

# The Amethyst Encounter

by Casimir Dukahz

*Twenty-six years ago the Oliver Layton Press of New York launched into the boy-love world Casimir Dukahz' s first published novel, "The Asbestos Diary"-a peculiarly American blend of humour, tall tale, word play, the erotic, and boundless optimism. It was the first English language work of fiction which celebrated boy-love as something fun, precious and thoroughly normal. In the years that followed it became a kind of underground classic. Dukahz wrote three more books (one, "Growing Old Disgracefully," published The Acolyte Press and all offered to mail-order customers) and has contributed stories to PAN Magazine and the Panthology series. In his latest literary project, a novel which The Acolyte Press hopes to publish soon, the irrepressible "Duke" is reincarnated backwards in time into a boy-actor at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre.*

THE WEEPING-WILLOW tree spoke to me! On an unseasonably cold cloudy April midnight in a strange New Jersey town, the tree said, "Hey, mister!"

OK, so I was a trifle tiddy, a smidgen super-mellowed, aftermath of a long-time-no-see reunion with an old Army pal who unaware of my consuming puer de vivre (boy-love is the State of the Art sex) was himself depressingly hetero but delectably possessed of a well-stocked liquor cabinet so I might've over-indulged a wee bit and thus now been afflicted by a brief audial hallucination. Then again, it's possible that this particular willow was a mutant, result of the recent Russian nuclear fall-out. On the other hand, since many apparently sane persons talk to plants, it's not too surprising if the shrubbery occasionally talks back—though perhaps yawningly bored by the inane conversation.

The willow addresses me a second time. "Hey, mister, you deaf? I'm talk in' to you!"

It must be a very young tree as its octave-ranging tones are thrillingly reminiscent of a lad's voice hovering on the verge of the wunderbar CHANGE when little males begin to secrete milky nectar while little females, alas! commence to ooze stinky gore. (Why is that old whore, Mommie Nature, so inhumane to her own sex?! Far's I know, mares and ewes and some sows never have the Curse though of course it's extremely difficult to get them to confide in you about such delicate matters.) But I'd better reply to my arboreal interrogator forthwith lest he, she or it has a Venus' Fly-Trap complex and becomes hostile.

"Yes, Master Weeping-Willow if such you be, I heard you. So what do you want—a handkerchief to dry your tears. A shoulder to cry on? A tree-surgeon? If you can walk, come out here under the street-light so I can get a look at you."

A snicker sounds, followed by a veritable Vision slowly emerging from under the low-hanging branches. As I'd hoped and surmised, it's a boy (given to tricks?)—slim, cuddly, smallish with an engagingly elfin quality, seemingly straddling the Generation-Gap between 11 or 12 or 13 and scantily clad in skin-tight blue cut-offs scarcely covering his crotch and exposing shapely

thighs to evoke sighs. White T-shirt above, black canvas slip-ons with red soles below, no socks, Ivory-clean ankles. My blood-pressure sky-rockets.

"Well, hello!" I ejaculate tremulously. "I'm relieved to see you're a biped like me. For a whole minute there I thought trees had tongues!"

"I fooled you, huh?" the Vision smirks, grinning. "Can I bum a butt offa you?"

"Sorry—I don't smoke."

"Me neither—unless I get a free fag."

"So what's this business with the tree? You could be a fey woodland creature or a lost leprechaun but more likely you were hiding from the Fuzzola or a similar hazard."

The sweet stranger shrugs. "Not this time. It's just that it's warmer underneath the branches. Damn weather's gone crazy—it was summer this afternoon when I left the house."

It was then I noticed the youngster was shivering. My motherly instincts instantly aroused, I slip out of my authentic Made-in-Brooklyn Scottish hairy tweed jacket. "Come closer and let me put this on you. Can't let a nice Warm Body like you catch cold, can we?"

Kiddy gives me a quizzical glance then advances warily and I help him into the garment. Just touching his hard young flesh through his T-shirt gives me a mild but intensely pleasurable electric shock—about 69 volts, morales. The jacket engulfs him, imparting a fetchingly waiflike appeal and my libido longs to caress him but the time is not yet—if ever. Too often the Great Game is a gamble that you can't win for losing, little laddy-bucks usually being elusive as quicksilver, practical as loan-sharks, unpredictable as a horse-race—but a rare sometimes like once in a blue moon they can be amoral as a condom if you happen to capture their errant fancy. (According to Judianne Densest-Gooper, male minors consent far more readily than adults do—but that's just female chauvinist sexist propaganda.)

Close up I discern that the youngling boasts a face to launch a thousand slips—of propriety and I am lost beyond the Point of No Return. Neatly-trimmed thatch of auburn hair with bronze highlights; smooth oval countenance with heavily-lashed big eyes of a startling Maxfield Parrish blue-violet, amethystine allure. Slender slightly snubbed nose, generous full-lipped mouth revealing gleaming white teeth—but is that rounded chin just an iota too firm, betokening an off-putting young No-Sayer? Even so, the kid's as sexy a petrified hard-on and I am doubly intoxicated by his boyish beauty.

"Lordalmighty!" I exclaim. "Where'd you get those eyes? Are you Liz Taylor's son, perchance?"

Kiddy shrugs. "Could be—she slept around a lot, I hear." "But always with a marriage-certificate clutched in one hot hand."

The boy nods. "Besides, I was raised in a Jesuit orphanage in El Lay."

