

The Twelfth
Acolyte Reader

© 1996 by The Acolyte Press

Printed in The Netherlands by Krips Repro Meppel

First Edition June, 1996

All rights reserved. Except for brief passages quoted in a newspaper, magazine, radio or television review, no part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Cover design by Huibert Krolis

The Acolyte Press

P.O. Box 12731

1100 AS Amsterdam

The Netherlands

CIP-GEGEVENS KONINKLIJKE BIBLIOTHEEK, DEN HAAG

Acolyte

The Twelfth Acolyte Reader / [ed. Frank Torey]. -

Amsterdam: The Acolyte Press

ISBN 90-6971-059-5

Trefw.: homoseksualiteit; mannen / verhalen ;

oorspronkelijk – Engels

Statues Can't Wink, Can They?

by I. L. Ingles

Losithan was not very bright. He did not have a very good brain. This was one of the few things he knew for certain... and his friend Bilal had often reminded him helpfully that it was absolutely true – "actual facts". That was what friends were for, wasn't it, to tell you the truth about yourself? Teachers were always saying so. His parents weren't very bright, either, giving him a name like that... just because one grandfather was called Loss, one uncle was called Simon, and Dad had wanted him to have the name Jonathan.

However, there was another "actual facts" of which Losithan was happily just as certain, that he had a very good body and was very strong. There was no need for Bilal to remind him of the truth of this particular fact. It could be demonstrated at any time any day – such as when Losithan had beaten up Peter Portillo for calling Bilal a "dirty Arab".

Bilal's family came from Egypt, and his father was working in Barbridge as a doctor. Bilal was a clever boy, but was a bit big-headed, so it was hard for him to make friends. It had been natural, therefore, that he and Losithan should pal up, because Losithan wasn't good at making friends either. The boys were all too quick at everything for someone like him to cope with, and he wasn't interested in girls. This was a pity, perhaps, since the girls all adored him for his well-built body and unaggressive strength and the polite

inoffensiveness that went with it had so many times made one smitten lass after another plead in vain, "Give us a kiss, Loss."

Unfortunately his first-class body didn't make him first-class at sports. It wasn't well enough coordinated. That was the fault of the not-very-good brain! So, Losithan and Bilal had become firm friends, and went everywhere together.

Bilal needed protecting: for, although he was six months older than Losithan, he was slight, uncombative, and brown-skinned... and also said prayers all over the place, Moslem prayers. He didn't have to. He could have got out of it. He just kept on doing it. Combined with his being flimsy and conceited, this made him a natural target.

Bilal always said that he, too, didn't like girls, but Losithan doubted if this was actual facts, because he had once found Bilal and Sharon Chilton hugging each other very tightly in the stock-cupboard at end-of-school time. Mr Jones, who wanted it known that Bilal could be trusted, had told him to lock up the cupboard and then bring the key to the Staff Room. When Losithan, looking for Bilal to go home with, had poked his head round the cupboard door, the two huggers had been very embarrassed. This was because Losithan had seen Bilal with Sharon's right hand down inside the front of his trousers – where, as Bilal had explained when taking Losithan to the sweetshop afterwards, the hand had accidentally got trapped while she was hugging him, and she hadn't been able to get it out in time before Losithan pushed the door open, because some people crept about so quietly and quickly. It was against the rules for boys and girls to be in cupboards together, and Losithan wasn't to tell anybody, in case old Jones got to hear about it, and would Losithan like one of the giant bars of Cadbury's "Dairy Milk", as proof that Bilal still wanted him to be best friends?

All this had occurred weeks ago and, while at the time Losithan had felt puzzlingly funny in his stomach about it, that feeling had now passed away. The end of term had come, and there were nearly two months of freedom to enjoy. Then a strange thing happened. He had gone to bed last night the same as usual, and ought to have slept right through as usual, although the weather was rather hot. Then, when a church bell was striking three o'clock in the morning, he had woken up as suddenly as if his alarm had rung right in his ear-hole, and he had found his hand down inside his pajamas and sticky stuff all over his fingers.

