

*The Seventh
Acolyte Reader*



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A Fine Mess

by K. I. Bard

My mother clicked her tongue and said, "Are you *ever* going to grow up?" She said it in a way you knew it wasn't a question.

My dad raised his voice to deliver his version of it: "Think! You have to think about things before you do them." He liked to holler at me. I was a lot easier to yell at than his boss at the office at the mine.

What happened was on the school bus after school I wasn't in the mood for the way kids usually carry on because I was trying to come up with a plan to satisfy Mr. Harrison, so I got off halfway home and started walking. There's a path people take that's like a black strip of dirt that cuts across an empty lot. You can't miss the dam thing, even though there's a sign on the lot saying, *Please stay off the grass*.

Gosh only knows how many people had gone through there that day, but I had to be the one to squish my sneaker into a fresh dog turd. You see, I was trying to think, and I felt my foot slide, and then it was too late.

It was embarrassing, not to mention the stink. I tried to rub it off on every bit of curb and grass I passed. Anyone seeing me walk that way would *know* what I'd gotten into, or think I was spastic or something.

Home, I went right to the back yard, because you know all those little grippers and pockets on the bottom of gym shoes? You can't go walking in the house with them holding a whole cargo of dog poo. So, to escape an early death by Mom, I decided to hose the junk off outside, because that was the smart thing to do, right?

Well, I was concentrating so hard on rinsing the polluted sneaker, I didn't notice how the spray was soaking my other pant-leg, and when I did notice, I jumped and the spray went everywhere, my face, my shirt, *inside* my shoes, you name it. A guy feels like a real jerk when every time he takes a step it goes squish, clump.

So then I had another good idea. I squish-clumped my way through the back door of the garage, and that's when I saw Mom's car wasn't home. Aw, great, nobody in the house. That meant I could go right upstairs to my room without getting yelled at.

But... how could I make it across that highly polished kitchen floor,

Mom's pride, without leaving a mess of wet sneaker tracks? There was no way, unless I went barefoot. But wet bare feet make tracks, too, don't they?

My third good idea was to use the basement entrance off the garage. And as long as I was going through the basement, why not throw my water-logged gym shoes in the washer so they'd be *sure* to be clean? I mean, who wants to walk around wondering if his shoes still stink of dog turd?

So, see, I do think things out before I do them. The only problem is things sometimes don't go the way they ought. The Hindus have a word for it, something like 'caramel'.

As I was taking off my sneakers in the basement I figured why not toss in my socks, too? It was a sin to run the washing machine for one lonely pair of sneakers. And while I was at it, why not my bluejeans – they were all wet and soggy and my shirt, and my shorts?

So there I was, because of one single dog plop, standing naked in our basement, twirling the dials on our washing machine – and getting stiff! That's when the thought hit me, what would I do if Mom came home all of a sudden? I'd be trapped in the basement, that's what! I had to get out of there, stiffy or no stiffy, and fast!

From the basement door to the stairs was the trickiest part of the route to my room. There's a big window in the front of our house, and I had to get by it. Of course, I could have crawled, but it was more daring to do it standing up. When my folks leave me alone at night I sometimes prowl every inch of the house buck naked, but this was in broad daylight, the drapes were open, and anyone looking from the street would see a naked kid passing the window with his periscope up.

Well, nobody was on the street; I made the stairs scott free and took them two at a time, giving my cock a real roller coaster ride. There's a safe zone around my room. Mom and Dad almost never come upstairs. I now dared to touch my cock like I meant business. This was *my* part of the house. I not only run around there in the nude whenever I feel like it, but I play with my donger like it is the most natural thing in the world. Only, of course, a person has to be careful not to get caught, because then they'd lock you up in some place for weirdos and defectives.

Anyhow, by the time I reached the door to my room my hand was going good, and to tell you the truth you have to be sorta coordinated to be able to walk fast and beat off at the same time.

Heck, I must be a genius at it because I hardly got through my door before it was shoot-a-rama. The first start of a spurt took me by surprise,

so I didn't have time to do anything more than lean back against my door, making it slam with a heck of a clap, just in time for the first gobs to launch. Yikers, it was a wild mix of noise and pleasure, the noisiest cum I'd ever had!

Even with the first spurt, I thought of the floor. I shoved my spare hand into place to catch what I could before I left a lot of puddle spots in the wax. There I stood, right hand doing some follow-up pumping, left hand acting as a sperm bowl. Then I glanced up. The window and drapes were both open. I could look right into the upstairs room of our neighbor's house, which is something I'd done lots of times, even waved to the little kid that lives over there. Of course, I'd never done that when I was naked and masturbating.

I slid down the door. The knuckles of my right hand were dripping sperm. I tilted my left hand sperm bowl the wrong way, and now my butt was sliding around in the stuff, all cold and sticky-slippery. See what I mean about caramel?

After I recovered I drew the drapes and wiped up with the private tissues I keep by my bed. Mom wonders why I go through a box so quick, especially since I don't get colds very often or have allergies. I must have used five or six of them, and took them to the bathroom and flushed them down the toilet. I washed my dick. I almost always wash it after I've spermed. About half the time I end up doing another orgasm in soap, with me standing on my toes and my cock loaded and pointed at the wash basin while I watch my face and upper torso get tense and muscley the closer I get to shooting. I like to be clean and I like some of those second orgasms because they feel stronger than the first.

I bet I've got the cleanest peener in our class. With Mom always after me to wash up, it was up to me to find a way to make one part of it fun.

I dried myself off and then padded into my room and closed the door and thought about my sneaks going round and round in the washing machine and how I'd walked bold and naked across our front picture window, and that got me boned up all over again. I leaned back in my chair, stopped reading the book I was reading, so you know what was going on. Ka-Zott Ka-Zamm, I sent some more sperms on their one-way trip to the great tissue in the sky. By then my stuff was thin, but the first Zott shot some drops that landed on a page of my book. You can't see them, but they're there, making it possibly the first boys' adventure story that has actual sex in it. Pretty neat, huh?

I'd been hearing Mom on the move downstairs, and my alarm clock

was telling me it was nearly time to eat, which we do almost as soon as Dad walks through the door. So I got dressed. I would have liked to go downstairs with everything hanging out, as a joke, but I knew I'd never dare do that. I slipped my bare butt into clean, folded shorts, and then I jumped into a pair of tan chinos. On top I wore my favorite button-down shirt. My feet went into penny loafers because my sneaks were still down in the wash.

