

*The Ninth  
Acolyte Reader*



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# Wild Boy

by Daniel Mallery

Late May and the sun was up. It was already pleasantly warm at a little after nine when I set out on foot wearing nought but tee-shirt, short shorts and stout hiking boots. My intention, to explore a remote and spectacularly ragged part of the country new to me.

By noon I was well off the beaten track and, as it had become too hot for walking, I sought shade. I presently came upon an agreeable spot where silver birch and rowan flourished beside a meandering watercourse. Picnicked on salmon sandwiches. The odd dragonfly helicoptered by. Bees strafed the bluebells. The white wood anemone and the yellow celandine fraternized in a shared bed.

It was so pleasant that I elected to bide a while, stretched out full length – and fell asleep. A stupid thing to do for I always feel lousy upon awakening – which I did an unbelievable four hours later. The sun had dispatched my protective shade and the fronts of my thighs were on fire. Sizzled when I bathed them!

Leaving the trees behind, I eventually attained an elevation of some two thousand feet – as my map contours attested. But which mountainside was I actually climbing? I'd forgotten my compass. No matter, another thousand feet would take me to the summit from where I would be better able to assess my position.

However, the appearance of wicked-looking thunderheads billowing in from what I supposed to be the west proved daunting, and as I toiled upwards I beheld the tumbling, angry looking mass of cloud already engaging other peaks, transforming the scene into an insane, yet thrilling, melange of light and shade, crag and sharp-toothed ridge. By the time I reached my summit thick mist obliterated everything. Panic threatened. Here I was, lost, alone, and not a single soul on earth had the remotest idea I existed. I stumbled downhill as a wind sprang from nowhere carrying with it the first drops of rain. I found myself in incredibly rock-bound territory where the going became increasingly difficult, coming at length to a cleft between high bluffs as the rain began falling in earnest. Scantly attired as I was, I'd have to find shelter quickly and hope the storm would pass.

A wide rock-strewn river in full spate barred my way. The crystal clear water eddied momentarily in giddy whirlpools before tumbling riotously from ledge to ledge in its rush to the sea. Seeking a way to cross, I came upon rocks arranged in a rough stepping stone configuration. In awe of the seething cataract, I began to make my way over, gave my weight to a rock that didn't want to know. It tilted, threw me off balance, pitched me headlong into shallows deep enough to soak me through. My rucksack, which I had carelessly slung over one shoulder, dislodged itself, was caught on the current and carried away before I could make a move. I had bashed a kneecap plumb center, and hauled myself from the torrent in great pain.

At my back was a forty-five degree scree-covered incline which some distance above gave way to perpendicular sandstone cliffs. I knew that caves were sometimes found where the angles met.

I dragged myself up the streaming slope on all-fours, the wind-thrashed rain needling through my thin shirt. I did, indeed, find a hole I could crawl into. It was little more than an oversized rabbit warren. Easing inside, I rolled on to my back the better to check the storm's progress, but the wind gusted into the hole and I was forced to withdraw still further, elbowing myself into the awful darkness. Then suddenly, the ground gave way beneath me. I was falling. Not far. A few feet only. Dumped unceremoniously on my back – on a dry, dust-covered floor.

I sustained no further injury but my heart pounded. I couldn't see a thing. Yet even as I lay there my eyes were accustoming themselves to a new phenomenon. The blackness was slowly giving way to a faint greenish glow I took to be residual phosphorescence, reckoned to be a constituent of certain rock types. Still pretty dim, but light enough to give me a bearing. There was sufficient headroom. I stood, toe-tipping the ground with my injured leg, and looked around. Although unclear, the place gave every indication of having immense proportions. It was spooky too, and I had to get out of this equivocal spelunker's playground but quick!

My exit was above, just within my reach. As I scrambled towards it I heard something that caused me to stop short. I had already been aware of the faint trickle of falling water emanating from one of the darker recesses of this awesome cave, but there was more. A scratching, scabbling sort of sound. An animal sound. I was not alone!

Something else was sheltering with me. But what? It was no small animal, yet a larger specimen could not have gained entrance as I had. A fox perhaps? A wildcat? Was my presence causing it agitation? Animals, no matter the specie, can turn savage if they believe themselves cornered.

I don't frighten easily, but I readily admit to being scared shitless at that

moment I felt trapped, entombed. It was a conspiracy of elements. The thought of that immensity of rock above me, the darkness, the unfamiliarity, that unknown living 'thing' and my cold, wet self. Something scuffed me. Something warm. I shot away from my intended exit as if I'd touched a live wire. Sheer madness. How the hell would I ever find my way out if I strayed too far?

I sensed I was being watched as I stumbled into an alcove which, oddly enough, seemed warmer than the rest of the place. Another shock. Something crunched underfoot. A closer inspection revealed piles of bones – animal bones, small, larger. Human bones too for all I knew. Bits of fur, feathers, decaying flesh and – a partially devoured rabbit! The smell was abominable. I turned to run again. It was upon me.