Nothing like this had ever happened to Losithan before; but, even though he knew he was not bright, he had no doubt that this must be what all the boys talked about, the thing Mr. Rees in Biology called "puberty". It was supposed to happen to everybody when they were teenagers... so Losithan, remembering that he was thirteen and a quarter, wasn't alarmed. Indeed it had felt very nice, though it was certainly a bit messy. What had astonished him was a most peculiar dream he had been having before he woke up, and for once he could remember what he had been dreaming. So now he felt very excited, and wanted to talk seriously to Bilal about it.

Payton flung down his pen and switched off the computer. He was tired of marking children's work, and tired of recording statistics for the school data base, and the weather was very hot.

It was Thursday afternoon. The summer term had been over for nearly a week, but at St. Botolph's Comprehensive it was the custom for all exams to be marked and scores handed in by the first Friday following the end of term. Then there would be a great staff meeting, lasting a whole day, after which nobody would set foot on the premises again until a week before the children returned in September – nobody, that is, apart from thieves and vandals! It

wasn't such a bad system really. It forced you to get the donkey work out of the way quickly, and you could enjoy several weeks of comparative idleness.

Payton lay back on his bed and gazed around his room, which was what you might call "personalized". The walls were studded with small framed pictures either of winsome prepubescent boys or of charming lads in their early teens. Some of his collection were prints of famous pictures. Others were of boys unknown, painted by artists equally unknown. All the subjects could be said to be "respectable", in that they were dressed in at least bathing trunks or shorts or, if naked, had their backs turned. All were involved in "respectable" activities – playing games, fishing, swimming, wrestling, day-dreaming, smiling, frowning. There were cricketers, skiers, archers, dog-walkers, footballers, kite-fliers, cyclists, bookworms, gymnasts.

Payton loved every one of these boys, especially the brown-skinned fourteen-year-old listening absorbed to his Walkman and oblivious to the world around him. This picture was particularly precious. Payton had painted it himself from a photograph taken when he was on holiday in India. The boy had been completely unaware that he was a thing of beauty, and would never know that he had now become a joy for ever, thousands of kilometers away, in the study-bedroom of a schoolteacher's bungalow.

One wall of this room, the wall with the window, was taken up with bookshelves, four of them, marshaling some three hundred volumes held in place by statuettes on heavy bases. The statuettes were of boys too, but here there was a difference... all of these figures were naked, and some of them distinctly naughty. The "Pissing Boy" from Belgium, a comparative innocent, might well have blushed, had he been able to gaze down upon the boy below, whose penis was being put to quite a different use – and the boy elegantly straddling a

dolphin might well have been horrified if he had been able to look up above him at the pair of lads lying intertwined together between two seaside sand dunes! These statuettes Payton had bought from a skilled artist, whose name and telephone number he had found tucked away in the columns of a magazine someone had accidentally left behind in Southwark Cathedral.

Payton also had a couple of nude statuettes in his sitting-room, on the mantelpiece, but that pair were respectably sanctified by age – Michelangelo's "David" and, at the other end, a beautiful Eros whose arrow would have gone straight into the young Hebrew's heart – alas, poor Jonathan! – had some magic or miracle been able to grant the bow-boy sight and a few fatal seconds of actual existence. Resting here in the pleasure dome of his study-bedroom, Payton folded his arms under the back of his head and gave himself up to the contemplation of perfection.

The two friends watched the fox slink past them into the reeds, as the hunt in its ignorance galloped off noisily in the opposite direction, "...and I had my hand down somebody's track suit," Losithan continued excitedly, his gaze reverting to Bilal's questioning eyes, "and I was trying to have a feel and, when I looked up and saw their face, it was you!"

Bilal jumped, as if one of the hounds had suddenly sprung out of the bushes at him. Slowly a dark flush spread over his face and neck.

Losithan tried to explain. "I don't mean I think – thought – you're a girl. I..." His voice trailed away. This was all very complicated.

The reason why Losithan found things complicated was that something else had happened to him last night and this morning, and he couldn't make up his mind whether he ought to tell. Even more complicated was the way it had now begun to make him think differently about Bilal. He wanted to kiss him!