You'd think being dressed the way I was would satisfy anyone, wouldn't you? But you don't know my mom. She saw my feet in the loafers, so she wouldn't let me sit down to eat until I went to my room and put on socks, like some sort of sacred law gets violated if food goes into your mouth while you feet aren't soxed. That's when Dad gave me his lecture about not growing up.

After eating we *all* have to stay at the table until one or the other of my parents declares we are done. That night I tried to watch TV but Dad started to fuss after the first half hour. "You waste too much time in front of the tube, young man. You should be out doing things, or, better yet, studying."

So I went back upstairs to my desk, which I figured maybe was good, because I'd got to figure out what to do about Mr. Harrison.

When school started in the fall, us ninth graders had a special General Assembly to welcome us as freshmen to high school, even though we'd been going in and out of the same building every day for the last two years of junior high. Our principal did the welcoming thing, and then the vice principal gave a talk about discipline, making it sound like he was ready to execute kids for misbehavior, and then the athletic director boosted sports, and then the cheerleader adviser followed that with a pitch on school spirit. The only thing that made me listen up was the school counselor, Mr. Harrison. He was there to help us with anything that bothered us. He was just like having a friend on the faculty.

I was probably the only one in the whole school that took him anywhere near seriously. He looked like you could trust him. Picture a fat little Buddha in a dark suit. Well, I did have a problem and I did want to talk with someone about it. Maybe entering ninth grade gave you the right to have someone take your problems seriously.

I'd tried the summer before to talk to a grown-up. It was the youth director at church, who seemed like a pretty neat guy. But as soon as I started I got scared, so I flubbed around and didn't say anything, really. His solution was to get me on my knees in prayer. We prayed. I told him

that prayer had answered my questions, and then he let me go. As for telling anything to kids my age, forget it. They'll either make fun of you or blabber all over. Most of the boys are too busy being jocks and all the girls can think about is make-up and teen stars.

So I was ready for Mr. Harrison. But, well, I'm not stupid. You don't go running to some strange guy and spill your guts all over. No way! I played it real cool. After maybe a month I made an appointment to see the counselor. I think I asked about study habits. Next time it was about friendship and how can you tell real friends from fake ones. Then one day I said I knew this kid who thought he liked his boy friends too much. That did it. I'd pushed some sort of magic button. Mr. H. let me know he wasn't fooled about who that boy was. He put me down for regular weekly counseling sessions. I might have been just a little relieved, but mostly I was scared – of being labeled, and especially that my parents might be called in for a conference.

I could see right from the start that Mr. H. wasn't so much interested in hearing my worries as in convincing me that there was a truer, better, nobler path that led to marriage where every last one of my innermost desires and all my questions would be satisfied, answered and resolved. Well, at fourteen I didn't feel like waiting until I got married. I'd sort of hoped for something to go on now. By fourteen you have a pretty good idea about what makes you click. I mean, would a kid like me go to an adult and risk everything because of some passing whim about what made his pecker pound? This kid wouldn't. I knew already that putting my happy peter into some girl's pee hole was not for me.

So what this kid needed to do was to get himself out of the mess. My program was to admit to being only *mildly* worried about myself. I got that idea when Mr. H. said, "all but a few very effeminate and disturbed boys eventually adjust to normality." All I had to do was not act the least little bit femmy – no problem: I'm not – or disturbed, right?

Wrong. I became Mr. Harrison's prize case. I told him I'd just been a little confused and the idea of actually doing anything with another male was horrible to me. Now, that was progress! He beamed all over. Next step was to start dating so I'd "learn to respect women and share with them the simple pleasures of companionship and healthy age-appropriate activities." *And* I had to give Mr. H. little written reports on how much I was learning, which got me to where I was now.

Okay. It's one thing to say you're starting to like girls. It's a whole different universe when you have to go on dates and take notes. If I wasn't convincing I'd probably get counseling every week next year. If I did too

much I'd get some girl pregnant (I suppose I could do it, even if I didn't enjoy it) and then Dad would castrate me and force Mom to cook my balls and make me eat them. That would be before he killed me.

A couple of days after I'd stepped in that dog poop I talked to this girl, Karen, and I asked her out on a date. I told Mr. H. how much I was looking forward to Saturday night. My whole mouth got dry inside from keeping such a wide smile going for so long. Fortunately there's a water fountain right outside Mr. Harrison's office.

Now, here's a few of things I *didn't* tell Mr. Harrison. Karen was tall and wore orthodontic braces, so I figured with all that metal in her mouth I wouldn't have to kiss her. I picked her because she was not popular and not sexy. I thought she'd say yes, and she did. Girls with flat chests (and boys with little cocks) don't get many dates. The final reason I picked Karen was her little brother Joe.

Joe was in grade seven. He was a cute kid, and because he was on the junior swim team I'd even talked my way into one of his practice sessions by saying I was going to write a piece on junior sports for the school annual. I hoped I'd never have to see Karen naked, but it sure was fun seeing her little brother in the buff. Joe still had almost nothing down there, but he was developing a swimmer's body and you could tell he was starting to turn into something more than a little boy. He was not circumcised, either, which made him even more interesting because most of the rest of us are.

I couldn't talk to him at practice, but maybe, if I was lucky, I'd be able to when I went to pick up Karen. Heck, I'd have been happy simply to see him in his own house for a minute. Not start anything, of course. If Dad would kill me for making a baby in a girl, he'd do worse than kill me for playing pee-pees with that girl's little brother. What's worse than getting killed? My dad would know, I was sure of that.

All of this meant I had to plan everything just perfect. The date had to be right and my report something that Mr. H. would think was real. I actually started a list of topics and phrases to use. All I'd have to do, really, was throw in the kinds of things my parents or most adults say about A-OK 100% male boys. I had to make it sound like I was full of respect for all the things I was supposed to be respecting these days: women, girls, marriage, children, our nation, the state, the school, our teams, the cheerleaders, fatherhood, her body, my body.