Fleeting I beheld a dark shape. My sub-conscious flashed 'human'. My conscious wasn't sure. Claws deeply scored my cheek, neck and shoulder. The creature gave out with a curious sound – a voiceless 'haarr' on an indrawn breath – a chilling, reptilian sound! I howled with pain as I felt the warmth of my own blood trickling down my back. Something gave me a shove. I got the message. I wasn't wanted!

I lurched blindly towards the opening, located it, (though exactly how I found it I have no recollection) scrambled up and out.

Damn the weather, I shouted aloud, exploding from the cave and toppling ass over tip down the long incline, ending in a dazed, sodden heap at its foot.

It was a little after twelve when I hit home-base on what had become a terrible night. The rain had turned torrential, driven almost horizontal by a continuous blast from the Atlantic. I was filled with questions about who or what had been my assailant. I immersed my grime-encrusted, pain-racked body in a hot bath. Then tended my wounds as best I could. Calamined my thighs, massaged my knee and examined the injury sustained in the cave. There were four deep, more or less parallel scratches stretching from my right lower jaw to midway down my shoulder blade, via the side of my neck. It stung like holy hell – the marks of a beast! A tetanus jag was beyond my reach. I'd have to take my chances. What was it? I was to find out that very same night.

I haven't always lived alone. Redundant to an ailing industry (identity immaterial) and possessed of the disposition of a sloth meant I suffered little sense of loss. Especially since darling providence blessed me with propitious concurrency and married me into money. I considered myself inviolably heterosexual (and still do, in spite of much that

follows) and sweet Etta gave out – came on strong – satisfaction guaranteed – as and when. But what we had together foundered early on the jagged rocks of incompatibility, and it came to pass that any kind of stand-up response on my part would have demanded the sturdiest scaffolding. Not that she cared – or ever discovered. As Henrietta Shumlin she was an accomplished and best-selling writer of travel books, with a voracious (thankfully not contagious) itineracy which took her far from me for happily extended periods – and I mean far! Upshot: She fell foul of savages in some godforsaken Third World jungle. Curtains. So I took the money and ran. Clive Shumlin, her dead number one, had bequeathed to her a considerable packet also!

Me, being an anti-social beast, chose reclusion and settled in this isolated, tumble-down croft house beside Destitution Road. Now a full-fledged byway (label defunct), it had been little more than a footpath during the last century when notoriety named it – when that shameful blight on Scottish history known as 'the Highland clearances' took place – when sheep took precedence over man – when crofters were burned out of their homes to make way for the money grubbers. Many hundreds trekked this way making for the coast and passage to Nova Scotia. That such atrocities could have occurred in this desolate, yet ravishingly beautiful land is almost beyond belief.

We came upon the place years ago when Extinct Etta had been researching her much loved epic, *High on the Highlands*. Of the building little remained. Just the four crumbling walls with holes where windows had been, nothing else. But I remembered it, had fallen in love with it, was determined one day to return. Something about it fired my soul. I had to own it.

The property was acquired following difficult negotiation. The factor, the queerly monickered Maximilian Fortescue-Pook, acting on behalf of some obscure landowning laird or other, opposed me from the start. He wanted the sad heap of stone to remain just as it had for some one hundred and fifty years or more, heaven knows why. However, after months of haggle, and for an extortive sum the invisible man couldn't refuse, I swung it. The exposed cottage can be seen from great distances, standing in defiant isolation almost at the head of a vast declivitous expanse of fissured rock slab, hardy wind-blown moor grass and sparse shrub – my 'garden' as far as the eye can see.

I'm sans mod cons as might be deduced. No electricity – pylons dare not bestride my territory. So it's bottled gas, (which heats my water and my food), charming chemical toiletry, piped water from a stream (called a 'burn'

here) that sparkles on its merry way through my private acreage. People are flogging water like mine and making a mint.

It was here I sat in solitary but regal splendor, king of the castle and of all I survey, monosexual, with twin orbs and scepter for playthings, and Fatcat, my ginger and white mouser, my only courtier.

Following restoration, and by now feeling a little less reclusive, I had an idea I would throw out an extension and turn me into a 'themed' tourist tea room. It wasn't on. Planning permission denied. I discovered I'd been stymied yet again by – you guessed it – Max Factor, a pain in the pan if ever there was one. But listen to this: You haven't heard the last of that odious fellow quite yet...

I dropped off at last but was brought back to my senses with a start. The wind was battering my building with unrelenting ferocity. Fatcat was yowling, spitting. I grabbed my flashlight. He was standing at the kitchen door, back high-arched, fur erect. There was a crash as of breaking glass. Oh my god, now what? One crisis a day is one too many. Another crash. More breaking glass. Scuffling. Someone was in there all right, no question. How to tackle the intruder? I had no weapons but my fists. I strode manfully towards the door. Fatcat was retreating. Bad omen. I flung the door back on it hinges...

But there was no one there! Just a smashed window, frame included, through which the storm was gaining entrance. I hosed the torch beam around. Food store door open. Contents of shelves therein awry. A sudden flash of lightning and a rumble of thunder. The wind gusted and the drapes flapped wildly. I spotted a broken honey jar on the deck, its contents running free, merging with... blood splatters on the vinyl floor tiles!