Bilal knew himself to be blushing furiously. His whole face and neck seemed to be on fire. What was he going to do? You couldn't explain to someone as thick as Losithan that dreams were just a way of sorting out events and memories. Losithan was like a primitive tribesman or somebody in the Bible or the Koran. He believed his dreams. Once he had dreamed about Bilal falling into the swimming bath and nearly drowning and having to be rescued. In the dream it had been Losithan who was the rescuer. Two days later in Games it had really happened, except that the P.E. teacher had done the rescuing.

"Can I kiss you, please?"

Bilal couldn't believe his ears. Losithan had suddenly knelt up and was staring at him in a funny way, like Sharon had that first time. It was impossible. "No, you can't." Bilal blushed even more hotly. He had fired the words like machine-gun bullets.

Losithan was confused. He had already worked out that morning that something important had happened to him, and that it made him different from the other boys. When they talked about their dreams or even about the real people in the class, it was always girls' breasts they compared or said they wanted to touch, or even the part between girls' legs, but he couldn't remember the name. When they brought rude pictures in, they were always of girls or of men doing things with women. There had even been an announcement about it once in Assembly. Now it had happened to him, this puberty thing, the proper thing with sticky stuff, but it wasn't Sharon Chilton or Maggie Knight or Virginia Widdicombe he was interested in... it was Bilal, and Bilal had just said "No". Also, when Losithan was cycling over, to join Bilal on this fishing expedition, two more things had happened. The first was that he had suddenly felt that he was a hundred times cleverer than he had ever been before. The second

thing was that all the boy-bodies he passed looked different from how boy-bodies had looked before, even of the boys he knew, and he couldn't take his eyes off them.

Bilal got to his feet. "I'm tired of trying to catch perch that don't exist. I want to go home," he said slowly. "Let's have an early lunch, and then go for a cycle ride after. Okay?" He was worried. He couldn't bear the thought of losing Losithan's friendship, but something definite would have to be worked out, something Losithan could understand and accept. Bilal sighed. A lot of private thinking, perhaps even praying, would need to be done before he met Losithan again for that ride.

Losithan went through his wardrobe. He would have liked to wear shorts in this hot weather, but Bilal never would, except when it was at school and compulsory. As it happened, none of the boys would have been seen dead in shorts voluntarily this summer. They were unfashionable. Perhaps they would become trendy if it became really really hot. There were three thin pairs of non-school trousers in the wardrobe. He tried them all on. He had grown an amazing amount recently. Only one pair still fit, just, and that was the pair Auntie Juliette had given him at New Year's. She always gave him things to "grow into". Anyway, they were ultra-thin and exactly what he wanted now, really lightweight. The other two could go to Save The Children.

There was still half an hour remaining before it would be time to leave for Tesco's, where Bilal had said to meet up. Losithan looked at himself in the mirror. He was aware that he was seeing and thinking of things which had never bothered his mind before. Take the shape of his hips, for example, and the various soft bits and solid bits that made up his figure. Until this morning he had simply been content to know that he had a broad chest and big muscles, and was envied for

his strength by boys who otherwise took no notice of him. Actual facts. Now, as he stared at the mirror and scrutinized his appearance, he felt a strange new sense of satisfaction in the thickness of his thighs and in the substantial size and roundness of the bulge between them, one of the reasons for the trousers feeling so tight. "I'm Losithan," he thought, and blushed, because he'd never had such a thought before, and he had said it out loud. Time to go to Tesco's!

Bilal, who turned up in faded blue jeans, suggested that they cycle out to the Great Park. It was vast, and its northern end was bordered by Barbridge Forest, where you could be very private. Losithan began to feel more hopeful.

Bilal had done a great deal of thinking during lunch. If he behaved in a way that hurt Losithan's feelings it would be both unfair and stupid. Losithan couldn't help being thick, and was his only real friend, and easy to manage. Better to give in just a little, so as not to upset him, and then to get tough. On the other hand, he liked Losithan. If you liked someone and he was your only real friend, you had a duty to help him be happy. There hadn't been time to dig about in the Koran, but Bilal had no doubt that that was his duty, but what about someone liking boys and not girls? Where did that fit in?