I had to decide what part of the date to play up the most. I could say the movie was the big thing, but then I'd be writing a movie review and

not what Mr. H. wanted. So maybe I'd stick with the companionship thing which Mr. H. said was "part of any serious human relationship based on mutual respect." That sounded good, even if I didn't know what the heck it meant. Being together had got to be companionship, only Mr. H. gave it kind of a glow.

That was it. We didn't have to *do* anything, none of that boy/girl stuff. We'd just be companions.

With that settled, I started feeling better, and horny again. Before I got undressed for bed I opened my special drawer and got my things ready. I felt my cock jump in my shorts in anticipation. Until I started to strip, though, I was not going to touch it. I'd make it wait, and then I'd pop the cork when I was buck naked between the sheets.

Once my mom found out I was taking a girl out she started to load me up with advice, suggestions and instructions. Within a few minutes she'd decided just what I should wear, her idea being along the lines of what a prince would put on to escort a princess to a ball. I couldn't just be a fourteen-year-old kid taking a girl to a movie. Dad seemed kind of pleased. I didn't have much fun with my dad any more. Used to be I did, but the past year or two we'd not been very close. When he found out who I was dating he said her father worked in his office. "She'll be the kind to get you on a short leash. You think we're demanding parents, just wait until she gets her hooks into you."

He made it sound like dating was a matter of hunting and capture. The talk about short leash made Mom blush and give him a dirty look. That's how I figured the short leash had to be a guy's pecker. Well, Dad didn't have to worry about my leash, that was for sure!

Which brings me to my date. As soon as I saw her I thought she must have been reading my mom's mind. She had on a pink frilly dress that had all those petticoat things under it. She was way more dressed up than she needed to be to see a show while sitting on hard, creaky seats with your feet stuck to the floor where people had spilled their soft drinks and parked their worn-out wads of chewing gum.

But at least the movie gave us something to do, and it was okay for my image. I was showing the world I was one normal boy. I even held hands with her for a little while.

Her dad insisted on driving us to the show and picking us up after, even though we could have walked just as easily. But after the movie Karen begged him to take us to the fountain and then let us walk home by ourselves. I hadn't planned on spending more money, but fortunately I

had a few dollars with me; Mom had made me take extra money "in case".

I figured none of this would be too risky, but then I didn't know what a girl like Karen would do given the chance. I thought she'd be grateful simply to have a boy ask her out.

Boy, was I wrong! There's a bench by the library, and she steered us toward it. I sat down like I'd sit on any bench, so I wasn't ready to have her grab my face and start kissing me like I was the movie star in her wildest dreams. For some reason I'd never thought about girls getting horny. Well, I learned different real quick. Her idea of kissing wasn't your average peck on the cheek: she nearly sucked my face off. And when she wasn't trying to pull my tongue into her mouth she was slithering hers into mine.

The funny thing was that her kissing did give me a hard-on. As I sat there with her making love to my face, all I could think was how I could screw a girl if I really had to. My dick could do it, even if the rest of me wasn't raving mad about the idea. After a while she dropped one hand onto the edge of my lap, sort of checking things out down there. Maybe she wondered why I didn't attack her tits or something. I think she was telling me she'd do more if I wanted. I didn't. I just wanted to get her home and be done with the damn date.

Well, my pecker oozed some goo into my shorts, but not enough to make a spot I had to hide while I stood in the light on her porch saying goodbye to her. We shook hands so her parents could see, with Joe in pajamas spying from an upstairs window. I was almost out of earshot when I heard her mother say, "Such a nice boy!"

Relieved boy would be more accurate. I couldn't think of many other things that had ever made me so happy as having that date over and done with. Now I just had to write up my experiences for Mr. H. The next day I started. I crammed in every wonderful, romantic, clean idea I could come up with: our companionship at the movie, our mutual regard at the fountain. Her slobbering all over my face was written up as a sedate kiss, and the erection I'd sprouted was "a feeling of warmth". I figured Mr. H. would go for it.

He did, more or less. He figured I was on the right course now. But Karen wasn't satisfied. She kept calling on the phone. We talked. She hinted around like crazy for me to ask her on another date. I figured I'd better. Mr. H. was still keeping tabs on me – I had more counseling sessions coming up – so I figured I had to play safe and take Karen out

occasionally, at least until school was over for the year.

My second date didn't seem like such a bad idea, not at first. Sure, it wasn't at the top of my fun list, but at least it wouldn't be at the bottom either, especially if I got to spend a little time coming and going with Joe.

That's what I thought, until, at the movies, she started to masturbate my knee. Of course, I was wondering if she was going to finger-walk up my leg and do some exploring, but all she did was fool with my knee, giving it squeezes, rubs, little pokes and pats. Sometimes she'd even jerk my pantleg back and forth, sort of like the way a boy maneuvers the loose skin over his boner when he's fooling off.

At the fountain afterwards, drinking a malt, I had to get careless and send a drop right down onto my nice tan pants. It landed in the middle of my thigh.

Karen spotted it and went into action, like she was my mom. "We have to take care of that right away or the stain'll set." They'd taught her that in Home Ec.

She soaked a hanky in her water glass and before I could stop her she was dabbing away, making the small spot of brown malt into a big wet blob. I'd never had anyone working on my leg in public before and it was, well, embarrassing. You can imagine how cool and casual I felt leaving the fountain with one leg all wet!

As for what happened on the bench after that, let's leave it that she zoomed in on my face and started to eat it off while I attempted to keep some composure, until a car came by full of kids who yelled, "Make-out! Make-out!" which flustered Karen so she quit and suggested we walk for a while, which was okay with me.

Now she started talking. She talked about the kind of house she wanted in the future and what colors the bedrooms would be. My pants got drier, but I was no closer than before to understanding girls.

And that's exactly the kind of thing I *couldn't* write about for Mr. H. I was supposed to be learning to understand girls, and to like them. I guessed that might be possible, but I couldn't see it happening yet. Karen kept calling me every evening, and now my dad had a new thing to yell at me about because I was on the phone all the time. Mom ran a screening cover to keep Dad at bay.

You couldn't really call them conversations. She talked and I said things like, "Yeah," "Oh?" "Uh huh," "Nah," "Maybe." I'd hardly get home from school before the first call would come in. She'd call again after dinner, and then closer to bedtime. It was messing up my whole

schedule. Like, I hardly had time to play with myself after school any more because I had to be on the phone with Karen, who was now "my girl". And listening to Karen when I was already in my pajamas hardly got me in the mood for a nice just-before-you-go-to-sleep beat-off.