But for the blood I would have accepted that the raging elements had been responsible. My nerves were a-jangle again. Impulsively I left the cottage and executed an on-the-double complete circuit. What I'd expected to find I had no thought. I felt threatened and decidedly ill. How could I sleep now? I tacked a makeshift waterproof covering across the broken window, closed the door on the mess and put match to the fire. Inside twenty minutes a hearty blaze raged. I made a hot drink, stoked my pipe and settled down beside the psychological security the warmth and radiance engendered – and began to feel a little more human again.

It was to be short-lived. Now that the fire was burning where was Fatcat? I guessed he'd slipped out when I had – but he hated the wet...

Taking the torch, I opened the door and was almost flung off my feet by the force of the gale. I'd taken but a single step when I stumbled against

something, shone the torch beam at my feet and – there he lay, my poor soaked puss in a horrible death contortion, his head partially severed! Nauseated, I charged inside again, slammed and bolted the door, and stood with my back to it, shattered.

A killer was loose and for the first time ever my lone existence was suddenly terrifying. There was no one I could turn to for help. Figuring I had to try to get some sleep in spite of my fear, I tended the fire, crawled into bed – and shivered beneath the covers.

Somnolence struck at length and I dozed off, but it couldn't have been for very long. There came another almighty crash which slammed me awake again. Whether real sound or dream sound I was given no time to decide. The beast was upon me! In one fell swoop the covers were swept aside and I was dragged (by my hair!) from the bed. I crashed to the floor face down, catching my forehead a painful blow. It was too dark to see anything – even if I'd been given time. My pants were ripped off, rendering me stark naked. Something – somebody I had figured by now – with the strength of ten was pressing me flat out with my head twisted sideways on the carpet. One forearm was crushing my neck. The other, claw-tipped, aggravated my sore shoulder. Sinewy legs flanked my own. I was totally and immovably encumbered by a cold, wet, and seemingly unclothed body – stretched out full length on top of me – so strongly secured that resistance was impossible.

I couldn't organize my thoughts. My neural pathways were so thickly clogged with fear that I have now only vague impressions of what happened at the time. Retrospect allowed rationalization. I was horrified. Was he a thief? Why didn't he speak? Did he know I was a rich man? Surely he wasn't about to kill me. He'd get nothing that way. Now I began to realize what it was he wanted. Something solid was probing the area around my anus. Entry was being attempted. Jesus Christ! I was actually about to be raped! There was a stickiness and a slipperiness as a rod of iron was slowly finding its way inside of me. I howled with pain.

I found my voice at last. "You deranged bastard!" I yelled, as best I might through twisted larynx, "Are you insane? What in god's name d'yer think you're doing? Get the hell out of here!"

No verbal response. Inch by agonizing inch of rock-hard penile tissue penetrated deeper and ever more deeply, and, grunting like a stuck pig, the creature began belting away like some monstrous pile-driver gone berserk. The beast had settled its head – which seemed over-abundantly hirsute – beside my own and was breathing more or less directly into my face. Talking was almost out of the question but I did manage to utter something to the effect, "You're a dead man, d'yer know



that? You'll never – you'll never leave this place – alive when I get – my mitts on you. Are you hearing me, you fuck-face bastard? Why don't you answer?"

I retched. I gasped for air. I felt my neck would snap under the enormous pressure. Felt my rectum would burst. I know I cried out. The pain was blinding. Another nightmare. I believe I passed out momentarily. My assailant was breathing harder and pumping with such demonic ferocity that at every down thrust the breath was expelled from my lungs with agonizing force.

Presently I experienced a number of spasmodic jerks and knew he must have ejaculated, though, oddly, I don't think I felt the result. I was benumbed. At that point I expected him to release me, but no. He didn't disconnect, just stayed put. His body, now evidently relaxed, weighed down heavily upon me. I still couldn't move my head very much because my neck was in cramp. I could feel a warm sweatiness where his legs rested against mine. I couldn't avoid breathing his earthy, animal scents. I tried to communicate again but it was unavailing. His respiration had become steady, rhythmic. Now what? His flaccid sex-piece had not disengaged and his dead-weight was tremendous. Why wasn't he moving? What more did he want from me? I was, by now, curious to know what my strange attacker looked like. "Okay, mad bastard, you had your fun. You gonna move it, or what?" I murmured. Again, no response. If I could get out from under him I would be in a better position to retaliate, and retaliate I would with matching violence. This maniac would get his head bashed in. By very careful and arduous maneuvering I managed squirm to one side, rolling him over on to his back at the same time. He hadn't tried to stop me. It was as if he'd expended his energy quota and was willing just to lie there.

Rising painfully, I located the flashlight, ready to clobber him with it if he made a move. But – in its sudden glare I beheld – a boy! A mere child! Stark naked. I was stupefied. More than that. I was momentarily paralyzed. My arm, raised for action, lowered again jerkily, robot-like. The lad's eyes were wide open, but registering no alarm, and though the torch beam played directly on his face he didn't blink. He simply continued to lie quite still, staring into the light. Fascinated by it, it seemed. Or hypnotized. What in heaven's name was all this about? What was happening here?