Far enough in. Bilal braked to a slithering stop under some trees fringing a little clearing. The tire on the front wheel of his bike had gone soft, and he immediately set to work pumping it up. It was a good excuse for delaying things. Soon, however, the tire was hard. He squared his shoulders, and delivered his prepared speech. "I've been thinking," he said awkwardly, his color rising. "I was a bit rude this morning. Do you really want to kiss me?"

Losithan's heart seemed to turn right over and back up again. "Yes, please." He longed to say that really he wanted to hug Bilal tight and

stroke him all over. He remembered how Sharon's right hand had accidentally got caught down inside Bilal's trousers. Losithan wished that his own right hand could get caught down inside Bilal's jeans. He longed to ask Bilal to let him put it there deliberately, and pet his puppy... but he realized that, stupid though he had to admit to being, he was not so stupid as to try and go that far! "Can I, then? Really kiss you?"

"Just this once, but not on my lips. Then never again." Bilal leaned forward, a pair of very strong hands gripped his shoulders, and a pair of very wet lips glued themselves to him where his nose joined his right cheek.

Losithan didn't forget that he mustn't do anything else. Nevertheless, keeping his hands under control was a terrible struggle. Then, just when he might have lost that vital control, a sort of unspoken time-limit was reached and with awful, sweat-making reluctance, he removed his mouth from the warm, salty cheek and stepped back a couple of paces.

Unfortunately, however, Losithan's hands weren't his only problem. Another kind of struggle was going on – his absolutely uncontrollable puppy was fighting to get out of its kennel in his underpants. A great goose-pimpling burning spread from his knees up to his neck, and from his neck to the tips of his ears, as he saw Bilal gawping horrified at the area where the struggle was taking place under the skin-tight trousers.

"Is your puppy doing that because of me?" said Bilal thickly.

"Sorry, couldn't help it. It just happened."

Bilal tried to turn his eyes away, endeavoring desperately not to appear or even feel disgusted. What in the name of Allah was he to do? Losithan's trousers were bulging out like a pregnant woman, and the baby was kicking in her womb! Worst of all, Bilal now found that

though he was doing nothing, merely looking, his own penis had gone as stiff as that cycle pump, as stiff as when Sharon had initiated him in the stock cupboard. He sighed. He would have to make it absolutely clear to Losithan, in actual words, that their friendship couldn't have sex in it. Losithan would never be able to think such a thing out for himself. "Okay, Loss, let's talk."

The two friends sat down on the grass and, adjusting his trousers so that his erection would be more likely to collapse, Bilal began the task he had set himself... explaining how he was absolutely normal and that all his dreams and sexy thoughts were about girls. He even went into details as to how, when he and Sharon had been interrupted that day Sharon's hand was all sticky with his "come", and that was why she didn't dare pull it out of his trousers. Truth to tell, Bilal had wanted to boast about this ever since... and why not, if it was in confidence to your best friend? Losithan must understand that there was absolutely no way Bilal would give in to him, "not even kissing, let alone feeling you up," said Bilal inflexibly. "I wouldn't even enjoy it... and, when people mature, like we're doing nowadays, all sorts of things happen. We shouldn't stop being friends just because I like girls and you don't."

"Actual facts", Losithan agreed. He had been terrified that Bilal was telling him he didn't like him any more.

"And I'll try and work out some way of helping you," continued Bilal, being a boy of a generous heart, "maybe even find someone else like you in school. I told you I'd been thinking. My only good idea at the moment is for you to have some extra puppy-walking sessions in bed at night and think of boys, like most of us do – cept," he added hastily, "we think of girls. I'll try and help you any way I can," – and he meant it – "only the trouble is, at the moment I haven't a clue what to do about it."

Losithan nodded. He sensed that Bilal was doing his best to be friendly. "It's okay. Perhaps I'll grow out of it, when I've got more hair and my puppy's a full-grown dog." Bilal looked quite pleased with this idea. They talked on for a while, then Bilal suggested "We can't spend all day talking. Now we've got our puppies under control, why don't we go for a round-the-streets race? You go down Oatwick Rise and me down Trymbury Drive, and see who gets to the Co-op first, then zoom along Northend Road to my house and have a drink."

