

Android

by Robert Campbell

GODDAM GHOUL, McKensie thought. Sunshine not buried a week before the pitchmen start.

“...the girl of your dreams, sir,” the son of a bitch was finishing, “why wait? The replacement insurance policy will cover eighty percent. With inflation outrunning the index...”

“I want a boy.” McKensie was angry. It showed in his voice.

The salesman was startled. “Why, uh – ” He pressed his pocket scanner repeatedly. “Mrs. McKensie was – I mean. I beg your pardon. She was – ”

“Female. I'm not about to put one of your fuck machines into her bed.”

“Our android girls – ”

“No female machine in this house.” McKensie lowered his voice to fierce intensity. “You've got the insurance contract. I can't help that, but you can damned well take orders.”

“Males cost more, Mr. McKensie – ”

“Boys don't. A twelve-year-old is a third cheaper to produce. Cheaper than a fuck machine. I looked it up after you called.”

The salesman rose. “I can't accept that abusive term, sir. Our females – ”

“File the order and get out.”

The salesman, fashionable but bloated looking in a sheath suit with a floppy collar, sneered at McKensie, who had barely bothered to dress for the visitor. “I don't think you know that we *assume* all purchasers of boy androids are pederasts. We program the androids to be very affectionate.”

“Damn you!” McKensie exploded. “All you've got is effeminate twerps – ”

“No, no.” The salesman was intimidated by McKensie's size, almost two meters and over eighty kilograms. “We have all types. Very masculine, muscular, athletic. Programmed to learn swimming, or tennis, or what have you. You have to teach, of course. Nevertheless, they all require affection, so that – ”

“As long as I don't have to screw him.”

“That's up to you.” The salesman was defeated – he had no choice – but he could still keep his tone offensive. “They're programmed to enjoy it, but they have no programed explicit expectations. Beyond affection, of course. We don't want them beaten, Mr. McKensie. They 'feel' pain. You might not understand.”

“I'm kind to roaches.” McKensie saw the salesman out and onto a module, for though he disliked the man, he disliked being alone even more. Back in the house, he kicked on the cocktail synthesizer, took the drink into the holographic

capsule and switched on the image of his honeymoon in Greenland with Sunshine. Two minutes later, he stomped out, tossed the martini into a potted croton, stripped off his clothes, and plunged into his swimming pool, resolved to drown rather than drink himself to death.

He did neither.

MCKENSIE WAS PREPARED – a week later, when his order was delivered – for a less beautiful child. He had, without fully understanding why, made a special effort in anticipation. Instead of the knee-length slops that he normally lounged about the house in, he put on a shimmering body stocking, with codpiece, intending to show the deliveryman at least that he was in good shape for forty-two years. But when the boy walked in, unattended, McKensie felt oddly pleased that he'd made the effort, as if he thought the machine would care. It was all rather confusing.

Gendered androids, relatively new, vastly expensive, rare, and disgusting – the females McKensie had seen were all that. Sunshine had betrayed him with this gift lest he remarry. Jealousy. Or something worse. Sex with Sunshine had been a ritual. Then she got too sick for it.

Now he had this – what? Companion. A silicone plastic interior structure, a high-density, sub-molecular bubble holographic control center, and a muscle/flesh system grown from an ovum. Conceivably Sunshine's. Her horror of childbirth had led her to sell her ova to Hemispheric Androids International (a subsidiary of Universal Robotics). In those development days, HAI paid in postmortem guarantees to the survivors. Did HAI make sure that none of the deceased's ova contributed to an android that the insurance supplied? McKensie's fear had been that he would get the child Sunshine had cheated him out of, faked up into a mechanical doll, with big breasts and a cunt for incest. The creature before him, thank heaven!, looked like neither Sunshine nor himself. But sturdy, like McKensie. Some likeness was welcome.

It was fashionably dressed, yet not so immodestly as McKensie himself. He allowed himself a moment to wonder and – remembering what the salesman had said – he admired the company's tact. The creature carried a high-quality suitcase (befitting the colossal cost) containing the additional clothes provided for in the contract, and containing as well interchangeable, rechargeable energy units, also provided for. It smiled tentatively at McKensie, yet there was something expectant in the look. It worried McKensie, and for an instant McKensie wondered if he was up to the expectations of a robot.