My mind was bombarded by all manner of simultaneous impressions. The anger, the tension, the fight that had been in me the moment before drained magically away. His vicious assault upon my person suddenly seemed a little less repugnant. Oddly, my senses had become a swirl of

mixed emotions; sympathy, wonder, elation – even covetousness. I knelt beside him uncomprehendingly, not immediately daring to put a hand on him. Why did he remain thus? Why didn't he flee? Did he feel no shame or remorse? I looked his long prone body up and down. He was a little taller than myself, but of similar stature – that is he was narrow of hip and waist and broad of shoulder. On the slender side, but clearly heavy-boned. He had a wild, tangled mass of hair in a thick dark ball that could never have known brush or scissors, and into which broken twigs and burrs had worked their way. His lips were full and out-turned, but dry and cracked. His nose, a little flat, a little broader than accidentally regular. I learned nothing from his face which was completely expressionless. I reckoned he would be perhaps fourteen or fifteen, but appearing much more mature. He was dirt-scuffed, filthy from head to foot. His grimed hands bore the long, curving, almost claw-like, fingernails that had inflicted the scratches on my neck and back. The undersides of his long, high-arched feet were hard as hide. His legs thickly covered with matted hair. His abundant pubic hair (encompassing enviably substantial genitalia) was reaching towards his navel. His skin appeared to have been exposed to all weathers for some considerable time. There was the odd healed scratch or two on his marvelous torso. I suspected that beneath that unkempt exterior must reside a very handsome boy. Damn it, Pete, I told myself, quit hedging. This boy does something to you. This is sheer physical perfection lying here before you. Beauty incarnate. He can't be chastised for the wretched act he's committed. You have to know more.

It was with growing interest that I watched his abdomen slowly rising and falling as his steady breathing continued. I was almost moved to tears, for my hate, my hurt, my earlier repulsion was rapidly dissolving. I had a hundred questions. Who the devil was this kid? From whom had he run and why? Was his dwelling – his only home – that awful stinking cave in which I had first encountered him? And, more importantly, what on earth should I do about him?

I was seized by a strong desire to embrace him. I still couldn't understand why he made no attempt to move or to speak. I took a chance and rested a hand on his shoulder – and wished I hadn't. He rallied, rolled aside, snapped into a crouched position, eyed me suspiciously, wildly, and shot to his feet. He snarled – actually snarled – then retreated to the furthest reaches of the room – his movements a mix of human youthfulness and animal agility and cunning. He was regarding me as a cornered beast might regard a potential aggressor.

"It's okay, son. Nobody's gonna hurt you. Come – sit here and let's

talk." I patted the bedcovers. "You can forget what you did. I won't hold that against you. Come and tell me your name? Mine's Pete, Pete Haskell."

He gave out with his alligator sound again and advanced as if to attack, his lengthy dangler lashing about like a lamb's tail. He brushed past, almost bowled me over, vanished into the kitchen and made his exit through the broken window. I ran to the window and called after him. I watched him hare away like a cheetah into what was left of the night. He was gone from me. I'd failed to win his confidence. I cursed and slung unmeasured whiskey into a glass – reflecting a moment on what the legal position might be if I reported him. Not that I had any intention of doing so – a conclusion drawn for no other reason than he had been a boy. Raped by a boy – wow! No, he would not be betrayed.

I hovered in that strange half-world between sleep and restless wakefulness for the remainder of that night, and I dreamed I was myself a young boy again, floating, it seemed, outside the wrought iron gates over which a proscenium-like arch turned schoolyard into stage. Thronged with ghost-boys at play. The stone arch, overhung by the horse chestnut whose huge palmate leaves, like fingers, fondled it. Many a lad had straddled that arch (adult eyes turned) pursuing the fruits of autumn for their knotted strings. At the center of the span there was a single word, BOYS, chiseled into bold relief, across which eager young legs swung to and fro. Boys! Even the word is magical. The dream bubble popped. Ah yes, I remember now. I had good times in school! It was at that point I forced myself, not unwillingly, to accept that, though heartily hetero (as I understood the term) I did have a special additional fondness for – boys.

Dismal was the dawn when it deigned to put in an appearance. And as the day began so it remained, matching my mood piece for piece. I couldn't get the strange lad out of my head. I had stumbled upon the lair of 'a wild boy', fantastic as it must seem. Someone's child mislaid when young? A baby. But if so, how the hell had he managed to survive without Tarzan's apes or Mowgli's wolves? Sure, he'd found himself a cozy cave, and it's my guess that if you've never experienced civilization's niceties, you'll never miss them.

But how had he managed to escape the attention of the media all those years? Was I truly the first human he'd chanced upon? I had to have been the first. I found it hard to imagine that anyone else would have kept quiet about him. One immediate question remained: What should be my next move?

And then it struck me. A revelation. I suddenly knew who he was!

Since moving here I had learned that a dozen or so years ago there had lived, in the village, a middle-aged spinster named Morag McLusky, an odd sort of creature with marbles missing, though – 'twas thought – not enough to warrant her removal from society. The butt of much ribaldry from the younger set, she became known locally as Mad Morag. Folks would put up with her 'cootchy-cooing' over their perambulated offspring because, deep down, they sympathized. Then, one day she vanished – and to this day has never been traced. And on the very same day, the baby of a couple new to the area also vanished – and has never been recovered. Putting two and two together was scarcely ever easier. Morag had done a bunk with less than two-years-old (get this) Marmaduke Fortescue-Pook! Glee was evidently rampant because the Fortescue-Pooks – up from London – were generally unpopular. Quite naturally, the plight of baby Marmaduke evoked a different response. What could have become of the poor little feller?