There was still a whole month before school was out, so I had to continue to play it safe. Man, was I ever looking forward to the 10th of June! After that I wouldn't even *think* about Mr. H. for the whole rest of the summer, and maybe not about Karen, either.

Remember the dog turd I stepped in and one thing led to another? I soon got a horrible feeling the business with Karen and Mr. H. was turning out the same way. No matter how hard I tried, I ended up getting in deeper and deeper.

Like the next date. Karen couldn't go to the movies because she, meaning we, had to look after Joe while her parents were out for the evening. Now, that might not be so bad, I thought.

Well, it was. Soon as her parents were out the door, she and Joe were engaged in constant, nasty bickering. It went on and on.

We looked at TV, me and Karen on the couch, Joe on the floor in front of us where I could see his hair sort of lit up around the edges from the light of the TV because Karen had made the room pretty dark. If I watched TV and the back of Joe's head and didn't pay too much attention to the bickering, it was almost okay. I guessed with Joe around Karen wouldn't get too friendly.

I guessed wrong. She wouldn't let me simply sit on the couch; I had to sprawl on it. After moving positions a few times, she got a place behind me where she could masturbate parts of me again, only this time she gave it to the back of my knee and my shoulder, simultaneously. I kept watching the programs and Joe while she kept pawing away at my safer parts. Sometimes she'd poke my back with her tits or bump my butt with her middle. What I didn't like was that she was breathing heavily, like she was really cranked up. When she couldn't stand it any longer she grabbed my face and started sucking on it. Then she bit my ear-lobe and blew in my ear, which almost put me in orbit and made me scared I'd be deaf for life.

Finally she tossed her voice at her little brother, who'd been amazingly quiet for the last few minutes – there must have been something exciting on TV I'd missed. "Get ready for bed, Joey," she announced, voice weighty with authority.

"It's Friday, an' I get to stay up later, don't forget!"

"Joey, go get ready. I mean it."

"Why? So you an' lover-pants can make out some more?"

"Move it, twerp!"

"Make me!"

There was an eruption behind me. I didn't know what the heck was going on, but Karen was reaching for one of her shoes and I was in the way. I almost got shoved off the couch. With shoe in hand, she threw it at Joe's back, hitting him with a good solid thump.

"Ow!" the boy hollered, turning around. "Damnit, Karen, that hurt! Damn! Jesus! You're lousy, Karen!"

"Get ready for bed."

Actually, Joe didn't seem hurt at all. He looked back at the TV but stood up. Like a robot, he kicked first one sneaker off, then the other. Eyes glommed on the TV, he undid his shirt, then started backing out of his pants. Finally, standing there in his shorts with his back to us, he peeled off first one sock and then the other, balancing on one foot at a time.

"Can't you undress in your own room for once?" Karen asked.

"What's the matter? You never saw me in shorts before?"

"Just get out of here and go put your pajamas on."

"Yeah, yeah," Joe chanted. He grabbed his clothes and gave his sister a tail-wag with his free hand tugging down the elastic of his shorts to expose a portion of his bare butt. Then he fled.

But not for long. Before Karen could half get down to the serious business of sucking my face and tongue-washing out my ear again, Joe was back, pajama-clad and obviously intent on staying.

"Why are you down here again?" Karen asked him.

"This is the TV room, ain't it? Where else can I watch TV on the night I get to stay up?"

"Well, watch TV, then," Karen said, dragging me up off of the sofa.

"We'll go in the living room so the twerp can have the TV all to himself."

As she was pulling me away, I caught a side view of Joe, and I could have sworn the kid was showing a distinct bulge at his middle; those flimsy pajamas were barely managing to cover an obvious erection. I didn't get much more than a glance, but that was better than nothing.

Of course there was another couch in the living room and of course we had to get into a clinch on it. I won't bore you with all the groping and lip-slopping, but it went on and on.

"Unbutton your shirt."

"Huh?" I said.

"So I can feel your chest, silly."

"Oh."

"Now, lay against me like that so I can feel your skin... Ouch, that hurts!"

"What? I'm sorry."

"It's just your buckle. It presses into me. Maybe if I take it off..."

I actually helped her, maybe because I didn't like all that pulling and tugging and fiddling, who knows? I'm a helpful guy, right? But I was just setting my belt aside when she undid my top button, followed by a skilful, flawless job of unzipping.

"There. You can lay back down on me and be more comfortable."

Now she had access to my rear, outside and pretty soon inside my undershorts, and was flexing my globes. I knew what we were coming close to and I wasn't going to do it, no way, because, most important, I wasn't prepared. My heart was pounding like a rock 'n roll drummer and my ears almost rang with the noise inside my chest. I did the only thing I could think of. I kept my groin pressed against her mound like I was stuck on home plate, and, to distract her from the actual fact of my non-erection, I French kissed her like a demon possessed.

Then I got lucky. From the back of the living room couch came Joe's stifled giggle. That was all I needed. I mean, no self-respecting guy could keep making out with his girl if her little brother was watching, right?

I sat up and said loudly, "Hey!"

Karen was almost hysterical. "Get out of here, Joe, you little creep, spy! Get out!"

I stood, only to find my pants not where I usually wore them, and I'll tell you it's hard to play innocent in that condition.

"I'll tell! I'll tell! You're supposed to watch me, Karen, not spend all your time making out with your boy-friend."

"You say anything and you'll regret it, you little prick!"

"Not after I tell Mom and Dad, I won't." Once again Joe fled up to his room.

Now Karen was scared. She pleaded with me to go up and talk with him. "The little brat really might do what he says. If I talk to him I'll get mad and then we'll argue and then I'll swat him."

So there I was again: I'd stepped in another dog turd, and this one was named Joe.

I tapped on Joe's bedroom door. "Joe," I said, "Joe, it's me. Can we talk?"

"You gonna hit me or anything?" he asked from inside.

"No. I think you're an okay kid, but I want to talk, okay?"

After a moment to think, he said, "You can come in, but if you hit me I'll really tell. I will!"

It was totally black inside. "Where are you?" I asked.

"On the bed, stupe."

"Where's the bed... Ow!" I'd bumped something solid.