“Come in, come in,” McKensie said. *You talk to an-droids as if you don't know they are. But you don't have to,* McKensie explained to himself. *This machine will take whatever I put out.* But the machine's innocent, intelligent look compelled courtesy, so McKensie gave it. “Your room's ready for you.” he said, as if to a human guest. “Follow me with your bag.” They circled up the stairs wordlessly. At McKensie's touch a wall opened and they entered. “How do you like it?” McKensie asked.

The thing beamed approval.

“Can't you talk?” McKensie was easily irritated. This was wasted kindness. Although he never had overnight guests, he sacrificed the possibility of accommodating one by giving a room to the robot. Besides, it had been McKensie's library, where he escaped from Sunshine in the later days. That was reason enough to resent sharing it. But there was more. In it, he was proud to say, was not a single electronic volume. All his life, when it came to literature, McKensie's philosophy had been damn the expense!

“Oh, yes.” The voice was a boy's, not quite broken, but with undertone that promised – “It's just hard for me to say. I never had a room before. And books! Hundreds of books. I haven't read a book yet, a whole book – you know, they just program us with poems and stories and stuff – but now, wow! And a bed!” The robot looked anxious for a moment. “Is my bed near yours?”

“Yes, yes. Over there,” McKensie said. “Down that way. The bath is next, though. Between them.” He saw the thing's alarmed look. “No, I don't like to use the sonic cleanser. You can use it, if you want to; there's one by the window there.”

“Oh, I see! No. I don't especially like sonic cleaning, I really don't like it. I just – I mean I never had a bath. Will we play sports, so that I'll sweat a lot? I think a bath is best then. Isn't it? There's so much I don't know yet.”

“Yes, yes.”

“We will? You do mean sports? Oh, good, I'm really going to be happy here!” The creature hugged a very nervous McKensie.

“Well, now. That's enough.” The thing hung back, contrite. “Let me see. What shall I call you?”

“Anything you want. I was just a number at HAI” It looked perplexed.

“Hold that look,” McKensie said suddenly and bolted from the room. He returned with a framed photograph, the old fashioned kind from the twentieth century. It was a youth, blond, perhaps fourteen. “The resemblance. Look in that mirror there, then at the picture.”

The android looked. “It's like me, except for the hair.” The perplexed look turned back to McKenzie. “Please, can I smile now?”

“Oh, yes. Sorry. He was Jaacko. My wife's grandfather. I'll call you Jaacko. Jaacko McKensie.”

“I like it.” It – he was hugging McKensie again. “I mean, I like Jaacko.”

“You don't like McKensie?”

“No, I like it. I *love* it, because it's your name. But – I don't know. I just have a feeling. My name ought to be –. I don't know.” Jaacko smiled. “It doesn't matter.”

“Well, Jaacko will do.” McKensie was a little confused because Jaacko was rather more lifelike than McKensie either expected or wanted. The enthusiasm was certainly fake, yet it was – he didn't know: convincing, or simply appealing? The pale skin of the “boy” set off his brown eyes and black curls; the effect was disturbingly real. And when Jaacko frowned attentively,

McKensie had to catch breath a moment, the beauty was so dazzling.

Room by room, they toured the house. The complex mechanisms of the kitchen McKensie was obliged to explain – but only once; Jaacko was programmed to learn, and to be pleased at being taught. It was unnerving.

THAT NIGHT, as McKensie undressed for bed, he wondered vaguely what Jaacko would do at night. Read? With his computer mind, how fast could he read? McKensie himself took a book on the ecology of blue green algae in Venusian atmosphere and slid under the covers.

There was a tap on the far side of the wall opening.

“Jaacko?” McKensie touched a button.

“It's me.” The wall opened slowly. “Is it all right?” Jaacko came in. He was naked and his penis was erect, a touch of dark red showing beyond the foreskin. “You didn't kiss me goodnight.”

“Oh, well – ”

“If you don't want to – ” The penis began to droop. It had been perhaps five inches; around it there was no pubic hair. “It's all right – ” Jaacko stood, undecided. He half turned away, then paused to look back.

Programmed to be very affectionate. That's what the son of a bitch said. And what about frustrated affection? Would that burn out his microlaser holographics? *Why the hell didn't they provide a user's manual for this thing?* A little affection, he decided, would protect value. “Come here. I'll kiss you goodnight.”

Jaacko paused as if still in doubt. But when McKensie nodded to affirm the offer, Jaacko overdid his response. He rushed to the bed and threw himself onto McKensie. His kiss was passionate as a woman's. And his hands went everywhere.

