing up there?"

"Having a ball, believe me!"

"I'm serious. Come on down."

"I can't. He's got my ankles handcuffed to the radiator."

"Jesus! What's he been doing to you?"

"That's a long story."

"Are you okay?"

"So far."

"Listen, where is he now?"

"Asleep, I think." I told him where Mr. Holroyd's bedroom was, that his window faced inward on the patio. "Go to the stable and get a rope and a couple of files."

Billy tore off and was back in fifteen minutes. He flung me the loop end of a lariat and I fastened it around the radiator pipe, and then he was climbing the wall, looking in the moon and its long shadow like a gigantic preying mantis. At last he was up, and, oh, was it ever good to feel his friendly hands touching me, smell his sweet breath and hair as we held each other!

"I saddled a couple of horses just in case," he said.

"I thought you were in Chicago."

"You should know me better than that!"

We pulled in the lariat and stowed it under the bed. Then we started to work with the files. It was slow going because, if we put the hard steel links on the radiator to file against, it would make too much noise. We had to hold the chains in one hand and work the files with the other.

"Man, Billy," I said, "I can't believe you're here. Mr. Holroyd said he not only put you on the plane but saw them close the door on you and watched the plane taxi out and take off."

"He did. But airlines fly both ways. We stopped at Denver and I walked off and telephoned my folks. Instead of going into a lot of explanations I told them I was visiting a school friend and we planned to camp in the mountains for a few days. And then I turned in the rest of my ticket on an economy return to Tucson, plus forty dollars in cash. I got here this morning which was as good as I could do. I've been eating at the No Delay Cafe and sneaking around school all day trying to figure out what in hell was going on."

We were almost through the handcuffs when I heard Mr. Holroyd moving in his bedroom across the hall.

"Quick, in the closet!" I whispered to Billy. I lay back on the bed again and pulled the sheet up to my chin. The door opened and the light came on. I feigned sleep. I heard Mr. Holroyd breathing and I felt the mattress sag. The light went out. Fingers came to the top of my head and began smoothing my hair.

"You're so beautiful!" Mr. Holroyd murmured.

I pretended to wake up. "Please, sir, I need to sleep now."

"I'm sorry, Jeffrey. You *are* comfortable, aren't you?"

"I don't hurt any more, if that's what you mean."

"I'll be gentle this time, Jeffrey. Gentle and simple. I just want to lie with you for a few minutes."

I felt the full weight of his body come down on top of me and the great lever of his erection bury itself between my thighs. How much better that was than my tired asshole! His lips came to my lips. I snapped my head away. He wound his fingers in my hair and twisted my face up to meet his, so I held my mouth rigid and tight so he couldn't suck anything in or get his tongue past my teeth.

With that he gave up trying to kiss me and concentrated on plunging that long penis of his up and down between my legs. He dropped his head to my shoulder. I felt teeth sink into the flesh on the side of my neck.

He started to moan, sing, almost, with words coming out like "never" and "love" and "happiness" and I gathered I was to stay with him for the rest of his life. I wasn't to grow up, it seemed, but to remain a kid forever and ever – some deal for me!

Pretty soon all that humping brought him around and with a last, long drive his cock swelled and pulsed and then I could feel the wetness of his sperm running down the crack of my butt and pooling on the sheet below. He lay still on me for a minute regaining his breath. Finally he sat up. He put his hand on my penis.

"You aren't even with me tonight," he said sadly.

Nor will I ever be, I thought, but I only said, "I told you I was awful tired."

"I understand, Jeffrey. You'll find, I'm sure, as time goes on, that I'm a very understanding person. Good night, now. Get your rest."

He was gone. Billy came out of the closet and we started working on the handcuffs again.

Finally my ankles came loose. I slipped my clothes on as Billy re-rigged the lariat, and then the two of us were scaling down the stucco. My feet touched ground and at long last I was free.

We must have made more noise climbing down than we'd thought because the light went on in the window above. We didn't wait to see what would happen next. We took off on our heels and ran toward the corral, our steps crunching hard on the gravelly desert soil.

The two horses Billy had saddled were standing at the hitching rail by the barn. I was heading for one of them when I heard Billy pant, "My stuffs in the tack room," and he veered right and disappeared through a door. I followed.

Inside there was that peculiar smell of leather and saddle soap and horse manure. Billy felt around in the dark and gathered up his wallet and a small bundle of clothes and was just turning to leave when the light snapped on and Mr. Holroyd was suddenly filling the door.

I shrank back. Billy stood his ground. "We're going," Billy said. "You better not try to stop us."

I saw that Mr. Holroyd was carrying a short piece of steel. It looked like part of a concrete reinforcement bar, about two feet long, flared at the end, twisted off and left jagged.

Then everything happened very fast. Mr. Holroyd stepped in, close to Billy. I saw his arm go up. I yelled at Billy. Billy tried to protect himself with his hands but the bar was already coming down. It hit him on the side of his face and with a little cry he crumpled on the ground and lay still. "You've hurt him!" I yelled, tears running down my cheeks. "There's blood on his head!"

Mr. Holroyd seemed confused for a moment. He looked at Billy, as though wondering what he was doing lying at his feet, and up at me again, and then he started after me.

In the back of the tack room there was an opening into the main part of the barn. I scrambled through, barking my shins on a ladder somebody had left lying on its side, and ran for the big barn door. But it was

closed and bolted and I couldn't budge it. Mr. Holroyd was coming through from the tack room. I ran to a corner where I knew a lot of tools were usually lying around and grabbed up a hay hook. Then, with nowhere else to go, I scrambled up the ladder to the loft.