"You found it. Just climb on, now that you're here."

Joe's bed was a double, plenty big enough for the two of us. I settled myself by feel and then said, "I wanted to talk to you so you won't make a fuss about anything."

"Ah, that's okay. Karen and me, we just bug one another. We do it all the time. I wouldn't tell unless she goofed me up bad." He giggled. "I was curious to see if you were really doin' it."

"I wasn't," I said. "And I sure wouldn't with someone watching."

"You gonna go back and screw her?"

"That's not really any of your business, is it?"

"Man, I was turned on! Look – okay, you can't look, *feel!*" And he whipped back the covers, grabbed my hand and pasted it over his middle where a very stiff little penis poked up under his pajamas. "Bet yours is still hard as a rock, too!"

Well, it was – now. I should have gotten off that bed, and fast, but all I did was lie there feeling up his cock. How many nights had I jerked off thinking about Joey and that little pointy part of him teasing into my palm? It was like someone had given me an injection that took away all my will, all my good sense, the sort of thing the KGB used in order to get the truth out of you.

Now his fingers were working my fly open. "Yeah, it's *big!*" he whispered. He bared it and started playing with the skin. Karen had masturbated my knee and shoulder; her little brother went for the real thing. I jumped and shuddered. "She's hot for you, you know," he went on, rolling to face me so that his sweet little-boy breath scented with Colgate flowed over my face. "You're almost the only thing she talks about any more, and I guess she wants to try something like this..." – and he gave my cock an extra squeeze – "bigger than mi-" Joe's voice snapped off like an electric current.

"What?!" I gasped.

"Oh, oh..." Joe was caught out and he knew it. Hands came off cocks which, in any case, went down fast. Now the shoe was on the other foot. "You won't tell, will you?" Joe pleaded. "Don't even tell

Karen I told. Please?"

I said I wouldn't, zipped up and slipped out of the room.

Karen's mood was broken, too. I helped her straighten up the living room and got out of that house as soon as I decently could.

When I want to forget about the whole rotten world and it's Sunday I sleep in as late as possible. That's what I did the following morning. I played with myself, dozed, played with myself, dozed again, but as it got closer to noon the reminders from below in the house grew louder and more frequent. When Dad yelled up the stairs at me I knew I had to move. Besides, I was getting hungry.

Downstairs and feeling screwy because I'd stayed in bed so late, I caught a lecture from Dad. It was his usual one about how I showed no respect for my mother, she wasn't my private maid, and so on and so on.

After Dad's lecture, Mom said, "Karen called twice." She said it like I was supposed to feel guilty about having had someone call and someone else having had to take the message. Then, in case I hadn't got quite enough from Dad, she added, "You know, your father expects you to be more a part of this family and pitch in like the rest of us and not act like some visiting guest who can come in late and get up when he feels like it."

It was a relief when I could actually sit down and eat my cereal. The world's a lot simpler when it's just me, a bowl, some cereal and a little milk. Something like hunger is a cinch to take care of compared to the problems you run into with people.

But I couldn't even finish breakfast before Karen called again. I had to stand at the phone and listen and throw in my usual "Umm humm," "Yes," "Ahh hahh," and "I see," while the rest of my cereal turned into milky mush. I figured it would have maybe been better if I'd stayed in bed after all.

Dad found things for me to do the rest of the day. He was convinced if he didn't do that occasionally I'd turn out lazy for life. But it's okay to be busy when you've got something on your mind. Your hands or legs or whatever can keep working at what you're supposed to be working on while your head goes over and over your problem. Even when Karen called again later I found I could listen to her talk and still keep thinking about what was bothering me.

Because by then I was coming up with a plan. I'd written some little pieces for the school Annual and one article had actually been published in the school newspaper. Maybe if I got to be a really super writer

people wouldn't mind so much that I was different somehow. "Okay, he's a little odd," they'd say, "but that goes with being talented."

So that night I wrote my first real story. It was about a boy who went around pretending he liked what other people liked. There was nothing about the kid's so-called girl-friend almost getting his pants off or there being a little brother who nearly seduced him and was part of sister's sex education, but the story was almost ten pages long. I'd *never* written ten pages on anything before. I gave it to Mr. Lawrence the next morning.

A couple of days later Mr. Lawrence announced he wanted to see me when classes were over. Do you know what it's like to wonder for hours and hours what some teacher is going to say to you *after school*? Is it going to be something really bad? You hope it will be good. It drives you crazy, so by the time the last bell rings your nerves are shot.

With some of my classmates humming the funeral march as they walked by me in the hall, I took a couple of deep breaths and knocked on Mr. Lawrence's door.

"Come in," Mr. Lawrence said from behind it. Well, that didn't sound too bad.

"You've probably already figured out I wanted to talk to you about your story," he said. "Sit down."

"Oh?" I tried for innocent surprise.

"Not because it's all that good as writing goes, but because I suspect it's you you're writing about."

Oh, oh, I thought, here we go – Mr. H. all over again. "You mean you really think the boy in the story is me?" I smiled at him to show him how amusing I thought the idea really was.

"Look, I don't wish to embarrass you. I'm not going to probe. I'm not the sort of teacher who goes around meddling in other people's lives. In fact, I should probably have kept my mouth shut. But, if there's something you *want* to talk about..." He looked at me closely, saw there wasn't, I suppose, then went on in a different direction. "I think you could write good stuff for the school newspaper next year. You have a sense of the ridiculous and you're honest about what you observe."

"Then... you really thought my story wasn't so bad?"

"It wasn't so good. Parts might be saved. You'd have to do lots of rewriting...."

I didn't want to hear that. Teachers are always saying how you should rewrite things and I always thought they said it just to give kids

more work to do. But maybe I didn't know what a story was, either.

Before I left a half hour later Mr. Lawrence had offered to help me with any future pieces I decided to write – and neither of us had mentioned again who the boy in the story might be or what he was really hiding from the world.

Mr. Lawrence was one of the few single teachers at school. Guys routinely called any bachelor a queer, but Mr. Lawrence wasn't the queer type, like Mr. Fibbs who taught the eighth grade and was one big wimp. But Mr. Lawrence wasn't really part of the crowd of male teachers who hang out with one another because they coached teams or their wives were friends. Somebody like Mr. Lawrence was more alone. When he taught he treated his subject with care, so much so that at times he wouldn't notice some kid goofing off or zinging spit-balls around the classroom because he was so involved in explaining a poem by Frost, whom he loved, or the way some word got derived from some other word.