McKensie, too surprised to resist, was appalled by his own erection. He was having a degenerate, perverse, spontaneous reaction. His passion growing, he dimly recalled his hatred of the “fuck machine”. He held off Jaacko. “What are you?” he asked. Jaacko at first seemed not to hear. Then, when he paused, as if the question had just been processed, McKensie, to his own dismay, put his hand to Jaacko's mouth. “Don't answer,” he said. “It doesn't matter.” He clapped a hand on Jaacko's baby smooth buttock, and returned the kiss. He was, though he'd have denied it, starved for passion, for love.

What he felt, in fact, was lust, and he remembered the salesman's promise: Jaacko would enjoy it. In only a few moments, McKensie had penetrated, producing a slight – but still surprising – “Ow!” and was almost premature in his ejaculation, as his hands caressed the smooth chest, wonderfully, unexpectedly aware that under each nipple was muscle, not a breast.

THREE MONTHS LATER, McKensie never felt better in his life. Jaacko was tireless. They swam, rode, played tennis and golf. Jaacko learned with ease, and constantly encouraged McKensie to keep up – one more lap, one more

set, nine more holes – building McKensie's flagging endurance so that he felt years and years younger.

And their lovemaking was limited only by McKensie's imagination. Jaacko had no inhibitions, so McKensie was amazed to find himself losing his. It was a passionate adventure.

And they discussed books and the news and holotelegraphics: Jaacko wept as a life-sized Juliet stabbed herself and fell on the bosom of a poisoned Romeo there in McKensie's living room. Later he reenacted the scene from memory, kissing McKensie, as dead as Romeo, back to life.

It was an idyllic time, living a fantasy. Of course it was that – McKensie was no fool. Fantasy or not, he was not prepared to negate his senses just now. Reason could wait. Once in a while, he subjected himself to a mindscan, but the results only confirmed what he knew, that his new eros, however hidden it may once have been, was also very old. The hints of previous mindscans that a certain boyishness in Sunshine had attracted him originally had not distressed him then, nor did the reports now.

Still, he did have questions. One night, as his lips and tongue played around the bud at the end of Jaacko's foreskin, McKensie paused to ask when Jaacko's pubic hair would begin to grow.

"I'm twelve," Jaacko said. "Some boys start growing it before then, and others don't. I don't."

"But in a few months you'll be thirteen." McKensie repositioned himself to look into Jaacko's eyes, to see what puzzle lay there.

"Oh, no. I'm exactly the way you bought me. I don't grow. If you want me older, I think you'll have to take me back to HAI. I'm not sure, but I can find out. Do you want me to?"

"No." McKensie kissed Jaacko's nose. "You're perfect."

"Am I?" The android was startled – but pleased. He kissed McKensie's nose. Then sucked it, giggling.

How could they program that? McKensie asked himself. But he decided not to ask Jaacko. What would be the point?

ABOUT A YEAR LATER the house next door became vacant, was sold, and the new owners moved in. They were a small family, mother, father, and a boy almost eleven. His name was Dany Merola.

McKensie invited the Merola family to supper. Their food synthesizer had been put out of adjustment (as they always are) during the move. Jaacko happily agreed to amuse Dany and to push the buttons in the kitchen, while McKensie produced drinks and made conversation with Sarazin and Duessa.

Dany, however, kept eluding Jaacko in order to lean on the drinks synthesizer when McKensie made cocktails, or sit on the arm of his chair when he made conversation, or kneel at his feet when he was silent, gazing happily at McKensie's face, ruddy from daily outdoor exercise with Jaacko. This was especially distracting because Dany was wearing only a floppy collar and

suspenders attached to a loose skirt that hung, more or less, from his hips to the middle of his thighs. And the suspenders kept slipping. It was, McKensie knew, fashionable for younger boys to wear these, but usually over a contrasting body stocking. Too much of a wiry little body showed.

“Dany likes you,” said Sarazin as they went into dinner. “Dany likes you,” said Duessa as she moved his plate so her child could sit next to his host.

“I like you,” said Dany, suddenly kissing McKensie on the lips during dessert, licking chocolate mousse off McKensie’s tongue.

“I think you like Dany,” said Duessa, laughing, as they went away.

“Dany likes you,” said Jaacko. This was much later. It was an odd moment for conversation because Jaacko was face down, and McKensie was on top, preparing for a grand entrance.