"Poor you! It never rains in Southern California, the song says, but the streets of Los Angeles are nose-deep in snow the year around."

"Yeah, except the snow is now 'crack' and that's a bitch for sure. Jeez, I hate drugs! I'm even leery of aspirin."

"You're wise beyond your years," I praise, noting that he has stopped shivering. "Are you warm enough now?"

"Warm as toast but you know something? Your jacket needs a shave!"

"That's impossible! It's only a year old—a mere infant!" Kiddy utters a bark of laughter. Encouraging note. If a boy laughs with you or even at you, the sweet bird is almost in hand.

"What's your name, mister?"

"You can call me Rue."

"Like in kangaroo?"

"No—like in I rue all the lovely lads I never met or meeting them was too shy to take them home and so tragic so forth. What's your name?"

"Regan."

"Is that Reagan as in Ronald or Regan as in King Lear's daughter?"

"It's Regan with one 'a' and I ain't been in any daughters. You waitin' for somebody?"

"I phoned for a taxi over an hour ago but I guess the cabbie got lost."

"This town's too small to get lost in. It's Saturday night so the guy's prob'ly celebrating in some gin-mill." He gives me a measuring glance. "You're kinda pissed yourself ain't you?"

"Frankly, my boy, I'm drunk on booze and your presence!" I hiccup politely.

"Then maybe you'll spring for bus-fare. See, I had two Kennedy half-dollars with me but they musta fell outa my pocket—look!" He pulls out the lining of his right cut-offs' pocket which displays a ragged tear in the cloth.

"H'm!" I from experience point out: "I think you made that slit yourself so you could play pocket-pool."

Regan yips his laughing bark. "Wrong. That hole's in my left pocket."

"Ah, yes, the left hand is the wet-dreamer, as some oversexed lady novelist wrote."

"Dry dreamer, man. I save the sticky stuff for my pickups."

My pulses pound. "Come to think of it, you picked me up, didn't you? And with the traditional ploy—asking for a cigarette." "You complaining?"

"Of course not," I say hastily. "Just... uh, remarking." "Then don't change the subject, which was bus-fare." "You've got it—unless you're wanting to go to Florida or some other far somewhere."

"No, only a few miles away and I'll pay you back when we get up to the house."

"No need for that. I'll sorta like take it out in trade."

The boy leers. "Hey, I thought you said you were shy!"

Shamefully, I blush a little. "Normally I am but somehow you inspire me to bold derring-do, like making hey-hey while the sun shines and suchlike shenanigans. It's always boys who cause boy-lovers, you know."

"I figured that's where you're at—I can always tell." He pauses to scowl up the street. "Now where did that damn bus get to? It shoulda been here long before this."

"Maybe the bus-driver is in some gin mill getting soused to the gills with my cabbie," I offer brightly.

"Don't even say that, man—it's black cat, broken mirror bad luck! No, here she comes, Old Faithful—never on time."

Stepping into the street, the kid waves both arms with wild abandon—the bus-driver blind as a bat? The ponderous vehicle almost runs Regan down before it lurches to a stop and the door rasps open. We enter. The driver is a hard-faced female about forty, straggle-haired and bleary-eyed and if she hasn't an ample snootful then I'm a WCTU teetotaler. Sighing, I hope for the best and wincingly pay our stiff fares—in boy-love it's ever the man who pays, don't you know it?!

The half-dozen passengers seem either dozing or Saturday-night stunned from unseemly revels. Regan nudges me. "Sit way in the back—it's more private." The bus rumbles on and on, then with a clash of gears starts to climb.

"Exactly whereabouts do you live?" I ask, faintly alarmed for the ascending road seems full of pot-holes every one of which the driver hits with bone-jarring emphasis.

"Way up at the end of nowhere," the boy grins. "You're in the Watchung Mountains now, man—tallest in New Jersey, so they say."

I peer out the dirty window. At last the full moon has managed to free herself from encompassing dark clouds and is shining half-heartedly down upon a lunar landscape of sorts.

"You call these mountains?" I disparage. "They're nothing but hills with delusions of grandeur!"

"If you had to climb them on foot you'd call them mountains. See that valley down there where the highway runs? About a quarter-mile farther on is a house where George Washington slept during the American Revolution."

"Seems like old George spent more time in bed than on the battlefield," I say sourly.

"How do you know—were you there?!" the kid scoffs.

"Well, no—I was a conscientious objector at the time."

Snickering, Regan punches me not ungently on my near biceps. (Boys frequently express their semi-affection in this manner and I've got the bruises to prove it.) "Hey, man, you're really something, ain't you?! I'm kinda beginning to like you—so far, that is."

"I fervently hope so! Have you ever heard the story about old George's sleeping habits? He slumbered sound as the proverbial log only more so and since there weren't any alarm-clocks in those days, he always went to bed with one of his drummer-boys whose job it was to wake his boss up for Reville or whatever. And if George was feeling lonely and in need of a bit of sexual tom-foolery, the boy was ever happy to oblige."

"Oh, come on, man!" Regan growls, plainly shocked. "Not the Father of our Country—First in Peace, First in War, First in the Hearts of his Countrymen!"

"Emperors did it, Kings did it—so why not our first President doing it? You can't dictate to Cupid who you'll lose your heart to, you know'."

"But Washington was married—to Martha somebody."