Losithan thought carefully for a moment or two. Both starting points led out of a roundabout just outside Great Park. The Oatwick Rise way was a bit longer into town, but his legs were twice the strength of Bilal's. "Okay. You're on."

Payton heard the crash and the cry of pain almost before they happened, as if he'd had a premonition. He was listening to the chaotic concert of sounds coming in through the window. Although the bungalow was separated from the traffic by a mere two-meters-wide sliver of front garden and a thin palisade of hawthorn hedge, and although the ugly din of motor vehicles was as loud as one of Stockhausen's shrillest cacophonies, he had picked out from a distance the sound of the boys' voices floating down Northend Road towards the bungalow. They were approaching from the Co-op end, and he had intuited from the way their voices were coming towards him, that they must be on bicycles.

Two boys... and engaged in animated conversation. As they drew closer, Payton had heard the boy with the deeper voice exclaim "It was a no-ball, and I shouldn't have been out. It wasn't fair." As they rode up to the bungalow, Payton had lifted himself up on one elbow to catch a glimpse of them before they whirled away.

The crash and the scream were sickening. Payton rolled off the bed, flung himself out of the front door, yanked open the garden gate, and sprinted along the pavement. Two boys. He'd been right. One, a slender brown-skinned lad was standing in the gutter. He was looking confused, gripping the saddle of his bike in both hands, and staring bemusedly at the other bicycle, which was lying in the middle of the road. Its owner was staggering around it in a dazed circle. He was clutching at one leg, and crying.

"Grab that bike," yelled Payton, "and bring them both into my garden! I'll help your friend." He glanced back along the road. Fortunately the traffic lights had turned red and there was one of those blissful pauses between movements in the din and bustle. He rushed over to the dazed boy, gathered him up, ran inside with him, and deposited him on the bed. He looked to be a strong, well-built lad, with a pleasant freckled face, but at this time in his life he was crying like an infant, and his face was screwed up with pain. His trousers were torn at both knees, but the real damage was to the left leg. The trouser material had been ripped open, and blood was streaming from a great gash half-way up the thigh. No wonder the boy was in shock.

Payton hurried out across his tiny hall and into the bathroom, where he armed himself hastily with a flannel, some ointment, and a bowl of hot water. When he came back into the hall, he found the Arab youngster – if Arab he was – standing just inside the bedroom and staring round like some prospective buyer in a gallery. "Go right in, I'll need you to hold things. What's your name?"

"Bilal, sir."

"I'll have to take these off." Payton indicated the torn trousers.

Bilal nodded. "Your bed'll get messed up," he pointed out helpfully.

"Damn the bed! This is an emergency." Payton undid the injured boy's trousers and cautiously worked them down. The wound looked nasty, now that they could see it properly. "May need stitches." He soaked the flannel in the hot water, then rubbed the damaged thigh very gently.

"Ow!" shouted Losithan, and turned over onto his front.

"Now it will be messed up," murmured Bilal.

"What's his name?"

"Losithan, but you'd better call him Loss."

"Good heavens! What sort of a name's that? Anyway, we can be grateful he's not a dead Loss. Help me pull him back over. Come on, Losithan, 'I must be cruel, only to be kind.' Grit your teeth."

It took ten minutes of cajoling and main force before the wound was cleaned and dressed, and Bilal had described what happened. The pedals had caught together and Losithan had fallen across his bike as it crashed, ripping his thigh. The lesser wounds to the knees had probably been due to his surfing along the tarmac.

"He's very tough," said Bilal wonderingly in his friend's defense. "Never seen him cry before."

"He's still in shock. I'll call a taxi. You can explain to his parents. I'll give you my telephone number. What school do you go to?"

"St. Peter's Comprehensive, sir. Are you from St. Botolph's?"

"Yes. How did you guess?"

"Saw you in their play at Christmas. You were a slave-driver."

"When I was Newton? All teachers are slave-drivers, but some get redeemed."