McKensie paused. “Are you jealous?” he asked.

“HAI androids are incapable of jealousy,” Jaacko answered, but a tear was visible on his cheek, tracking the delicate facial hair.

“Who am I fucking right now? No,” McKensie corrected himself, “who am I about to fuck?”

“Me,” said Jaacko, and smiled. McKensie could not see the smile, and his hands felt for the less muscular parts of Jaacko, as if seeking what Dany offered in a body less developed, more at the edge of its sexuality. As if, for the first time, McKensie found Jaacko sophisticated. And, indeed, what was it in all the range of sex between them that Jaacko did not know?

A FEW WEEKS LATER McKensie and Jaacko were lying in the sun in the back courtyard. They had done sixty laps of the small pool – McKensie’s limit so far. As he lay, winded, his head on Jaacko’s thigh, McKensie idly began to lick Jaacko’s penis into an erection. (Jaacko’s model was programmed for ten to twelve ejaculations per day, as some owners liked to use them at parties, sharing them with friends. So – though neither knowing nor caring why – Jaacko was always ready for McKensie’s modest demands.)

Little did they know that Dany had come in the house by the unlocked module track entry, had looked here and there, and now was covertly watching the scene by the pool. Jaacko soon adjusted his position to do unto McKensie as he was prepared for McKensie to do unto him, and for a time the two were oblivious. At least, McKensie was oblivious, even if Jaacko was not (who can say?), and Jaacko was busy enough to be unaware of Dany’s obscene voyeurism. By the time they emerged from expressions of mutual esteem, Dany had fled.

Though unwitnessed, Dany’s visit had consequences. The very next day, Jaacko brought McKensie an envelope that Dany had delivered. On it was written in an adult’s hand – Sarazin’s probably – “Mr. McKensie/PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL”. Jaacko pointedly left McKensie alone to open it. Inside was a carefully printed note.

I love you. J. isnt a real boy, I bet you anything. A billion dollars.

Ask him to go to sleep at three OCLOCK, and I will SHOW YOU SOMETHING.

Love, Dany xxxxxxXXXXXXXXXXXXxxxXX

McKensie put the note in his pocket and looked at his watch. 2:55. At three, he told Jaacko to go upstairs to his room and sleep. Jaacko did not hesitate. (Note: He could not resist the command because of the Second Law of Robotics, formulated by one I. S. Imov before the general introduction of humanoid robots, in the mid-twentieth century. Besides obedience (second law), the laws require the safety of humans and, if human safety is not at issue, robot self protection. Had Jaacko known for certain what was in the envelope, he might have hesitated, on account of the third law, but still he would have obeyed.) A moment or two later, Dany came in through the open entry, closed it, and climbed onto McKensie's lap.

"How did you know about Jaacko?" McKensie asked between kisses.

"Daddy figured it out. He says I need a haircut. See?" He pulled on his hair. He certainly did need a haircut. He was top heavy with blond curls. Somehow they fit, in McKensie's mind, with Dany's clown face and pug nose. Less pleasing were his dirty fingernails, which McKensie noticed while a grubby hand was unzipping the fly on McKensie's slaps. "Come on. Get naked like you was with Jaacko by the pool yesterday."

"Yesterday? What do you know about yesterday?" McKensie did not actually resist, but he gave no help when the zipper snagged and Dany had to reach in over it.

Dany giggled. "I'm a spy. I know *everything!*" He had hold of McKensie's erection.

"What are you going to show me? Your note said you would show me something."

"This," Dany said. He put his mouth onto McKensie's cock and slurped. He looked up at McKensie and laughed. "I can do it better than Jaacko, I bet. A billion dollars."

"Try," McKensie said.

"Me first," Dany answered, and rolled away onto the floor. It took minutes of struggle before McKensie got Dany's clothes off to expose his tiny penis, and when McKensie mouthed it, Dany twisted away screaming with laughter. A half hour later, McKensie concluded that, if he'd taken Dany's bet, he'd have won. Dany was gone, but his image remained. Eyes shut, McKensie masturbated, lying on the living room rug. His orgasm, in his imagination, shot up Dany's little pug nose.

"NO," MCKENSIE SAID. "He's not jealous. He sure is unhappy though."

The HAI adjustments manager looked stern. "If you want a refund, you'll have to accept a pretty big discount. Unless –" he consulted the file on his scanner. "Ah, no. No, Mr. McKensie, your purchase was an insurance credit on

your wife's life, so, technically, it wasn't your purchase at all."