"So are a lot of too-greedy bisexuals. I don't approve of that myself—I'm strictly boy-oriented. Of course, if you work both sides of the street, you get the best of both possible worlds but in that case I don't see how you can be sincere to either sex."

Face averted, my young companion lapses into scowling silence. Alas, I have with no real proof impugned his hero, his idol and shall probably suffer for it. If I could just learn to keep my big mouth shut except for food and sex, I'd be a helluva lot better off. Cautiously I essay a safer subject. "Why did you leave the Orphanage, Regan? Did you have a tough time there?"

"The orphans were OK and the food was pretty good but then the Director took a liking to me for some fool reason and if I didn't service him every damn night he got jealous as hell and carried on like crazy."

"He was probably mesmerized by your blue-violet eyes—can't say I blame him 'cause I'm a victim, too!"

"He wasn't interested in my eyes," the boy hoots. "Then his fat wife with boobs like

watermelons got into the act, wanted to make it a threesome, for Christ sake! Me and her woulda been like Jonah in the Whale, it was the final straw that broke my back so I cut out. Hadda hustle myself all the way back East but I didn't make out too good 'cause guys like you mostly go for blonds and I'm dark-haired."

"Gentlemen prefer blonds, huh?"

"I don't know no gentlemen!"

"Well, speaking for myself, I'd pass up three blonds just to get next to a yummy dark-haired lad like you."

Kiddy barks a sardonic laugh. "But are you in your right mind?!"

"No, as a matter of fact. The Divine Madness has overwhelmed me and where I'll end up nobody knows. Tell me, did you hate to have to hustle just to keep food in your belly?"

"Hell, no! It's easy bucks layin' on my back but I'll tell you right now I never lay on my belly 'cept for AL!"

"That's right my or your alley so we're practically soul-mates already." It's reassuring to know that my little friend is bed-broken—virgins tend to be too skittish for complete conjunctive bliss. Suddenly a dismal thought strikes me without warning. "Regan, are you living with some man now?"

"What else?"

"But won't he object to your bringing me to his home?" "He won't object—that you can bet on!"

"Why not?"

"Cause he's dead, that's why."

"Saints preserve us!" I groan. Here's a pretty kettle of fish! "Regan, you'd better explain—I'm all at sea."

"It happened last Wednesday—didn't you see it on TV?" "I don't possess a boob-tube."

"It was in all the papers, too—big headlines: 'LOCAL MAFIA HOOD KILLED IN ATLANTIC CITY CASINO!!' See, this guy—his name was Jake Guzik—went down there to gamble which he did about once a month."

"How long have you been living with him?"

"Since last January when he picked me up outside Trenton, the capital of New Jersey and an asshole town, if you wanta know! There I was—broke, cold, hungry my shoes fallin' off my feet and some bastard hunk of Fuzz in a nice warm overcoat grabs me by the arm and tells me to

get outa town but pronto—they don't want the likes of me hangin' around, seeing what I could steal. So I scrambled, 6 inches of snow on the highway, wind-chill about 69 degrees below zero Fahrenheit and I'm just about to give up, lay down and kick the bucket—they say freezin' to death ain't too bad a way to go—when Guzik in his big old Lincoln Continental comes helling along and he stops, opens the door and says, "Hop in, sonny!"—and, man, I was never so glad to see anyone in my whole life!"

"Still and all," I say, jealously, "I hate the thought of you having sex with a Mafia hood!"

"So what? He treated me swell, fed me, bought me clothes, gave me spending money and he was clean—no AIDS or herpes or any other sociable disease." The kid cocks an askance eye at me. "I sure hope you can say the same, man!"

"I'm Mr. Clean in person!" I assure him, modestly. "Why, I've never even had an anti-social disease. Uh, maybe I'm being too nosey here but since Guzik, even though now deceased, was my competitor in Illicit Pleasures—did he know his business?"

"Between you'n me—and not to speak ill of the dear departed—he was like lousy, couldn't blow worth a fart in a piss pot."

"Too many teeth?"

"Yeah, and buck-teeth at that! When I came, he'd get all excited and nip me a little—I still got tiny teeth-marks on my papoose."

"Prepuce—a common occupational hazard. By the way, I'm blessed with store-teeth—at night they come out and stare at you from a glass of water."

"We oughta hit it off like a house afire, then—though I ain't promisin' a thing, mind you!"

" 'Twas ever thus," I mournful. "A torrent of unpromises followed by a rain-check no-performance."

"Jeez, I ain't that off-putting if you—hey, we're here!" Regan yanks the communication-cord and the bus clanks to a stop, the door shudders open.

"Good-night, ma'am," I say to the driver as we clamber out but she just glares at me with woozy contempt and dry-spits. Can she possibly suspect the Wildean designs I have upon my young companion?

We are standing on a wind-swept plateau with not a habitation or other signs of civilization in sight. The moon is almost cloud-obscured once more, it's colder than ever and a light drizzle adds the final touch to our misery. Now I am

the shivering one!

"Where in the name of God are we?" I mumble. "This looks like the hind-end of nowhere."

Kiddy brays a burst of laughter. "Keep your pecker up, man, the worst is yet to come!" He points. "Home, sweet home is just behind that grove of fir-trees over yonder. There's a sorta cow-path to it, see?"