Too much of a coincidence, it may be thought, but it happened to be true. Marmaduke lived! And if I could only relocate and tame him, he'd be mine forever. Of course, that name would have to go.

I was very much under the weather for the remainder of the day following the attack. My scratches stung, my backside was sore, my bruised knee plagued and I suspected the imminence of the common cold. And as the elements continued to rage there was no question of trying to retrace my steps. It transpired I didn't have to. Feeling somewhat sorry for myself, I partook of several hot toddys (whiskey and lemonade) and packed in early. No sense in hanging about. The overcast sky induced early darkness with a vengeance. And my weakened state knocked me out with a similar heavy hand.

I had no idea how long I'd slept, but was awakened again by noises from the kitchen. My window covering had suffered stove-in. He was back. I sat up, at once thrilled and terrified. I did not want to be taken as before and speculated on how I might tackle my wild boy this night. I ignited a gas lantern. At that same moment he exploded into view. He simply stood there in semi-shadow, staring, looking nerve-shatteringly savage – like something out of Hitchcock. Water coursed from his hair, streaking his fine stolid frame and sturdy legs with dirt-flanked rivulets. It dripped from his penis like pee. (It was, I later discovered!) An apparition, at once hideous, intimidating, stupendous! The fact that I was on to him seemed to have stopped him in his tracks. He stood, muscles flexed, legs astride, arms raised out from his sides a little, palms forward,

fingers curled, poised to – pounce?

I stepped slowly from my bed feeling, I assumed, like a lion-tamer confronting a beast for the first time. I clenched my fists, set to bop him one if he turned nasty.

There was what I took to be dried blood on his lips. I hadn't considered it before, but recalling Mad Morag again, cannibalism crossed my mind. She must have nursed the stolen infant to begin with, but I couldn't see a nutty spinster lasting long in such a harsh environment. The baby's intact instincts must have protected him. But I pondered; might some of those bones, back in the cave, be hers? Had she merely decomposed over the years or had she been eaten? The thoughts gave me pause, but thrusting them aside and, with arms essaying a supplicatory gesture, I took one step forward. The move provoked one of his voiceless snarls, but he stood his ground with eyes flashing. He couldn't talk. That was evident. He could never have learned how. I would try speaking to him, but I guessed he wouldn't understand.

"Don't be afraid, son. I won't hurt you, and I know you don't want to hurt me." I sat on the bed and invited him, by sign, to join me. Nothing. I wondered if he'd respond to the sound of his name. A pre-two would surely have learned his own name. What did I know? Maybe he hadn't. But I had to try, though I could hardly bring myself to say it. Who but pater Pook could have labeled his son thus? "Please sit – Marmaduke."

I figured I'd made some sort of impression. His head cocked to one side ever so slightly – but now he looked set for flight. "Please, Marma – Mark, Mark (I reckoned on establishing the new name while the going was good), please, Mark, don't run. Come to me."

No go. I wasn't getting through. I felt defeated – sad. I wanted so very much to play with him – to have him play with me. I wanted to feed him – to clean him up, but I might just as well have been trying to communicate with a fish.

I rose to my feet again slowly and advanced towards him, at pains not to appear threatening. I succeeded in getting close enough to place my hand on his upper arm – gently stroking a bicep as hard as steel. That did it! He shrank from my touch and his teeth bared in a snarl.

I noted his canines were larger than is usual – of necessity I supposed. He'd need them for tearing the raw flesh he obviously survived on. I don't infer they were unpleasantly large. No Dracula he, yet he looked incredibly fierce (fierceness in which dwelt a savage beauty) and for one brief moment I thought I was going to be attacked

again. But he gave vent to a high-pitched, ear-piercing shriek and bolted. Like a flash he brushed by me and was gone – back through the broken window. I'd failed. Forlorn, I sealed the gap again and put the kettle on.

I crawled into bed at length wishing like hell that the object of my new affection would put in a reappearance. Affection? Oh yes. I needed that wild creature as much as I figured he needed me. To that moment I'd needed no one. I'd been alone but never lonely. He'd already transformed me, in ways that even a couple of days ago I could never have imagined. Now I needed someone to touch, to love – and to be loved in return. If only I could get him to understand that. If only he would allow me to shape him the way I'd like. If only he would come back...

If he did return I'd be ready. I hardly dared to breathe, for no sound however small must be allowed to escape my auditory sense. He'd taken me by surprise before and, flat on my face, I'd been helpless. But I was no wimp. I knew also that I was more than a match for him if prepared. I was prepared. My preparedness was not unrewarded. He was back. I sensed his presence even before I heard the gentle rattling at my covered window. No forceful entry this time. He was clearly trying to gain entrance without my knowledge. With baited breath I sat up, back rested on the headboard, and awaited his reappearance.

