

*The Sixth  
Acolyte Reader*



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# Trompe-l'Oeil

by Alan Edward

"Very nice, M'sieu. You agree?"

Martin made no sign. Then he took a pack of cigarettes, flicked it open and held it out diffidently, not turning his head.

"Thank you, M'sieu. You want, eh?"

Martin shrugged, still not making eye-contact. But not moving on either. On the Boulevard Pasteur, as always at the time of the promenade, the string of youngsters opposite sold oranges, matches, contraband Marlboro. The one on the corner, cross-legged on the pavement, was selling colored handkerchiefs and...

"Is my Chouchou, that. I speak to my Chouchou for you, yes?"

"Mebbe."

Unusual, these days, to see a kid in the old-style djellaba, except in high summer. This one was perhaps from the mountains. Slim, a sight of soft-curved cheeks, dreamy-dark eyes. Two bare brown legs poking from underneath, two grubby feet in sandals. From the mountains... It was said they wore nothing, but nothing at all, underneath. Martin swallowed.

"You cough bad, M'sieu. You smoke too much perhaps."

"Mebbe."

There would be no more of the brash town-brats, that was for sure. Hagglng not only before and after, but *during*, for Christ's sake. This could be different. Let me be kissed with the kisses of wine, not stung as many times as a one-legged beekeeper.

"How much?" he asked.

Chouchou, whose eyes had been fixed unmoving on the pair, pocketed the handkerchiefs and wandered across. Favored with a hundred-watt grin that exposed surprisingly good teeth, Martin mentally upped the sum he'd had in mind, and was favored with a word or two of quite serviceable French. Not from the mountains after all maybe.

The men smoked again and spoke of numbers. Parent or pimp, Ali Baba would be paid first, Chouchou later; at least the kid would be properly rewarded. The man was paid a little more than he expected. Not wanting to be followed, Martin lingered a little. Then he bought a box of tangerines and gave it to Chouchou to carry. With youngster and

tangerines a short distance to the rear, he followed the winding streets to his apartment and arrived in a few minutes.

"M'sieu?"

"Through here. Wait a moment."

He went off to store the tangerines, then returned to his bedroom.

Wow-ee! He had been right about the djellaba. The single garment had already been tossed to the floor, and the kid lay tummy-down on the bed. A little shy perhaps – or perhaps not. Head turned, a cheeky grin. "I ready, M'sieu!"

He crossed the room and drew the curtains, preferring the half-light. Though not before standing motionless to stare for a century or so. Perfectly shaped, the contours and skin flawless. The slim waist and legginess of early adolescence, but still with childhood's soft rounded swell of hips and buttocks...

"M'sieu!" Impatient...

Martin had taken his clothes off; he lay down, stroking and caressing the youngster, running his palms over skin of a petal-smoothness that sent electric quivers all through him. Savoring the delicious squirms and wriggles of response.

Flipping the kid over, he ran his hand over the delicate chest and tiny nipples, the smooth flat tummy, the minute and almost imperceptible pubic hair, then –

"Good God!"

He snatched his hand away. He reached again, then in an instant was on his feet and had snapped the light on.

Staring, biting his lips. "There – there's been a mistake. A big mistake. I'm sorry."

Chouchou had sat up, blinking and bewildered.

"M'sieu?"

"Look, I'm sorry, kid." Martin gestured to the djellaba on the floor, then picked it up and threw it on the bed. "It's that thing – you can't tell the difference. Put it on."

The kid still stared. "You – you not want me now, M'sieu? But you –"

"Oh, you'll get your money. Now, just put that on, then I'll pay you and you can go."

To his dismay, Martin saw the dark eyes start to fill.

"Do not be angry, M'sieu. What is it I have done?"

Disappointment, Martin realized, had made him harsh. And he was not proof against a child's tears. Whichever the sex. He sat down on the

bed again and put his hands on Chouchou's slim shoulders. "You see, in that djellaba boys and girls look much the same – when they're young anyway, and it's easy to – well, make a mistake."

"Oh, I see, M'sieu. You thought I was a...."

"Mmm." Martin nodded. He found a tissue and dabbed very gently. "And I'm not angry. It was my own stupid fault – not yours."

Surprisingly, his arms were again round the youngster, comforting and stroking. Even more surprisingly, the skin was no less deliciously satin-smooth, warm and lickable-soft than it had been a moment before – not on the kid's arms, back, tummy, or... anywhere. Even more so, he thought, though that was ridiculous, of course. Two arms were wound round his own neck in turn; the body squirmed under him and a pair of delicate lips smacked repeatedly against his own. Then the slim body quivered at a giggle.

"Eh?"

"Was funny, that."

Yes, quite crazy. And in just a moment he'd disengage from Chouchou, stop exploring the delicate mouth with the tip of his tongue... In a moment. If they could *see* me, he thought. And with *my* reputation!

He chuckled in turn.

"You want now, M'sieu?"

"No, really. I –"

The small hand explored disconcertingly. "Oh, M'sieu, you lie!"

"I – I can't help it." And Martin *blushed*.

"I show you," said the youngster, taking a surprisingly firm hold.

"No – really."

"Yes, I show you." Chouchou held, then guided, very firmly indeed. And soon Martin felt every single millimeter tight-clasped in the living warm so that, at the merest twitch of Chouchou, electricity sparked and flickered upwards, so that he could keep still no longer... And under him the small body twisted, hips writhing and grinding, until mega-volt surges rolled, gathered, rolled, at last sent lightning cracking through his body again and again, blinding him with white and scarlet. Someone cried out, and then it was dark again.

After he did not know how long, Martin disengaged – very, very slowly.

"Was the first time, M'sieu?"

Martin nodded, still scarcely able to speak.

The youngster whispered, "Tomorrow you make your own choice. We are a large family, brothers and sisters both." Another giggle. "They shall line for you naked, then you make no mistake!"

Martin coughed, then asked, "Are they all as pretty as you?"

Another faint giggle. "My mamma always say I am the prettiest, M'sieu."

"Um. Tomorrow, perhaps we'll... talk about it. You and me.

"Of course, M'sieu," said the kid solemnly. A moment of hesitation. "And now, M'sieu, for me...?"

"Ah yes, of course, the money."

"No, not the money." Again Martin felt his hand being firmly guided. Resigned, he made one or two experimental moves.

The kid gasped, writhed. "Oh *yes*, M'sieu!"

And then, once again, Martin performed magnificently. Though he began with hesitation, like a man who caresses a small but unpredictable pet snake that instantaneously stands quivering at his touch but which might at any moment spit like a firecracker.