"I'm not after a refund," McKensie growled. "Look," he added more reasonably, "I just don't have enough affection to go around. I mean, I never thought this situation could arise, not even after –" He paused, uncertain.

"If you're going to allege that the robot was over programmed on personal attachments, I think you should know that our lawyers –"

"Fuck your lawyers. I'm not complaining."

"Well, all you can expect from us is minimal reprogramming and storage, both of which will be at your expense." The tone was final.

McKensie ignored it. "What does storage involve?"

Reassured, the manager became more conciliatory. "We have to erase the entire RAM. That's an unavoidable part of the closing down process. The ROM, of course, will not be changed, as I've said, unless you want to pay for that too."¹

McKensie sighed. "When can we do it?"

"We can do it, quite without your help, now."

McKensie thought of all that RAM. Not just tennis or swimming, or even Romeo. Being used to McKensie's petty irritations – not to mention cocktails and dinners – had not required reprogramming, and it was all stored now. And now, now, it would be lost forever. He tried to be cheerful as he brought Jaacko to the inner office. "This man is going to make an adjustment."

Jaacko was weeping without shame. "It's because of Dany, isn't it? It's so I won't love you so much."

"Not exactly." McKensie felt guilty about the deception.

"You *do* love me some still, don't you, McKensie?"

McKensie kissed Jaacko for a long time. "Really, Mr. McKensie," the manager said.

"Fuck off," McKensie said. "I want to show him how much I still love him."

"Not in my office!" It would not be dignified.

"Why not? You got a better place?"

The manager went out for coffee while McKensie and Jaacko abandoned modesty on the office couch. It was good. Yet to McKensie, now, Jaacko seemed overgrown and oversexed.

DANY BEGAN SPENDING most of the time with McKensie. He was a challenge to McKensie's good will. It was a small thing, but Dany often got into bed at night without bathing. "I got to take a shower at school tomorrow anyway," he would say. McKensie didn't mind too much. The smell was the

1 Since 2034, EPROM (erasable programmable read-only memory) has been standard of SYNCOM holographic bubble systems, such as those used by Universal Robotics, but the never-quite-accurate term ROM was even earlier fixed into the language, RAM (random access memory) is improperly distinguished from ROM (ROM has always been RAM as well as ROM), but only purists, like the people for whom this note is written, complain.

price he paid for 100% organism. Another small thing: Dany never liked a quickie in the morning; he was sleepy and grouchy, especially if he had watched the holographics instead of doing his homework. That was an irritant too. He invariably insisted on watching *Asteroid Cadets*, wrestling matches, and spaceball games.

Every morning after Dany went to school, McKensie searched the house for shoes, socks, cockbags, skirts, shirts, collars, and other stuff. The night before, Dany would have danced around the house, stripping and flirting. Or when McKensie was enjoying an opera, Dany would leave his homework and sing a flat soprano, dancing naked among the images. Even when the two of them went for dinner with Dany's family, Dany would try to take McKensie's penis out and play with it if the conversation was too serious to interest him. It was intolerable behavior.

So for the first time in his life, McKensie was violently, hopelessly in love. He adored Dany's wiry, smelly body, sucked his toes and ears and licked his knees and between his buttocks and all over his stomach and chest and back, and sometimes got to lick his cock – and usually got nothing much back that he didn't achieve with his own hand.

He and Dany quarreled, yet Sarazin and Duessa were no help at all. If McKensie told Dany to stay at the homework console until it signaled “off”, and *Plutonic Wars* was on, the boy would run home and watch there, and let McKensie either sleep alone or (usually) come back courting Dany, much to his parents' amusement (and McKensie's humiliation).

McKensie lived on hope and desire. There were moments of calm when Dany, ever so sweetly, would rub and kiss the places he knew were most sensitive to McKensie, and sometimes – McKensie lived for these moments – would bring him to climax and watch the creamy little fountain, and even say, “I love you.” Such moments made the weeks between them seem worth all the anger and frustration.