He exploded into my field of view as he had before – evidently a characteristic of his. Having done so, he stayed where he was – motionless.

I opted for entreaty again, arms held wide, fingers splayed, reiterating in a whisper what I'd said before.

At first hesitant, the boy stepped forward. He was coming – slowly.

To avoid precipitating attack, or flight, I rose equally slowly. Even as he approached, his fierce expression visibly softened. I thought I detected a smidgen of appeal. My excitement was boundless as he literally melted into my arms. We stood together, skin on skin, his head on my shoulder, mine on his, chest to chest, thigh to thigh, mutually aroused genitalia in reckless contact, my hands everywhere at once, his shoulders, the small of his back, his hard bulbaceous buttocks, his hard, sturdy musculature. He was astonishingly reticent, quite the reverse of his previous behavior. It seemed that on this occasion I must be the master. He didn't know what to do with his hands. I took hold of them and molded them to my own body. My pulse raced, and though my reader may doubt my exposition, it is absolutely true to say that in all my years I have never experienced such sexual stimulation and elation. I

didn't mind the filth. I didn't mind his animal smell. Eroticism complemented to perfection.

By physical suggestion alone I prevailed upon my companion first to sit on the bed and then to lie down face uppermost. I gently lowered myself on top of him, an action to which he showed no resistance. It had crossed my mind that he might have felt himself unwillingly, unwittingly constrained. Not so. He became more relaxed and submissive by the second. His eyes. You can have no conception of the way his eyes shone. Their luster diffuse, darting delightfully, taking in every facet of my features as well as our immediate surroundings. And then softening, whereupon his pencil-line eyebrows were enlisted to help fashion irresistible wistfulness. I melted. The more I gazed upon him, the more I came to realize just how finely featured he was. Damn it, this guy was handsome, downright beautiful! That I should find myself faced with such an incredibly fortuitous circumstance was almost beyond my comprehension. His lips. Very full, still sorely flawed, still with a smattering of dried blood to one corner, not in the least off-putting. I ran the fingers of both hands into his thick tangle of hair and grabbed a hold. His face, initially seen in all its feral glory was consigned to another focal plane as I slowly lowered my head, bringing my lips into communion with his, licking a little to moisten, adhering myself to him, invoking (as I knew by then) conterminous rapture.

We remained thus for some little while. I was ever aware that two protesting phalluses were in dire need of appeasement as his hands became more animate, searching, exploring my body, stroking, prodding, sensual, inciting even greater passion. We took to writhing with almost ferocious abandon during which each and every part of our lusty bodies were brought into electrifying contact. I endured a sensory barrage of such massive proportions I might easily have blacked out. I rolled off to one side at length and wrapped my hand around his rock-hard and damp-ready appendage – and worked on him. And worked. By now his cock was throbbing masterfully. It pulsed strongly several times preceding ejaculation. His vital body shuddered violently, and relief came to him at last. He took me to himself again. Anaconda constriction! If only he could speak, I thought, finding breathing difficult. If only he could put into words the way he was feeling. I knew how I was feeling. My balls were paining me something awful, my sustained erection the cause. I wondered if I could get him to satisfy me – or would I have to guide him once more? I have to say here and now that I enjoyed having brought this dynamic young boy to climax. My head

was resting on his heaving breast and I was exhilarated beyond recall to be held thus – and then – out of the blue, taking my actions as his example, he grasped my hard-on with a suddenness and determination that precipitated an involuntary yelp. Banging away for all he was worth. Good god! He was tremendous, colossal. I had to coax him into slowing down a little for I knew it would all be over far too quickly otherwise. He was left-handed, so there had been no need to switch positions. I wrapped a spare arm around him and nuzzled into his shoulder and planted little kisses in the dip back of his dirt-grimed collarbone. I ranged across his taut abdomen and toyed with his navel. My senses soared. I belonged. I actually belonged to someone. Someone who liked being with me as much as I liked being with him.

Without question, the human boy has something special, something magic that those who scorn such liaison could never have experienced. Why deem it unlawful? It isn't molestation. It isn't child abuse. It isn't homosexuality. I did not (and still do not) consider myself homosexual. Sexual predilection or proclivity had nothing to do with it. Compatibility was all. Catch as catch can. Grab your pleasures in this life whenever opportunity presents. After all, I thought, this wonderful boy is doing exactly that. He knows nothing of man's silly rules. He isn't perverse. He is motivated by animal instinct alone. Which is what those who wax hysterical on matters sexual seem to have forgotten. We are all still animal at base. There can be nothing wrong with close association with another animal body, whatever its sex happens to be.

I do not for one moment suggest that Ralph Waldo Emerson meant quite this when he wrote:

*All our progress is an unfolding, like a vegetable bud. You have first an instinct, then an opinion, then a knowledge as the plant has root, bud and fruit. Trust the instinct to the end, though you can render no reason. By trusting it to the end, it shall ripen into truth, and you shall know why you believe...*, but by god, I like to think it possible.

I was, by then, experiencing the tingly sensations signaling the approach of discharge, and as the climactic moment occurred, I found myself clinging to my young benefactor ever more tightly. After which, temporarily sated, we cooled off somewhat.