It was about half full up there with baled hay. I climbed four or five tiers and squeezed into a hole between two bales and waited. I heard Mr. Holroyd climb the ladder, then he stopped and listened. Barns have always given me awful hay fever and pretty soon I was gagging on suppressed sneezes. Finally one sneaked out and he heard it and he started coming in my direction.

I knew, then, that it was just a matter of time before my snuffling led him right to where I was hiding, so I stood up and said, "Sir, Mr. Holroyd, don't come any closer."

I heard him stop.

"Go back down the ladder and get a doctor for Billy."

For a moment I hoped he was going to do what I suggested, but then I heard him raising himself over the last tier of bales.

"Don't come after me," I cried. "Please go down!"

There was just a little light up there, reflecting upward from the open space into the tack room. I knew that when Mr. Holroyd came close enough to harm me I would be able to make out his shape. I got a good grip on the hay hook and backed against the top row of bales.

Then I saw him, one tier below, his head not more than three feet away. He heard me and looked right at my face. I saw his hand go up, the construction rod ready, but by then I was already cutting sideways with the hook. It entered his head with the sickening sound of stabbing a pumpkin. He fell, the hook going down with him.

I left him and ran to the tack room. There was blood all over the side of Billy's head. I tore open his shirt and put an ear to his chest. There was a good strong heartbeat and I could feel him breathe. Also, he had thrown up, which was a good sign. I wanted to stay there and hold him until help came, but I knew help wouldn't come unless I went and got it. So I found some rags we used for cleaning leather and cleaned up Billy's face and shirt a bit, and then I found Billy's jacket and covered his chest and kissed his hair and whispered a farewell.

I jumped on one of the saddle horses and set out at top speed for Cochise Junction. Desert Ranch had a central switchboard which I didn't know how to work, so I was depending on the pay phone at the No Delay Cafe.

I got there at last, with my horse all in a lather. I dialed the operator and asked for the police and when a sleepy sergeant came on the line I stammered out the essential information that one man was dead and a boy seriously hurt in the Desert Ranch barn and they'd better send an ambulance at once.

When I was through the sergeant said, "Son, this is important. What is your name?"

"Jeff," I said softly.

"Jeff what?"

I didn't answer.

"Where are you, Jeff?"

"I'm..."

"Yes?"

But by then it seemed to me that everybody in the cafe was staring at me. What, they were asking themselves, was a strange fourteen-year-old boy doing in there at this time of night, hanging back in the shadows, telephoning? I was also conscious of a wetness on my Levis that I now saw was blood.

"I'm... I can't tell you," I said, and then I hung up and went outside and climbed on my horse.

I fled the little village and fled up the old Oldenabi Trail. Even the clouds seemed to be pursuing me.

They gathered in the valley behind and raced by from over my left shoulder. They crossed the face of the moon, torn and shredded, while the wind that drove them eddied down and made sharp little whimpering noises in the cactus and mesquite and all the other prickly things growing on that Arizona mountainside.

Pretty soon the buildings of the Oldenabi mine loomed ahead, further chilling me with their haunted memories. I spurred my horse and we trotted by as fast as we could.

When we reached the divide on the mountain I stopped for a moment to let my horse catch his breath. Behind I could see Cochise Junction and even the lights at school, so far away that they twinkled like dim stars. In front was the jeweled sweep of Tucson. Somewhere in the canyon before me, short of the city, was Adams' ranch where Ralph would be sleeping, where soon I would be climbing into bed beside him. I kicked my horse and rode down to face the new day.

How this is all going to turn out I don't know yet. I have been examined by a proctologist and a psychiatrist, and the one said, yes, I'd been raped but not hurt in any serious way, and the other said I was damaged for life the first time Mr. Holroyd even talked about sex with me – but in any case I wasn't a psychopathic killer. Mother and Dad are here in Tucson with me and I have been released into their custody. There will be an inquest, maybe even a trial.

Everything, it seems, is going to hinge on Billy's memory. The one good thing in all of this is that Billy is recovering, mentally and physically. When the police first questioned him, after he had been conscious for a couple of days, he couldn't remember anything after getting on the plane in Tucson. Later he recalled getting off at Denver, and just yesterday he told the investigators about hanging around school and eating at the No Delay Cafe.

"We'll get the facts out of him sooner or later," the detectives told me at my daily inquisition this morning, "even if we have to use a truth drug, so your story better holdup."

My lawyer says not to worry.

I suppose I better say something about him. His name is Larry Fox and he was recommended by Mr Adams, Ralph's guardian. He is a lover of boys himself, which is good for me. It makes it a lot easier to level with him. I'd hate to tell a straight lawyer about my affair with Ralph, for example, but it would be worse yet not to have my counsel in on the whole story, if only to see that parts of it which, after all, are irrelevant to Mr. Holroyd's death, don't get out. The newspapers have enough now to make my life miserable.

But nice things happen, too. Just now the phone rang in my motel room and it was Greg in Hollywood.

"How's my favorite mini-monitor?"

I said with a smile I am sure he could hear, "Can it, pal, or you'll find yourself on another work detail."

"It'd be worth it just so I could pin a hero medal on your bare titty."

"It was self defense, you know."

"Too bad."

"Billy's going to be all right."

"Good. He was the nicest guy in your whole class."

"I agree."

"You want a character witness?"

"You?"

"Yeah."

"I got enough troubles now."

"Well, just thought I'd ask."

"Thanks anyhow. How's things?"

"Dull."

"That's too bad."

"Look, if it comes to a trial I'm going to be there."

"How? Why?"

"Because I'm blood-thirsty. Remember how I used to chuck you?"

"Oh, yeah, you did give me a hard time."

"That, too. Well, so long."

"So long, Greg. And thanks."