I must have trusted him enough to show him that story. Maybe I picked him on instinct. I wasn't sure if teenagers had instincts or not. My mom said *she* did, so maybe I'd inherited some from her.

Whether it was instinct or not, the one thing I was sure of was that Karen wasn't going to let go of me in peace. Now she wanted me to give her a friendship ring to show we were a boy/girl pair. And she had summer vacation all planned out for us, every summer dance, social, parade, party, every weekend except for their family vacation. She'd tried to talk her parents into letting her stay home while they took Joe to Yellowstone Park, but they'd refused. I could have kissed her father for refusing.

If my last date with Karen was a disaster, the next was even worse. We had this routine of going to a movie and then the fountain, where I'd spring for the malts, and then walking home via the library and its outdoor bench. As always, she masturbated my knee and I jerked off her shoulder blade. She glued herself to my face and I did my level best to kiss back and pretend to be thrilled at the chance to swallow her saliva and used popcorn husks. On our first date I'd at least had a boner. I hardly got a twitch down there now, and her perfume actually made me a little sick when I tried to imitate the movie stars by kissing her down on the neck.

That wasn't the last straw, though. The straw came when she said, "I want to see it."

I had to swallow some extra saliva before I could dumbly inquire, "Huh?"

"I want to see it, you know, your thing."

I couldn't believe what she was saying. "What?" I repeated.

"Your thing."

"I don't think..." But before I could get out what I didn't think she shot one hand into my crotch and began to dig furiously for the opening slit in my underwear,

"Hey!" I protested.

"Where's your opening?"

By now my penis had shrunk up as small as those parts of you ever could, and if you've ever seen a boy my age scared out of his wits over getting raped in a public place, well you can imagine just how little my magic twanger was.

About that time she broke through, but for some reason she reached up instead of down. Maybe she was too excited to get her directions right. Maybe she was expecting a monster boner to greet her with its head up near my waist. What she didn't expect was for me to bail off the bench and land on my ass at her feet.

A car honked its horn down the street. I took that as an excuse to duck behind a tree and tuck my clothes into place. Out of curiosity, I felt for my peter, and sure enough I found the shriveled up little guy in the right place but hugging the bottom of my abdomen like a leech. My balls were pulled up even further. I think one of them had actually retreated inside where Karen couldn't get at it.

As soon as I dropped Karen off at her house I knew there was something I had to do on Monday. There was hardly a week of school left, and then we'd have finals for a few days, and then summer vacation.

Just about all the adults in my life had tried to think for me. Karen sure had ideas and plans. Joe was beautiful and sexy but so dumb he couldn't even keep an important secret. The only one who respected my right to decide about me for myself had been Mr. Lawrence. I had to talk about what was going on to someone I figured I could trust, and that someone was going to have to be him.

Primed as I was, I fizzled at the last moment. Once I got into the room with him, all my resolve and confidence went poof.

"What's it going to be?" Mr. Lawrence asked. "Another story, the first story, or something else?"

"The first story," I lied.

"You've rewritten it, then?"

"Ah, not yet. I'm going to, but I haven't got it done yet."

"Then you're here about something else."

"Not exactly. Well, maybe sort of..." I was hedging and dodging at every turn. I was scared, but he was right: 'something else' was what I'd come about. "Okay..." I took a deep breath and tried to swallow, but there was nothing to swallow. "Okay," I repeated, "the boy you wondered about in the story, it's me. I'm not sure what it all means, but I'm tired of having to pretend and I hate having to lie to people about what I feel. It's like I'm the only one that feels the way I do, and nobody will listen to me.

"I will," said Mr. Lawrence simply.

Then it poured out of me. I don't know where it all came from, but it spewed out in long strings and torrents. I talked and talked. Mr. Lawrence listened, nodding, following my thread, not looking too shocked when I slipped my biggest hints.

Maybe you know what it's like to go through an experience of that sort. You're "running on nerves". In the rush to get it all said you're dead serious one second and cracking a dumb joke the next. You're on automatic, with things you've kept locked inside going off every which way, like the night of the Fourth of July.

When I finally ran down I'd missed my bus by a good twenty minutes. Mr. Lawrence offered to drive me home. "Gee, you don't have to do that," I said.

"I know I don't have to, but I want to. It's not often a student trusts a teacher with so much of himself. I feel flattered, actually."

We stopped at the fountain on the way home and Mr. Lawrence bought me a root beer. Do you get dehydrated going through a scene like that? I don't know, but I sure needed that root beer.

"I think I know what you're dealing with," Mr. Lawrence said when we were back in the car. "All boys have fears and worries about 'what' they are. Some kids figure they're one thing for a few years and then turn out to be the other later on. But does it really matter so much? What's important, like the boy in your story, is to be true to yourself at the time, and let time take care of the rest."

When I got home I was feeling like the greatest boy in the whole world and Mr. Lawrence was nothing short of a genius. Then after supper it all came crashing down when Karen called, and there I was back to humming and hawing and pretending again. Nothing had changed. Nothing had got solved. I was still the same dumb kid that let everybody else ran his life for him.

Mr. Lawrence just laughed when I told him about my ups and downs. He didn't laugh at me to put me down, he laughed at my worries,

and my worrying about my worries. "Being a teenager means you're on a roller-coaster all the time," he said. "My boy, *you are not alone!*"

It was on maybe our third or fourth talk that Mr. Lawrence made his suggestion. "I've just bought a little farm about an hour north of here," he said. "I could use some help this weekend cleaning things up – help meaning you, if you're interested."

"Are you serious?" I said.

"Of course. I'd pay you a fair helper's wage."

"Aw, you don't have to do *that!*" I said. Pay? Me get paid? I couldn't believe my very well-washed ears.

"Of course I do. I'm not about to exploit you. And it would give us a chance to talk some more."