It crossed my mind that I ought to attempt to get him into a hot bath; to soften up his claws so that I might trim them for him; to find out what his hair really looked like; to discover the true boy that lurked beneath the grime.

It was not to be. He suddenly became restless, and minutes later



shot up from the bed, and without even a backward glance he left the way he had come. I watched his receding figure as another gray day began to dawn. His action saddened me, yet in my sadness stirred hope. I knew this wouldn't be the last time I saw him. Though he couldn't express it in words, he knew he would suffer no hurt at my hands. He would return again – and again. It wasn't until later that it became obvious here was a nocturnal animal, hiding by day, a carnivorous animal, hunting by night. Survival. What a boy! What a character! How he had survived on his own all those years was nothing less than miraculous.

When he came the next night I resolved to set food before him. My head was filled with thoughts of what I might do if I could get him to stick with me. How would he take to clothing? Would he bathe? How would he tackle offered food? Could I teach him to communicate verbally? In short, could I get him to stay here? No one would know of his existence. The more I thought of extant possibilities, the more excited I became. Although I have been a loner I have never felt lonely, but the idea that I might share my future with another presented as distinctly agreeable.

I breakfasted early, drove to the city, enjoyed a day-long buying spree. The nice storeman, a shrewd operator who knew a sucker when he saw one, furnished me with an over-abundance of teenage in-gear of staggeringly colorful array. I got gray marl, fluorescent green, silver, Krakatoa red, prepuce pink! Size no problem. The lad's dimensions matched mine, more or less. I bought shell suits, socks, underpants, Levi's, trainers, tee-shirts – and chocolate! He could never have sampled chocolate, one of the top taste-bud titillators known to man. I chose the brand that helps you work, rest and play!

I devised an additional form of enticement as darkness fell. The irresistible aroma of frying bacon was hanging on the air in the immediate vicinity of my abode. Hoping I could encourage him to come and go by the back door, I left it ajar. The air was warm and there was no rain, though no stars meant the sky was still overcast.

I waited, began to feel edgy, impatient. I poured myself a goodly measure of 'the water of life', in this instance an Islay malt, lit my pipe, took a pew by the kitchen door. And waited.

I was in the act of replenishing my glass when soft padding was heard approaching the cottage. And there he was! There he bloody well was, large as life, twice as handsome, and it was at that point it hit me. I loved this strange, rugged creature – with all my heart. I would have

been devastated if I could not have seen him again. He didn't appear as pleased to see me. In fact, he seemed incapable of evincing any kind of facial expression.

The fry-pan was his first objective. He shrugged off my attempt to embrace him en route. Injured, I took my seat again, drained my glass, refilled it, and watched him. He seized a rasher and dropped it again as though stung. It fell to the floor. He hissed. Hot food had come as a surprise to him. He seized the pan by its handle and dashed that to the floor too, scattering the remaining bacon pieces. He ripped the covering from the broken window and, at first, I thought he was about to leave. His anger was scary. I was no longer sure I could handle him if he turned violent. Mad dogs take some restraining. He hissed again when his arm strayed too close to the Calor jet which still burned low. The open bread bin had caught his eye. The smell of fresh bread, purchased that day, must have assailed his nostrils. He snatched one of the loaves, ripped it apart, and began to devour it, greedily, guardedly, retiring to a corner of the room with it, caveman style. I retrieved the bacon pieces, almost cold by now, and offered them to him. Still into the bread he grunted and turned from me. I was greatly saddened by his behavior, had expected a more docile, loving disposition. I began to think I had made one god-almighty blunder, had expected too much of him. It was almost as if, as far as he was concerned, I didn't exist.

I resumed my seat somewhat disconsolately, contenting myself with a re-appraisal of the standing figure. (He was by now eating the bacon too.) His naked appearance was thrilling to behold, dirt-encrusted though it was. Just looking at him gave me a hard-on. He was lithe, sinewy, spirited, alive! His concave back with a spinal column buried in the deep valley 'twixt twin muscular ridges, his flat stomach and well-developed pectorals, his broad shoulders, his remarkably handsome genitals, his marvelously shaped animal legs built for speed, his long, sturdily arched feet. My towering testosteronic (new word!) terror! I wanted to ravage him again. I had to make him mine. I removed the wrapper from a Mars bar and offered it. He snatched it, looked at it suspiciously, sniffed it, and stuffed almost all of it into his mouth at one go. Now I was being noticed. He had seen from whence the chocolate bar had come, seen there were more, and with grunts and gestures he was requesting, demanding, more of the same. I obliged. When it seemed he had eaten his fill I turned courageous and approached him, arms outstretched, and at last he succumbed. I hugged him voraciously.

"Oh, Mark, my wonderful boy," I breathed, "if only you could

understand. If only I could help you to understand. You and me, we belong to each other. Please help me to help you, son. You must, you simply must." I couldn't stop these inane utterances. There was no real point in saying anything at all, except that I was somehow compelled to give voice to my thoughts. His animal dynamism was tremendous, would take some shifting, and it occurred to me that maybe I shouldn't even try.