Then, almost in a day, Dany's penis grew a whole inch, and, on the sixteenth of June, seven months after his eleventh birthday, he became seminiferous. When his surprise gave way to realization of what was happening, Dany grabbed McKensie's ears and screamed “WOW!” He lay for a moment panting and then jumped out of bed and ran naked next door to tell Sarazin. Sarazin, awakened from a nap, nevertheless whooped in delight and, seeing McKensie come in (naked too, having forgotten to dress in his elation), opened a bottle of actual, real California champagne (not the cheap French stuff). In a moment Duessa – after Dany had used his rump to cover McKensie's genitals, for Duessa was easily offended by immodesty – joined the celebration. They formed a beautiful picture: the proud parents, the nurturing friend, and, in the friend's arms, the naked boy, his penis already erect again.

Once Dany knew what ejaculation felt like, he became solicitous of McKensie's orgasms, eliciting them with a busy tongue, and letting them flow into his mouth – and then holding the cum until McKensie was at peace –

instead of rushing to spit it out as had been his custom, whenever he had deigned to mouth it at all. Sex with Dany was mature, reciprocal. If McKensie had been in love before, now he was enslaved. And slavery was joyous for several months. There were ups and downs, of course, but overall these were the most wonderful days of their lives, for Dany too was joyous. At one point McKensie kept count and found that for ten whole days he didn't masturbate himself once, and he was coming twice for every once that Dany splashed sperm into McKensie.

Good sense said that it couldn't last, yet McKensie never thought of the end.

It was more than half a year later that McKensie became aware that Dany was having sex on the side. Frantically, McKensie rationalized the facts into fantasy, lest he go mad.

Then there were three successive weeks when – on Tuesdays and Thursdays – Dany either avoided sexual activity altogether or tantalized McKensie with flirtatious delays. Twice he went so far as to sleep at home.

McKensie reviewed Dany's weekly program and decided the criminal must be the tennis coach. He switched the boy to a female teacher. Dany sulked, furious, but admitted nothing.

Then it was Fridays, Space Scout nights. McKensie stored up his rage until, the case beyond all doubt, he threatened the Spacemaster with bodily harm. Dany sulked again, still admitting nothing.

Then, in one week, on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, Dany came home smiling smugly and refused to touch McKensie. Obviously one of the teachers at school had been getting what McKensie lived for. But the school had over two hundred teachers, and McKensie did not have a single clue to help him find which one.

In despair, he appealed to Sarazin.

"What can I do?" the father said. "He's over seven. You know the law as well as I do."

"Maybe," Duessa cut in, "you should have taken out sexual adoption papers."

"I guess," said Sarazin, "you wanted to keep him without paying us, right?"

Defeated, wordless – even his great capacity for rage was lost – McKensie went home.

Now was no time for light thoughts. Revenge. The problem was who to murder. Dany was out of the question: McKensie was not Othello, and – God knew – Dany was no Desdemona.

Thinking as carefully as acute depression allowed, he decided to commit suicide. Yes, he could kill Dany first, but some absurd sentimentality denied that option. No. He got to work on his telemeter keyboard. He did not wait for Dany to come "home". He filed his application with the Terminal Agency, getting a strong query which forced him to re-identify twice. His precious

mindscreens had been filed at the TA, as everyone's was, and the past did not credit despair. Then he asked his lawyer to draw up a will leaving everything to Dany. That would answer Sarazin. After convincing his lawyer of his seriousness, he called up and gathered the documents identifying his possessions for re-transcription to the lawyer.

Plowing through the electronic "paper", he lost interest again and again, forcing himself to deal with details that involved Sunshine's family, who were entitled to their share of the community property. Community property. Almost listless, he noticed one item in particular. He looked again. Then he sat, staring at it a long time. Then calmly, quietly, he telemetered the TA and his lawyer, canceling his appointments and shyly accepting their felicitations. Finally, he fed one more message into the telemeter and switched it off.

LATE THAT NIGHT, McKensie returned to Duessa and Sarazin. Dany was there, smirking. "I don't feel," McKensie said, "that I can continue the responsibility."

"I'm not gonna move out," Dany said, suddenly aware.

He was at his sexiest, wearing only a see-through cock bag. His still-wiry body had added a little muscular bulk, particularly on the upper chest. But what showed most vividly to McKensie was the erection of a penis that had long outgrown the cockbag.

"It's really his decision," Duessa said to McKensie.

"You've had him nearly two years," Sarazin added. "He has certain rights, you know."

"He can sacrifice those rights, as you well know, if he doesn't behave as I have a right to expect."

"Boys will be boys," sniffed Duessa. "That's a legal truism."

"I'm not gonna move out," Dany repeated, putting his left foot onto the seat of his chair, raising his buttocks so that McKensie could see his anus. Seeing McKensie's look, he grinned.