The trees seem a mile away and the path is virtually non-existent, could ominously be an ancient Indian trail where we palefaces could be ill-met by faint moonlight by a horde of firewater-maddened redskins on the warpath for invading their Reservation. Though I'm almost as bald as a Chihuahua, it must still hurt to be scalped!

I turn to the boy. "Master Custer," I quaver, "I don't wanna go!"

"What are you talking about, man? In two shakes of a lamb's tail we'll be safe and sound in front of a nice warm fire, winin' and dinin' and then to bed!" The kiddy leers with shameless invitation.

"Well, since you put it like that, I guess I can tough it out," I say, heartened.

"No sweat—just follow me." He guffaws. "I won't lead you astray."

Numbly I stumble along in the wake of Regan as fleet guide—too fleet for by the time we at long last reach our destination I am sopping-wet, my feet hurt and I am huffing and puffing like an ailing steam locomotive. Oh, Lord, how do I get into situations like this anyhow? Did some wicked fairy godmother put a hex on me when I was born?

"Buck up, man," the boy says, clapping me on the back. "From here on it's all roses."

I look around me. Small, square, one-storey, constructed of local stone, the house seems more of a fortress than a domicile with its windowless walls and single iron-studded oaken door.

"Is this a mini-copy of Fort Knox?" I inquire dubiously.

"Just wait—I guarantee you'll like the inside." Kiddy bends and digs out an odd-shaped key from his shoe, inserts it in the lock—and starts to count. "One turn to the right, two turns to the left, three turns to the right!"

"A combination lock and key!" I marvel.

"Yeah—but sometimes I get the sequence bass-ackward. Let's see how I made out this time." He takes a deep breath and delivers a mighty kick to the middle of the stout portal. "Open, Sesame! you bastard!" he growls and the door smoothly, silently glides open.

Gleefully Regan shakes his clasped hands above his head in self-congratulation. "Welcome to my humble home, Ruede-doo! Feel free to enjoy everything in it except me!"

He touches an inside switch beside the entrance and immediately the place is bathed in light. A big room, skylights, opaque now, spaced overhead, walls painted a restful green. Huge



fieldstone fireplace with imitation polar-bear pelt fronting it, flanking leather couches. Colorful Mexican scatter-rugs on the beige ceramic-tiled floor; TV, radio, telephone, bulging bookcase conveniently at hand. Dining-table and four chairs near the open kitchen on the far left, bathroom on the right... and a magnet to my eyes, in one corner a double bed, snowy sheet and blue blanket turned down—the lit d'amour awaiting lovers?! Knowledgeably I prod the mattress.

"Nice!" I approve. "Lots of bounce. A Beautyrest, I presume?"

Stirring up the dormant fire into a cheery blaze, the boy shrugs. "When I'm on it, it's a beauty rest." He shifts to grin at me. "Sorry I can't say the same about you! Hey, get out of them wet clothes or you'll catch your death. I'll get you Guzik's bathrobe."

A HALF-HOUR LATER, after a hot bath where I sneakily suggested showering a deux but which Regan promptly vetoed, we are seated in front of a cozy fire—I in a voluminous but too short red bathrobe and sparkling Regan swathed in an immense bath-towel modestly secured by two oversized safety-pins—and partaking of kiddy-prepared ham sandwiches, toasted-cheese sandwiches, mustard, pickles, relish on the side, followed by strawberry ice-cream, devil's food cake and a half-gallon of strong steaming coffee with real cream from a contented cow, yet! I compliment my charming host on his delectable cuisine, and offer effusive thanks.

"Don't thank me, man. Guzik paid for it—I just threw it together."

Looking up and then down, I intone, "Thank you, Mr. Guzik, wherever you are!" I pause to ponder. "Regan, do you think your Mafia friend has the slightest hope of Heaven?"

"Naw! He's probably in Hell, roastin' over a slow fire." He looks away, embarrassed. "When I heard he was dead I said a prayer for his soul—not that it will do any good." He eyes me defiantly.

"I'm sure it will," I say firmly. "The man was kind to you and that should count for something."

Suddenly the boy yawns prodigiously. "Oh, man, I'm long overdue for some shut-eye."

"Me, too—I'm all set for the loving arms of Morpheus."

Kiddy frowns. "Who's he? One of your friggin' boys?"

"No, he's just a myth—a figment of my over-heated imagination. Where shall I sleep—on one of the couches?" "They're soft enough but they're awful slippery so you can share the bed with me—but no fooling around, man, or I'll clobber you!"

"More than eminently trustworthy Bankers' Trust, you can trust me, kiddo, for I won't so much as touch a hair of your head or any other exciting place."

"I ain't got hair any other place."

"That's thrilling to know—smooth sweet boy-flesh all over. Yummy!" I cough slightly. "Of course, if you should get a nightmare I might just gently touch you on the shoulder to wake you up."

"I never have nightmares and I sleep light so watch it!" "Yes, your Boyjesty. Your wish is my command. Uh, you don't happen to wet the bed, I hope!"

"NO! Do you?"

"Not since my infancy when my diaper leaked."

Kiddy snickers. "I bet you were a pisser for sure!"

We approach the bed. "So this is where you and Guzik slept," I say, somewhat acidly, green-eyed jealousy.

"Oh, man, I didn't sleep with him 'cause I was afraid to." "Why was that?"

"Hell, he musta weighed around 300 pounds and he was only about five feet two so he was damn near as wide as he was tall, so if I slept with him and he rolled onto me during the night I'd've been squashed flatter'n a pancake! What I did was—after he'd finished playing my flesh-flute, I'd go and bed down by the fireplace."