So it was settled, both with Mr. Lawrence and at home. Dad was almost as pleased as I was over my "first job", and I was super-pleased because it gave me an excuse not to go out with Karen that Saturday night. "Gee, I'd love to," I told her, "but you see, I have this chance to earn a little money and, well, you know, movies and malts are expensive..." She about yelled my ear off, then pleaded, then cried, but I wouldn't back down. I'd already dragged my sleeping bag out of the garage and Mom was airing it on the back porch, and I'd told Mr. H. in what I'd hoped would be my last counseling session that I was really frustrated at having had to cancel my date, but I figured it was part of becoming a responsible person "to subordinate short-term personal satisfaction to the task of assuming a more adult role in our community," quote unquote – I was pretty proud of that statement. I didn't tell Mr. H. who my weekend employer would be.

Mr. Lawrence's farm turned out to be up a long gravel road where a billowing cloud of dust rose behind us and followed the car like a giant dung-colored serpent. As the road got worse, we had to slow down, and now the dust caught up with us and swirled around the car, making us choke and sneeze. But just then we turned off. I got a glimpse of a rusty mailbox with a Finnish name on and then we were riding down a narrow track between a couple of rows of apple trees with a swooshing sound from under the car where a river of long, green grass was brushing it. Soon that green river opened up into a huge grassy pool out of which the old farmhouse, sheds and barn rose up like brown timbered islands. The dust was left far behind.

I stepped out and stretched. The sun seemed hotter and friendlier up

here than in town. The air rang with the sound of huge numbers of crickets and grasshoppers; it smelled fresh, ancient, pure.

Mr. Lawrence put a hand on my shoulder and said, "Come on: I'll show you around."

The farm was half fields, half woods. There was a dug well, roofed over, with a bucket on a rope. As for the buildings, they were a mess. Once the home and livelihood of the Haikanen family, the farm was gently slipping back to nature. Soon brush and saplings would establish themselves in the hay fields; squirrels would find a way under the eaves into the house and nest there; the roofs of the sheds would collapse. Already sumac was sprouting up where grain had been.

I fell in love with the place, immediately, incurably.

We stripped off our shirts and went to work. It's amazing what the Haikanens had stashed away in all those little sheds: hay rakes, old rusty seed planters, rotting boots and mitts, a wheel-barrow, a grinding wheel, cedar shingles aplenty, a set of storm windows you could hardly see through for the dust and spider webs, a big stack of magazines, broken chairs, car parts, truck parts, tractor parts, a dismantled four-cylinder engine that could have come out of almost anything a dirt-poor farmer might have owned.

Mr. Lawrence made it fun trashing those old building out. We burned up the burnables in a huge bonfire that glowed red right into the night. We teased each other as we worked, like when Mr. L. dragged out a high chair and said, "Here, take this home and you'll have your very own seat at the dining table."

"Thanks a lot," I said, jangling what I could only think had been a mule harness, "Climb into this and go plow a field."

Was this really *me* talking? To an adult? Mr. L. didn't seem to mind. In fact, the more relaxed I got the better he seemed to like it.

Along about five o'clock he discovered a cupboard kind of thing he figured had come out of the kitchen. So back to the kitchen it had to go, across the grass, plowing up a wake because it was hugely heavy, and in through the back door. Man, was it a struggle! But it fit. It didn't look half bad, or wouldn't, once we cleaned it up, along with the kitchen.

By now sweat was running down our chests in dirty little rivers; it dripped off my face. I felt another bunch of drops trickle down my back and then the in the waist of my jeans.

"You want a coke?" Mr. L. asked me.

"In a minute, maybe. It's so hot I just want to stand here and not have to move," I said.

He reached out to brush a lock of sweaty hair that drooped across my forehead.

That's what I'd been afraid of, that he'd be just like Karen and try to grab me and press me into doing something sexy. I'd even rehearsed a speech: "I'm not that kind of boy, Mr. Lawrence. I don't like having people put pressure on me to do what they want all the time." It sounds silly, but that's what I'd been all geared up to say.

But there was one thing I hadn't planned on, and that's what Mr. Lawrence actually did. He leaned in, drew so close I felt myself tremble, partly in fear and partly in curiosity, and then he kissed me. It wasn't like Karen trying to pull my face off. It wasn't a kiss like I got from Mom. This was somewhere between the two, and it was completely new. If he'd grabbed my crotch, I'd have hollered, although who'd have heard me way out there except for Mr. Lawrence himself I wouldn't know. But the way he kissed me was more like I'd expect from someone who was happy and grateful, not simply horny.

I can't remember any more all the feelings that went through me as a result of that kiss – it was so different and unexpected – but I do remember what I did next: I kissed him back.

My kiss was more like the kind Karen dished out. Like me, Mr. Lawrence was hot and sticky and he smelled like a working male. I'd always loved being clean, yet here I was all sweaty and grimy and my hair disheveled, pressed against his trunk with more passion than I thought I had in me. Our physical grubbiness turned out to be a turn-on, a mark of intimacy. I liked the taste of his salt, the raspy roughness of his beard.

Right from the start I knew this kiss was going to be more than all the kisses I'd had from Karen. With her, it was like I didn't really want to be doing it, or touching her, but with Mr. Lawrence it wasn't like that at all. I wanted to feel him, everywhere. I kept us in that hug for what seemed like long minutes ticking away in my heart-beats, despite the clammy heat and sweat trickling between us.

"Well," Mr. Lawrence said afterwards, "that's what I call a kiss! I think we need a coke to recover."

"Can't kiss if you're too dry to pucker," I cracked, feeling giddily embarrassed now by my kissing spree.

Drinks in hand, we went out onto the porch where we'd dragged out a wicker couch, and that's where we sat. With one hand he massaged the back of my neck. I liked that, so I leaned closer, then against him. Believe it or not, what I did next was to start masturbating his knee the

way Karen had done mine. It's stupid, I know, but it made sense at the time because I could reach it and I was afraid to go after any other targets.

I know it's no big deal to sit on a couch with someone, but this was special. It wasn't sexy or anything out of the ordinary, but it felt absolutely wonderful to just lean against Mr. Lawrence and talk about anything that came into my head and not worry about whether it was right or wrong. It almost put me to sleep, in fact, which was something I tried to avoid because Mr. Lawrence was saying nice things to me I needed to hear. But the sound of his voice was more important than the words.

Maybe what he said didn't matter. Maybe being there together was the important thing.