The taxi arrived. Payton saw the boys and their bikes safely aboard, and explained what had happened. He gave the driver sufficient money to cover the likely fare, and watched the boys depart, Bilal waving, Losithan still crying.

A couple of weeks later, Payton was walking across the North Park railway bridge when he saw the slender Arab youth sitting precariously astride the parapet and waving to him. Nothing loath, Payton stopped and chatted. The boy was quite good-looking and had bright, intelligent eyes. "Hullo. How's your friend with the funny name?" Actually Losithan's mother had telephoned twice since the accident, once to thank him and, yesterday, to say that he had healed well.

"Not bad, sir. He's tough."

"I'm not surprised," agreed Payton amiably, remembering the compactness of Losithan's body and the firmness of the gashed thigh. "He might make a boxer, if he were so minded."

"Doubt it," Bilal replied judicially. "He only fights for good causes."

"Such as?"

"Me!" grinned Bilal. "When someone slags me off or hits me."

"An excellent cause. Good for him," smiled Payton. "Give him my best wishes. I must love you and leave you now. Sorry. Got to see a man about a dog." To his surprise the boy blushed violently and looked away, embarrassed.

At lunchtime there was a knock on Payton's front door. He saw the shadowy outline of a boy through the panel of frosted glass, and his heart missed a beat. Bilal had come to visit him. He was right. It was Bilal, but only, alas, to ask if Losithan could call round some time. "He wants to say 'Thank you' properly, sir."

Payton did his best to disguise his disappointment. "Of course. Tell him he can come any time... but not between two and four this afternoon. I always go to the gym on Thursdays in holiday time."

"The one in Goodrington Road?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Our P.E. teacher says he goes there sometimes." Bilal hovered from foot to foot. "Excuse me, sir," he said awkwardly, and coloring darkly, as they parted. "I know Loss is my friend, but he's... well, you know... a bit slow, and does things you don't expect. He might want to give you a kiss... you know... to say 'Thank you' with."

Losithan dug Bilal in the ribs. "Look. There's that teacher, the one who helped us." When Bilal had suggested going to watch people working out at Weissmuller's, Losithan had agreed enthusiastically. Why hadn't he thought of it himself? He knew you could do it, and for only a few pence. His father was in the "Blind Beggar" pub weight lifting team, and Losithan had gone to watch him once in a competition. "Look. He's going in."

Bilal affected surprise. "You're right. Actual facts. Doesn't look like a weight-lifter, though."

Losithan stared after the teacher, now disappearing into the entrance. "Probably more of a runner."

Bilal nodded. He made Losithan wait for a minute, then led the way in. They paid their money, and sat down in the spectators' balcony. Bilal chose seats behind a pillar. "So he doesn't see us," he explained. "Might put him off."

Losithan felt strangely excited. The presence of so many men and boys in leotards or only trunks in a gym, bending and stretching and throwing themselves about without any suggestion of shyness or rivalry, set his blood racing in a way it had never done before. "Might come here and do some myself one day," he whispered after a few minutes. "Wonder how much it is to join?"

The two friends spent a good couple of hours studying the gymnasts and weight-lifters, and ducking out of sight when the teacher's glance happened to turn in their direction. When they came out, Bilal said casually "I've had a good idea. Want to hear it?"

Losithan nodded. Bilal was brilliant with ideas. "Well, you ought to say a proper 'Thank you' to that teacher, not just let your mother say it for you on the phone... and, when we were in his house, I noticed something. He's got pictures of boys all over the place."

"Has he? I never saw them."

"No – because you were in shock. Well, I think he must like boys a lot and, if you're not scared, you could ask him to let you kiss him. You could say it was your way of saying 'Thank you'. The worst he could do is laugh at you, and tell you to buzz off."

Losithan bristled. "What d'you mean, 'scared'? I asked you for a kiss, didn't I?"

"Yes, but he's a man!"

Losithan longed to explain to Bilal how scary it had been asking him for a kiss. It couldn't be scarier asking a man who had already been friendly and helped them. The thought of kissing or being kissed by a man was as exciting as kissing or being kissed by Bilal. Actual facts.