"Well, you don't have to be scared of me on that score," I point out, "for if I weigh a measily 150 pounds it's 'cause I got an anvil in my hip-pocket!"

Still wearing the bath-towel, Regan climbs between the sheets where he doffs towel, flinging it over the headboard. Damn! in general I admire modest lads but this is carrying modesty too frustrated far! Dolefully, I remove Guzik's red bathrobe, fold it neatly and place it on a chair. I am encased in a pair of Jake's tent-like crimson pajamas, his initials embroidered in tiny scarlet letters on the pocket. Too evidently Mafiosos are partial to shades of red—especially blood-red!

I slither into our unconnubial couch, panting to see an arousing bit of juvenile fleshly vistas but the satanic kidlet has his back turned to me and is wearing boxer-shorts. Curses! My villainous intent is foiled again! (Superb shoulders, though, and a spinal column tenderly Corinthian.)

As a (not golden) rule, when I sleep with a succulent ball-bearing I never actually sleep, just cat-nap in fits and starts betwixt which with gentle furtive tongue, lips and fingers I tremulously feel, grope, caress and palpate the private and public parts of my perhaps precociously pubertal partner. But tonight against my will and desire I fall soundly aslumber almost before my head touches the pillow and I don't awake until—

"Hey, lazy-butt, rise and shine!"

Prying my eyes open, I groan, "What time is it?"

"Eleven A.M. and it's cold as a bitch outside—radio says snow likely. We could maybe go skiing, if we had some skis. Go wash your dirty face while I fry us up some breakfast."

Ablutions completed, I stagger out of the bathroom to find awaiting me on the kitchen-table a tall cold glass of orange-juice, beside it a heap of pennies, nickles and a lone dime.

"What's the small change for?" I ask the boy, busy at the stove.

"That's the bus-fare I borrowed. See, when Guzik left, he gave me 20 bucks for expenses but that's all gone now except for a measly 69 cents!"

"That's an odd amount to end up with," I remark, wondering if kiddy is aware of the erotic significance therein. "By a strange coincidence, those exact numbers are my Zodiac sign though they're... uh, lying down rather than standing up."

"Yeah, it's more comfortable that way—but don't think for a minute that I've ever done it!" Paradoxical Master Hustler elevates his eyebrows, looks down his nose, prims his lips while at the same time somehow contriving to appear wontonly pagan, his blue-violet eyes seductive as sirenic pools I could drown in. Ah, the brio, the infinite variety of wee scrotum-toters!

"Anyway," I hasten to add, "the bus fare was my treat and I can let you have ten dollars or so more if it'll help out." "We can talk about that later Here, shovel this into you while it's hot."

My charming host puts before me a sizable platter loaded with 4 eggs sunny-side-up, 6 slices of crisp bacon and 2 toasted, buttered English muffins. "There's jam, jelly and honey on the table. You want your coffee now or later—or both?"

"Later, thanks. My goodness, I must say you sure live high on the hog here!"

"Yeah—my belly still ain't used to getting three square meals a day, plus in-between snacks."

We dig in, devour, lick the platters clean, linger over coffee. "Where'd you learn to cook, Regan?"

The youngster grimaces as if at unpleasant memories. "I was sorta third chef at the orphanage—in charge of the greasy pots and pans mostly but I managed to pick up a few kitchen tricks on the side."

"Your coffee is the best I've ever tasted," I sincerely praise.

The boy shrugs. "It's only instant crap but I use plenty of it and boil it two minutes—that brings out all the tasty Vitamin P!" He wink-leers and pours me a fourth cup.

As I wash the dishes and he dries, I say, "Look, kiddy, this is a plush pad if ever was—but don't you think it's dangerous to stay here any longer?"

"Why so?"

"Well, with Guzik dead, won't his relatives or associates or lawyers or even the police be coming around to check up on things?"

"Nah! Jake mentioned once that nobody knows about this place 'cause this is where he brings the kids he picks up." The boy snickers scornfully. "He even called this his love-nest!"

"Well, no doubt even the Mafia get sentimental and romantic at times."

"Yeah—at the funerals of the guys the bump off! He's got an apartment in Manhattan but I don't know where it is." "Jake must've been a dual personality—he was straight in New York and bent in New Jersey but of course we're all bent, one way or another."

"You are—not me!" kiddy growls, snapping his dishtowel at me.

"Yes, you're the exception!" I concede, to keep the sweet piece peaceful. "If, as you say, only Guzik knows about this house then you're reasonably safe here but if you don't have funds for gas and electric and so on, you've still got a problem."

"I may have a problem and I may not. Come in the other room and I will tell you about it."

We adjourn to a couch by the fire. "You know," the boy begins, "the first time old Jake went to Atlantic City to gamble, he said, 'Sonny if anything should happen to me, I've left you in fine style for quite some time. I've hidden it but a wise-ass little chicken like you should be able to find it easy enough.' " Regan pauses to exclaim, "Jeez, I hate to be called 'chicken', as if I layed eggs or something!"

"When I was your age I would've been most flattered to be called 'chicken' but I didn't have what it takes—no more sex-appeal than a dog turd!"

"Yeah! and now you're a tough old rooster who's forgotten how to crow any more!" the awful urchin scoffs.