My tummy rumbled. I hate tummy rumbles: they remind you of what you got inside you and what's going on in there. That time of the year the days are so long you don't realize how late it's getting. Mr. Lawrence looked at his watch. "Time to wash up and then feed you some of that steak we brought along. I think we earned a steak tonight, don't you?"

We'd put buckets of well water out in the sun to warm up. Mr. Lawrence fetched the soap and towels, and then we were stripping down out by one of the sheds. I was nervous as I kicked off my sneakers; my hands were shaking worse when I peeled off my socks, and even worse yet when they went to my belt and the big brass button at the top of my Levi's.

"Let me." Mr. Lawrence brushed my hands away and calmly, carefully loosened and unzipped my pants. In the heat, my jeans stuck to me, so I wiggled from side to side as he skinned them down, my bleached white shorts sweaty and unkempt as they bunched up in one place and sagged down in another.

"No wonder we're having trouble getting these things off," Mr. Lawrence said. "They were stuck on a part of you that's intent on sticking out."

Geez, he's talking about my hard-on, I thought. Holy cripes, he's talking about *that!*"

He took my jeans and draped them over a sumac bush. "You look quite handsome, standing there," he told me. "Do you know that?"

I shook my head. Handsome was one thing I'd never considered I was.

"I'd like to wash you from head to toe. Would you let me?"

At least *he* had a voice – *I* couldn't talk. All I could do was nod,

afraid, really afraid, somehow, to look down at the poked-out, deformed state of my undershorts. I couldn't have removed them myself just then if God himself had commanded me to.

But Mr. Lawrence did it for me, and then there I was naked as that day fourteen and a half years before when I'd been pulled out into the antiseptic world of a hospital delivery room – not that I remember a thing about *that*.

Being naked, and with my short-arm cocked, was as incredible and it was scary. My dick felt huge. It stuck straight out while it hammered up and down in tune with my heart beat.

"Now that's real special," Mr. Lawrence said, looking it over like some kind of connoisseur. "That's going to give many people a whole lot of pleasure over your lifetime."

I half expected him to do something to it, standing in front of me still with his pants on, but instead he grabbed one of the buckets and said, "Ready?" and poured half of it down over my shoulders.

Then he went to work with the cake of soap. He didn't use a washcloth, just his bare hands. He started with my neck, then got my chest and back, my butt (even pretty intimately up the crack), my legs. He saved my penis and my balls until last. My cock hadn't lowered itself one degree in the meantime, and getting washed made it as hard as it ever could get. His rough hands, lubricated in soap, burned as they slipped back and forth working the bubbles in.

"Uh... you'd better stop," I gasped, "or..."

"Sure, I know."

The rest of the bucket went to rinse me off. I didn't use the towel. I liked the drops of well water standing up on my newly clean skin, the coolness of evaporation. I was beginning to be at ease again. After all, how can you worry about being naked with a hard-on after the guy you might worry about had just finished washing off your boner in soap?

Then it was his turn. I'd been looking at his bare chest all day, so that was nothing new; what was a surprise was the hairiness of him below the belt, the big cock which extended downward like the pendulum of a grandfather clock. I dragged over a milking stool and stood on it so I had height enough and then slowly poured over him half a bucket of lukewarm water.

Clean, he toweled himself off, looked us both over with obvious approval, and said, "There." He gave me another happy-friendly kiss, and I was ready, more than ready, to kiss him back. I thrilled to the feel of his warm, dry skin against mine, still water-beaded. I caught the slight

scent of unwashed, sweaty hair blending with the soap smell of purged flesh. I wanted, I wanted... I didn't know which or what, but I knew I wanted *something*, and I tried to think how much I wanted it when I kissed him back, putting everything to be said into my lips.

It was a surprise when Mr. Lawrence picked me up. I didn't think he was that strong, but he swept me up and carried me off into the house like he'd spent all his life practicing how to lift and carry naked boys. Inside in his arms I went, and down onto where we'd laid out our sleeping bags and foam mattresses for the night. That's where he took me, the first time.

Parents warn you, teachers warn you, the newspapers warn you that some men will *do* things to boys. I had a rush of fear. What I got, however, was a rush of pleasure.

I saw the tip of my cock disappear between Mr. Lawrence's lips and enter a cavity that was warm, slippery, endless in how it could tug, tickle, massage and please those inches where a boy has so much sensation tied up together. First times are always special, and this certainly was. The only bad thing about it was that it didn't last forever, although it almost could have, considering how I was barely on earth and didn't know time from tomorrow as Mr. Lawrence worked on my penis, throwing in a few exciting side trips, too.

When it was over, I was totally washed out. I didn't want to move so much as an eyelid. I'd never felt so good or so complete. Jacking myself off, nice as that was, had never been like this. I may have slept for a minute or two because I seem to remember waking up feeling a gentle breeze on my skin.

"I think you needed that to happen," Mr. Lawrence said. "You're not unhappy it did, are you?"

I had to clear my throat before I could talk. "No, gosh no!" I said. "I didn't know what it would be like."

"You're okay, then?"

"More 'n that," I said. "Now I know where I'm at!"

"As your English teacher," he joked, "I could wish for better grammar."

Grown-ups are always telling us that kids are selfish, and maybe they've got a point, especially when something new hits you over the head like this had. It wasn't until maybe a half-hour later that it occurred to me Mr. Lawrence had done everything to me and I'd done nothing to him. By then we were squatting over some hardwood coals in front of the house with our steaks sizzling above them on a grill.

"Don't worry about it," was all Mr. Lawrence would say on the subject. "The weekend isn't half over."

After supper we wandered over the farm, our arms around each other's waists (and, yes, we'd got back into our clothes by now). Here was an old logging road cutting across the north forty, here was the sugarbush where we would tap the maples come next March. *We* would do this, *we* would do that. Mr. Lawrence never said it, but from that evening on, both of us just assumed that his farm was my farm, too.

The sun finally set; the trash pile glowed in the middle of the field. We sat on the old wicker couch and watched the fireflies turn on and start their dance. It got chilly, even sitting close as we were.

"Well," Mr. Lawrence said at last.

"Well," I said, feeling the excitement steal into my stomach once again.

"We got homework to do, don't we?" I could feel him grinning, even if I couldn't see it. Then he quoted from something we'd read that year in English: "And you've got promises to keep."

"And miles to go before we sleep," I said, remembering.

"And miles to go before we sleep."