"Shall I go with you?" murmured Bilal, wondering what sort of scene he might witness.

"No thanks." Losithan blushed. He never said no to Bilal; but, as soon as Bilal had put forward the arguments for the kissing dare, and explained them and convinced him, Losithan had known that he didn't want anyone else to be there when he asked for that kiss.

Bilal flushed. It had not occurred to him that he mightn't be wanted.

"I'll go home first," continued Losithan, ignoring the look of irritation that had appeared on his friend's face, "and have a wash. I'll tell you all about it after." He sensed vaguely that this act of self-assertion was somehow connected with the feeling he had had of suddenly being a hundred times cleverer than he used to be. He

didn't understand the change, and it couldn't really be true, of course, but he just felt like that. At home he would have a shower, and soak his armpits in "Niceboy", the deodorant everybody else his age was using this summer.

The two conspirators separated, their homes being in different directions. Then an astonishing thing happened. As he was walking up to his front door and mulling over the possibly embarrassing or even dangerous consequences of Bilal's brilliant idea – suppose the man reported him to Dad? – Losithan suddenly had a brilliant idea of his own. He never had ideas, not ideas of his own, but this was his absolutely personal invention. He could hardly believe it was himself thinking, so unique and exciting were the thoughts whirling around in his head. No, he wasn't a hundred times, he was a thousand times cleverer than before! Actual facts!

Payton drew the curtains shut and stretched out on the bed, as he always did after a session at Weissmuller's. He closed his eyes, took a deep breath, then exhaled slowly and gently, to encourage his mind to fade away into a pleasant, year-ninish somnolence – and immediately there was a knock at the door. With a grunt of irritation he ambled out into the hall. As he saw the figure of a boy foggily through the frosted glass, he half-hoped that it might be the wispish brown-skinned Egyptian lad. Still Losithan was no ugly sister to Bilal's Cinderella, far from it.

"Want to say 'Thank you' for helping me," babbled Losithan, suddenly tense.

"Come in," smiled Payton affably. "That's a nice shirt." Losithan was wearing startling green shorts and a gaudy sports shirt, which flapped loosely around his waist. Payton showed him into the sitting-room. Losithan glanced round quickly. Yes, Bilal had been right. There was evidence here. "Would you like a drink?" Payton

prompted, with another smile, as the boy seemed to have become suddenly tongue-tied.

"Yes, please."

Payton went out into the kitchen. Losithan studied the two statuettes. Nice. He summoned up his courage, and poked his head in at the kitchen door. "Can I look at your pictures in the other room? Bilal says they're ace. He likes the fishing one."

"Go ahead," replied Payton, making a snap decision. Obviously Bilal had already been talking about the works of art. There was nothing to be gained by evasion. "I'll be with you in a second."

Losithan sat on the bed and surveyed the pictures – and the nude statuettes. Bilal hadn't mentioned those! He was dead right about the fishing picture, though. It was fascinating. It showed two naked Amazonian boys with their backs to the painter, so that most of the right-hand side of the canvas was taken up with an expanse of bare, brown buttocks and wiry thighs and calves! It was a pity you couldn't fish like that in England, thought Losithan, and grinned to himself.

"You like it too?" smiled Payton, entering with the lemonade.

Losithan nodded, suddenly dumb. He didn't go to church, but he prayed silently that he wouldn't become a coward and have to give up carrying out the one brilliant idea he had come up with in his whole life. He looked again at the statuettes. No... he wouldn't be a coward. Even if the brilliant idea turned out to be absolutely useless, the man wouldn't be too offended. First, however, there was lemonade to drink, and biscuits to eat...

"Did I see you somewhere today?" inquired the teacher. "I could have sworn-"

"Don't know," said Losithan quickly, in between a bite and a gulp. "We've been around." He put the cup down. The great moment had

arrived. "Would you like to see my scar?" He had done it! Actual facts!

Payton smiled. Boys were like antique warriors. Scars were almost a kind of currency with which they purchased fame or self-respect. "I'd rather hoped my doctoring was so efficient, there wouldn't be anything to show. Of course I'd love to see your scar, now we know you're safe from gangrene and amputation."