"That remains to be seen." With the backside of my social finger I begin tenderly to stroke the delicate round of his cheek, satin-smooth and soft as a kitten's belly. "In your case, I'm sure Guzik meant 'chicken' as a term of endearment."

The boy bats my libidinous digit away. "Endearment, my rosy fanny! It's an insult!"

"Is it really rosy, little chicklet?" I leer. "Or more like Hot Pink?"

Kiddy tries to smother his slight blush with a hideous scowl, then digs a rude elbow into my ribs. "Stick to the point, damnit! I've turned this place upside down huntin' for the nest-egg that Jake talked about but so far I haven't found a single thin dime!"

"I'll bet you didn't look on the underside of drawers in kitchen-cabinets and such-like."

"Elementary, my dear jerk—I read detective stories, too, and drawers are among the first places I searched. I examined everything in the freezer and fridge, emptied out containers of sugar, coffee, flour, rice and stuff like that nothing. Like with a fine-tooth comb I went over the mattress, pillows, furniture, TV and radio—again nada. There's no loose stones in the fireplace, the floor is solid cement under tile, the walls are plastered and painted cinder-blocks. For two entire days I hunted high and low and found nothing but a big fat zero!"

"Did you go through Guzik's clothes and stuff?"

"Of course! No money-belt or diamonds sewed into a coat-lining."

"How about all these small throw-rugs and polar-bear hide—anything concealed in them?"

"Nope! I prodded and poked and squeezed them like Jake useta do with my privates!" kiddy rasps, looking as outraged as a cat with itching-powder up its bung-hole.

"Don't be vulgar!" I chide. "The books and magazines in the book-case—"

"I went through them damn near page by page."

"H'm, this is a puzzle and I'd put on my thinking-cap but I left it at home. Let's see—Guzik referred to a 'nest-egg' that could be the essential clue."

"Bullshit!" Regan grumps. "He didn't keep hens so there's no nests nor eggs—unless he meant a golden egg like that fairy-tale goose laid but if so—where the hell is it?!"

"He could've hid something up inside the fireplace chimney."

"Man, that chimney is too narrow for even me to get into, much less a tub of lard like Jake!"

"Back to Square One," I sigh.

Echoing my sigh, the boy scowls. "You know what? I think the bastard was puttin' me on!"

"I doubt that, kiddy. He might've been a Mafia hood who deserved hanging, yet I think he was really fond of you so it's hardly likely he would lie about something like this."

"No?! He told me the nest-egg would be easy enough for me to find—and that was a whopping lie!"

"Wait a minute!" I exclaim, excitedly. "Exactly what did he say there at the last—can you recall it?"

"Sure!" Closing his eyes, the youngster knits his brow in concentration. "He said, 'I've hidden it but a wise-ass little chicken like you should be able to find it easy enough.' "

"Eureka—I think I've found the magic word! Guzik said `wise-ass' and ass connotes toilet so—"

"So if you're thinkin' there's loot hidden in the toilet-tank then you're all wet 'cause there ain't no tank—the toilet's the direct-flush type."

"Well, if 'wise-ass' is out then that leaves only 'chicken'." "You mean me?" kiddy flares. "That's crazy 'cause I sure hell don't have any treasure!"

"No, I mean the feathered kind."

"So where is it? There's none in the fridge."

"How about the freezer?"

"That has all kindsa meat, shrimp, a turkey, a goose and a capon—but that's like a quail or pheasant, ain't it?"

"A capon, my dear Dumbo, is indeed a chicken—a boy piece of poultry who's had his balls cut off so his meat will be more tasty and abundant."

Regan winces in empathy, protectively clutching his groin. "I thought that was only done to pigs and horses."

"Alas, it's only too common a custom—probably started by Eve in retaliation for being kicked out of the Garden of Eden. Personally, I am convinced it was this abominable circumcision-rite that got out of hand in a sort of surgical madness—first the foreskin went, then the testicles. God only knows what will go next!"

"Don't talk about it!" kiddy shudders, starting for the kitchen. "Let's dig out that capon—looks like he's our last hope.-"

Of course it would have to be on the bottom of the freezer and when finally we managed to disinter the pitiful corpse it was hard as marble though neatly Saran-wrapped, apparently just as it was when it left the supermarket.

"It will have to thaw out for a spell before we can see if there's any treasure inside."

"I can't wait!" kiddy shrills, feverish with the lust for lucre. "There's a meat-cleaver in that cabinet—we'll hack it open."

In the end we hammered the defenceless unfortunate to bits, the poor cadaver shattering like porous stone and revealing a wad of something tightly encased in aluminum foil. We observe a minute of silent prayer to Lady Luck, then with trembling fingers Regan removes the foil—and a roll of bills big enough to choke a hippo lies before us!

"Holy Hell!" the boy shouts, "al' Jake wasn't crappin' me—he did lay a golden egg on me, after all!" Awed, he riffles through the crisp new currency. "And all fifties, man—can you believe it?!"

He leaps up. "Hey, this calls for a celebration! You like booze?"

"Love it—especially if it's free."

"Guzik wouldn't buy nothin' but vodka but there's Georgi and Finlandia—take your choice since your comp'ny."

"The Finns, God bless 'em, were the only ones to pay their First World War debt to us so Finlandia, by all means." "I like it with grapefruit juice—that suit you?"

"To a tee-total."

"While I fix the drinks, you count the loot."