"You're having sex with everybody who's willing, and you still expect me to feed, house and clothe you."

"I am not! Not everybody. You don't even *know*."

"I am not going to bicker about it."

Dany got up and leaned on McKensie's arm. "Lemme whisper something." McKensie inclined his head. Dany began munching a hickie onto McKensie's neck.

Irritated, McKensie drew his most potent weapon. "Incorrigible sexual delinquent."

"You wouldn't!" Duessa was alarmed.

"It would be messy. But you don't know, and I do, what the Spacemaster told me."

"It isn't true, whatever he said," Dany said, now angry.

"Frankly, Dany, I think you'd be smart to hook up with him again."

“You'd scare him.”

“Not any more.” McKensie smiled benignly. “So we're agreed? He moves home today.”

Dany looked to Sarazin and saw no hope there. What he saw was anger, and it was not at McKensie. Dany looked at Duessa, who shrugged. “Will I –” Dany began, “will I be able to come see you?” He could easily win, given time.

“Sure, Dany,” McKensie said. “Just like you did the first time, any time the entry's unlocked, just come on in.”

Dany knew better than to accept that. “Will you lock it?”

McKensie took a moment to relish a certain satisfaction. “Wait and see.” Smiling enigmatically, he rose and left. But at home, he synthesized a martini and, drinking it, tasted in it his own salt tears.

THE “BOY”, so familiar that McKensie almost cried out at the blank non-recognition, was properly dressed. He didn't carry a suitcase this time (it, and his other clothes, were in an upstairs closet), but carried only his small bag for energy units. The “boy” smiled at McKensie expectantly.

Pained, McKensie sensed something was wrong. It was not the same as before. McKensie had been prepared, yet the actuality hurt. He had not, that first day, been glad to see the android. Now he was distressed that the android was not better prompted, that the RAM had been wiped so completely that the boy did not know what it was McKensie wanted – without the necessity of asking. It was as if Jaacko was a dearly loved total amnesiac (which, of course, he was).

“Come,” McKensie said. “Give me a hug and a kiss.”

It was like a magic word. The “boy” dropped his energy units, ran and leapt into McKensie's arms. They kissed, fell to the floor and wrestled each other out of their clothes. As had happened once before, the ROM was intensely sensual, and it was prepared for a passion McKensie thought he had lost. He played through a repertory of lustful actions, delaying the climaxes, testing and finding. Then in a simultaneity that was more than coincidence – it was finished. They separated, and McKensie placed a final kiss on the splendid nose. He said, “I have a name for you. Jaacko.”

“Wow! Nobody's got a name like that! I love it.”

“And I'm going to teach you to swim, and ride horse- back, and play tennis and golf.”

Jaacko stretched out his sturdy, naked body ecstatically. “You're going to do all that?”

“Come upstairs.” McKensie led the way. He skipped the old library, and touched a control button on the other side of the bath. “This is our room. See. I've got a big double bed for us.”

Jaacko bounced on the bed delightedly.

Now was soon enough for the rest. “And down the hall's a library for you. Look. Just beyond the bathroom.”

“Books! Real books!” Although McKensie anticipated Jaacko's delight, it still moved him, like the death of Juliet.

“The bath's in there.”

Jaacko, cock erect again, hugged McKensie. “With water? Water and soap? Can we take a shower together now? Can we? Both of us? We've already got our clothes off.”

“Sure. Right now.”

Jaacko paused. “I guess,” he said, a tear appearing in one eye, “I guess I'm the luckiest boy in the whole world.” He hugged McKensie, and held him as they moved down the hall.

They passed the window overlooking the module track, and McKensie saw Dany, apparently walking back from the house entry. He turned and stared, frowning, up at the window. Jaacko stopped to look, too. “Who's that?” Jaacko asked.

McKensie paused, surprised at the question. “Nobody important. The boy next door.”

“He's about my age,” Jaacko said. “Will we play together?”

“I don't know.” McKensie turned Jaacko away from the window with a touch. “Start the shower,” he said, knowing Jaacko would figure out how.

After another moment at the window, “Fuck you, buster,” McKensie whispered. Then he lingered, knowing he was invisible from below, wondering how long Dany would stay. McKensie heard the shower and Jaacko's familiar cry of pleasure. He hesitated only a few moments, before, amused by his own foolishness, he followed Jaacko. *Best if I don't know how long*, he thought.