Losithan went pink. Payton, expecting him to pull up the left leg of his shorts and exhibit the gory marks of a heroically endured injury, was astonished as instead Losithan suddenly undid his belt and let the shorts tumble to the floor. Payton found himself gazing down at a boy whose shirt finished at his waist and whose loins were totally devoid of underpants, and whose skin was turning a brighter and brighter red every second.

Payton raised a quizzical eyebrow. There was no response. then he remembered that even this boy's friend confessed that he was "a bit slow". The question would have to be made explicit. "What, no underpants?"

"I forgot to put them on," mumbled Losithan, forcing out the big lie, and then the next part of the brilliant idea – "Do you want to feel it? Then can I kiss you, please, sir?"

Payton glanced at the curtained window, then round at his pictures and statuettes. Why not? After all, this bear with very little brain was not unattractive, quite the opposite, and willing... more than willing, wanting – and it could not be denied that, good as the fictional lads of his precious boy-love anthologies were in part-compensation for maintaining a law-abiding existence, a real-life Losithan and an interlude of illegality would be better. Their eyes met, and something like a charge of ions ricocheted between boy and man.

Payton leaned down and stroked the faint discoloration on Losithan's left thigh, then stood up again, like a schoolboy caught doing something naughty. The thigh was firm and warm and wonderfully smooth. "Okay," he smiled, surprised at his own nervousness, "give me that kiss."

Losithan sprang up, kissed the smiling man shyly on the mouth, and then hung round his neck.

Slowly, as if he had nothing to do with them, Payton's hands undid the flapping shirt and explored round the boy's waist and belly and the incipient patch of pubic hair, and then crept down over his sturdy hips and flanks.

"And you'd better call me Payton, please. We could hardly be more intimate." Losithan sighed with ecstasy as the fingers drifted over his bottom, down the back of his thighs, and up to his bottom again, stroking it gently round and round, and occasionally gliding up his spine and ribs and back down to his behind again, to caress or pinch or squeeze. It had been his one great idea, the only one he had ever achieved, to wear no underpants and to drop his shorts at the right moment, and it had worked. A long finger probed deep down between his buttocks and then deeper still, until suddenly it was making the most delicious circling movements right inside him. Actual facts!

Losithan sighed again with ecstasy. After a while the hands slid away from his bottom, stole around his hips into his thighs, and gripped him firmly by the balls, but not so as to hurt. This immediately made him have an erection, which pressed, very hard and unmistakable, against Payton's body. "Sorry. It wants to go walkies," said Losithan pathetically, as if an erection was the last thing he had expected as a result of his great idea. He unhooked himself from the man's neck and sat on the bed again – his penis

pointing straight up at Payton's face, exactly like an adoring puppy gazing up at its master.

"Oh, going walkies? Is that what you boys call it?" chuckled Payton. He took hold of Losithan's shirt and peeled it off. "Well, there's nothing better than a young puppy for teasing an old dog into activity. Pull back those bedclothes and lie down, while I let my lurcher out of his kennel!"

Losithan began to wonder if it was all just a piece of teasing, like part of a lovely dream, and in half a minute he would be told to get dressed and stop being stupid.

Not so. In much less than half a minute, the man – "Payton, please"! – was lying back naked on the bed, with his penis thick and stiff, and Losithan had been lifted up at arm's length and was looking down on a naked, hairy chest and a smiling, perspiring face. Payton was definitely far stronger than you would have imagined. Their eyes met, and again Losithan experienced that strange electric-shock sensation. Slowly, and with some giggling when their privates met, he was lowered into position on top of that naked, hairy and unexpectedly hot body. He felt a delicious ache in his testicles under the pressure of his own naked, but only a little hairy, weight. Now he could add something else to the short list of what he knew – that this puberty thing really was ace, like they all said! What was more, he knew that it was supposed to last most of your life, even if you were as old as forty, like Payton must be. Great!

Losithan began to push up and down and, as the beautiful feelings in his privates grew lovelier and lovelier every second, he was sure he saw one of the naughty little, nude statues waggle its naughty little, horizontal willie at him, and wink! Actual facts!, but....