"You mean you trust me?!"

"Sure I do," kiddy snickers, "But I'll keep one eye on you, just in case!"

Sweating slightly, I begin to count, my fingers tingling. Regan puts a tall, ice-tinkling glass before me and I drain it, ask for a refill. The boy sits opposite me hushed and big-eyed.

At length I sit back, mop my brow, utter a drawn-out quavering sigh.

"Well?!" kiddy demands.

"Regan, there are exactly 500 bills here so your good fortune amounts to precisely \$25,000!"

"I'm rich, by God! Hey, you know what let's do? Let's spread the money all over the bed, then take our clothes off and roll in it!"

"Marvelous! I've always wanted to do that but I never had the necessary." (At last I shall see my luscious amorino in the buff!) We start to gather together the beauteous bread when two bills, side by side, suddenly catch my eye. I snatch them up, examine them closely, front and back.

"Oh-oh, kiddy," I mutter. "Bad news."

"What're you talking about? What's bad?"

"Your fortune, I fear, is counterfeit."

The boy grabs a bill, scans it, snaps it between his fingers. "You're nuts! The engraving's perfect and the paper sounds like the real thing—kinda crackly-like."

"True, but it's the green numbers to the right and left of General Grant's face that aren't kosher."

"They're s'posed to be green, dummy!"

"Yes, but the same number shouldn't appear on two bills—they should be in sequence or anyhow different."

Scowling, Regan picks out half-a-dozen notes for inspection—all have the same mocking number. "You're right, man—Guzik did me dirty, the bastard!" He shrugs. "Oh, well, we'll just hafta pass one bill at a time so nobody can make comparisons."

"Whaddya mean, we'll pass them? I don't want any part of phoney money—that's illegal as hell, a federal offense!" "You're already illegal, sexing it up with boys and all." "So are you. If we were caught dealing in queer currency, you'd be considered a juvenile delinquent and probably get put in some integrated Youth Facility and you know what would happen there to a good-looking youngster like you."

"Yeah, I'd lose my lily-white tail-cherry in a black gang-bang and I ain't figurin' on that nohow! Anyway, you'd be passin' the fake bucks—not me."

"So now it's me alone who takes the risk! Why not you—it's your money."

"Oh, man, if a snot-nose like me tried to pass a fifty, they'd be suspicious right off the bat and start yellin' for the cops! Look, it's no big deal. You can go to the race-track like Belmont or Aqueduct in New York and make a two-buck bet on a long-shot. That way you get rid of a bad bill, get 48 genuine dollars in change and if the long-shot wins, all the better."

"You've got it all thought out, haven't you?"

"Right! I'm a wise-ass, remember? Got a mind like a friggin' computer: click-click-click!" He picks up my empty glass. "I'll get us some more booze."

Over a fresh drink, I say, "I appreciate the vodka, Regan, but it's still no go."

Kiddy cocks an analytical if not judgemental eye at me. "You're poor like me, ain't you?"

"Than a threadbare church-mouse, I'm poorer! Would you believe that I make one tea-bag do the work of three?!"

"So here's the chance of a lifetime to latch onto some easy moolah. Tell you what I'll do—I'll give you half the net, 50-50!"

"What are you, the Devil's Advocate? Quit trying to tempt me—I'm too old to spend the rest of my life in prison."

The boy leers. "How come you're so old yet so... so hot-blooded?"

"Well, you see, it's like this—even before I was born I took great care to choose healthy, hot-



blooded parents.”

Kiddy bays an incredulous guffaw. "That's impossible, man—never in this world!"

"I know—yet somehow I managed to pull it off.”

"Pull this off!" Master Cheeky snickers. "What do you do for a living?"

"I'm retired on Social Insecurity but I write boys' adventure stories to fatten the budget.”

"You need money even more than I do, so I can't see why you're turning my proposition down. Hell, there's practickly no danger at all, you work it right.”

"You can probably find somebody else, some young guy who's willing to take a—”

"I don't know nobody else here! I don't want nobody else! Wait, I'll get more happy water. I got a powerful thirst myself.”

"Are you trying to get me drunk, Regan?"

"Yes.”

"Well, that won't make me change my mind.”

"Never can tell—I'll use Georgi this time, he's higher-proof!"

I drink, he drinks, we drink (amo, amas amat?). Kiddy is as perky and bright-eyed as ever, while I am beginning to feel numb from the neck up.

After a time, the boy looks at me searchingly, passes a hand in front of my face. "You OK, man?"

"Posilutely!" I mumble. "Grand, great, wunnerful, feelin' no pain!"

"So what's it to be about our little business offer? We'd make a swell team—Fagin and the Fartful Dodger!" "Still nay, nein, nyet—no way, Jose!"

My persistent young companion grimaces with exasperation, strokes his chin, ponders deeply—then his face lights up and he grins at me like the Wolf meeting Mary's Little Lamb. "Let's go take a shower.”

I am stunned, scarcely believing my ears. "You mean together?"

"Like Siamese Twins together.”

"But last night I suggested that identical same thing and you gave me the cold shoulder.”

"Circumstances alter cases, as Guzik used to say—the awful prick!"

I become aware of a sensation of walking on fleecy clouds towards prospects of heavenly bliss. Either that or I'm half-plastered again. Kiddy impatiently tugs me into the bathroom, slams shut the door, locks it.

"May I have the pleasure of denuding you?" I say brightly.

"No. Take your clothes off."

"Can't we do it simultaneous?" I demur. "More togetherness that way."

"Strip, damnit—I ain't got all day!"

I doff my garments and the boy goes over my scrawny carcass inch by inch—if he had a microscope he would've used it and I have the distinct impression that he is trying hard not to burst into gales of derisive mirth.

"Well, do I pass your rigid inspection?" I croak.

The kid frowns. "I don't know what holds you in once piece, man!"

"Desire and Elmer's Glue," I reply, half-heartedly. "Now let me see you in your glorious birthday-suit!"

"Shut up and get in the shower, dopey. Turn the faucet to Hot."

"Jilted at the door to the shower stall!" I grieve, squeezing out a crocodile tear "Have you no pity?!"

"I left it at the Orphanage," kiddy snickers.

I get in the stall—fitting place for me as I feel like a gelding, newly-knifed. I turn the tap to nearly Hot yet almost at once the small cubicle is cloudy with steam, under cover of which my sneaky inamorato slithers in, his back to me. Strong light overhead, though, so I can morales plain see whom I'm doing while I'm doing it.

"Wash my back, man, but don't go below my waist or you've got trouble!"

"Yes, Master Tyrant!" I comply, my eyes glued to the sweet buns below—round, firm, compact, cleft tightly clasped, virgin territory! I kiss behind the youngster's left ear—it's all wet, praise be! Carried away on wings of I'd hate to tell you, I fling my arms about the lad and hold him close, inhale his body-scent like russet apples on a snowy Christmas Eve, warble, 'Falling in Love Again' a la Marlene Diedrich.

"Knock it off!" washee growls, smiting my tender ankle with a hard heel. "You're insultin' my ears!"

"It's Georgi's fault—he dared me to do it." I essay further liberties, my hands trickling down the kid's smooth front to thrillingly fondle his full-blown saliency. My goodness, here's an upright little citizen, indeed!

"Hoo, boy!" I exclaim, impressed. "Do you know you could be arrested for criminal possession of a dangerous instrument?!"

"Which you'd purely love to get shot by!"

"That I would!" I agree. "Shot at sunrise—delightful demise!"

Unresisting, my amoretto permits me to turn him around—and if it's his hindsight that dazzles, it's his foresight that totally entrances. Ah, if I could only preserve his radiant perfection forever! I scrooch down and kiss the soft base of his throat.

"I'm an Indian-giver," I palpate. "I expect my kiss to be returned!"

Promptly Master Nasty bite-kisses my Adam's apple mayhemly, got teeth like a man-eating alligator! I'm born-again Wilde Oscar, feasted on by leopards. Undeterred, I lower go to nurse on the child's niplets which are hard as he is and dry though wet, and my tongue-tip tells me his bellybutton is a deep narrow hollow, fleshly Holey Grail.

Kiddy impatiently pushes my head still more southerly. "Go downtown, stupid—that's where all the action is!"

The shower a sensuous curtain about me—'Raindrops Falling on my Head'—I kneel in admiring worship of Pretty Boy's Family Jewels, licking the sweet silken smoothness of his inner thighs and adjacencies—sexy as satyriasis in a Boy Scout Jamboree!

Pausing, I look up. "As the rapist said to the nun, 'I'm not in the habit of doing this you know!' " To illustrate, I engulf his rigid saliency, tongue-wrassle it a trifle, disengage. "See what I mean?"

Kidlet drums on my pate with pile-driving knuckles. "Pay attention to what you're doing!" he snarls. "Don't leave me high and dry, dammit!" He bumps and grinds against my face with groaning urgency.

Seemingly of its own volition, Regan's scepter of maleness thrusts between my lips, thudding against the inside of my cheeks and ramming my tonsils like a bucking bronco until I tongue-rein it in, gentle it with excitative caresses, adroitly lick it into shape.

The boy's breath quickens and his hands pull my head farther onto him as his hips begin a hard driving oscillation against me—my nose pressed into his pulsing pubis, my forehead tight against his lower belly. Kiddy sighs, moans, cries out as his groin convulses and my tongue drowns in the sweet tartness of his copious expulsion—creme de La crème.

I am savoring the last precious drops when the boy roughly pushes me away. "Well, cruddy

buddy, you got what you wanted, ruined me in body'n soul, a fate worse'n death—”

"Oh, come off it, baby," I say, stripping him to see if there's any nectar left, "the fate worse than death is never to have had any." (He's bone-dry, alas and alack.)

Unperturbed, kiddy perjoratives on. "Since you've molested me somethin' terrible, sodomized me downright scand'lous, now are you going to help me pass the bogus bucks?"

"Regan," I say, "You're a sporting lad so I'll give you a sporting proposition—we'll toss a coin.”

"Done!" the boy cries, blue-violet eyes agleam. "Let's go to the other room"

Naked but for towels around us, we sit before the fire. I hand my confrere a quarter. "Here you are, kiddy—a bona-fide two-bit piece, Washington's head on one side, the American Eagle's tail on the other. You toss and call—and may Virtue triumph!”

Kiddy gives me an intercoursing finger, tosses the quarter ceiling-high, squeals "Tails!" The coin flashes in the firelight, falls, bounces, comes to rest. The Moment of Truth is at hand!

The boy and I bump heads as breathlessly we bend to discover what Fate has dealt us—and we see, we see, we see...!