Why change him? Why try to make him 'normal'? He seemed perfectly happy the way he was, and heaven knows, there's precious little happiness to be gotten from life as forces around us have dictated it ought to be. We're living in an age where the human animal is teetering on the edge of total collapse. Where no persons are free, though propaganda tells them they are. Where there's a surfeit of humankind. Where disease is more rampant than ever. Where violence erupts at the snap of a finger. Where water and air, the very stuff of life, are poisoned.

*The sinew and heart of man seem to be drawn out, and we are become timorous, desponding whimperers. We are afraid of truth, afraid of death, and afraid of each other. Our age yields no great and perfect persons. We want men and women who shall renovate life and our social state, but we see that most natures are insolvent, cannot satisfy their own wants, have an ambition out of all proportion to their practical force, and do lean and beg day and night continually. Our housekeeping is mendicant, our arts, our occupations, our marriages, our religion, we have not chosen, but society has chosen for us. We are parlor soldiers. We shun the rugged battle of fate, where strength is born.* (Emerson again.)

Surely, it would be folly on a monumental scale to force him into such a world.

And yet I longed for closer intellectual and emotional communion with him. From his side, it was nothing more than animal gratification. There was no love in it. Perhaps time would alter that. Animals can learn to love human beings.

Anyway, suffice it now to say that after we had satisfied each other the night of which I currently speak, we lay in blissful relaxation until that silent, mysteriously innate alarm told my companion it was time to go.

On nine further consecutive occasions, this scheme of things, this succession of events as described, continued. Every night after dark he would appear, and just before dawn disappear again. I never saw him during daylight hours, and I made little or no headway in my attempts to

bring him closer to my way of living. The clothing meant nothing to him. If I tried to dress him he became vicious again. I could feed him, but he always took his food to a corner of the kitchen and ate alone, usually haunch squatted, rocking back and forth on the balls of his feet. (It's said that rocking in youngsters has some psychological significance – resulting from mother-love deprivation.) He also lapped up liquids like a cat – a pitiful little act that confounded and dismayed me. Sexual contact survived – almost to the point of exhaustion on my part.

But I was due a terrible shock. On the tenth night he didn't show! Nor on the eleventh or twelfth. I was utterly desolate as I'd known I would be. Had he tired of me? Had he had an accident? I thought to visit his cave, but I wasn't sure I could ever find it again. What the hell could I do?

Frantic, I drove into the village. Couldn't live with myself. Had to get out of the house. I bought a copy of the local rag, something I rarely did. It was almost as if something had told me to buy that paper. From it I learned that my boy had been 'captured'. A group of tourist hill-walkers following a local guide had, by chance, stumbled across 'a naked boy' whom they had overcome despite a fierce struggle. He had acted 'like a mad dog', I read, had bitten some of his captors, had clawed their eyes. One walker had been hospitalized with serious neck injuries, his jugular having escaped severance by mere millimeters. (Good for you, son, fight. Fight them!) He was being held in a local lock-up where police inquiries had been unproductive. It seemed clear, from the report, that no one had yet tumbled to his true identity, (was F-P out of town?) and he was expected to be carted off to some medical rehabilitation center early next week, if efforts to get him to talk continued unavailing. As I read, my vision clouded over. I was filled with fear, anger, grief.

My first impulse was to go down there and claim him as my own son, which would have been absolute folly. How could I claim to have a son who ran around naked and whose comport was animal-like? But what else? Could I just sit and do nothing whilst my own lad was being subjected to fates that, for him, would be worse than death? This was a free-ranging animal who would hate being caged.

Jesus! My feeling of helplessness was overwhelming. All my mind-blowing conjecture got me no place. I'd been happy alone before, but I never would be again. I divined no future for me without my boy.

As it transpired, all of my fears had been unfounded.

It was approaching midnight on the day the boy was to have been transferred. I'd had more than enough to drink but my wooziness was

instantly dispatched when I heard frenzied scrabbling and thumping on my back door. Who else but my Mark? The rain (which can go on for weeks at a time here) was torrential again. I tore to the door, opened it and... the sudden surge of elation I experienced was so colossal it damn near cracked my skull. My boy exploded into the room, threw his arms around me, almost bowling me over and – and – he was making human sounds! And exhibiting human emotion for the first time. He was actually crying, sobbing his terror-stricken young heart out as he clung to me, still naked, wet, shivering, tears mingling with the water coursing from his sodden hair. I was overcome with sympathy and with speculation too, much of which I verbalized – intonations now guessed at for the true spirit of that moment eludes me. My mind was running amok.

"Oh Mark, Mark, my own boy, don't cry, son. You're safe now. I've got you now, Mark, I'll look after you. But how did you get away? Is anyone following you? Christ, my lad, I hope you didn't kill anyone – or maim anyone else so bad they'll seek retribution. Did you? You can't tell me. I know, son, I know. But now I've got to hide you. You can't be recaptured. I won't let it happen. Mark, you have to stay. They'll be out, they'll be scouring the countryside for you. But how did you get caught in the first place? Coming to see me – or leaving? Has some of your animal cunning deserted you already? Is it my fault? How in hell can I get you to understand? I'll hide you, son – but where? What if they come here? What am I saying – why would they come here? Because mine is the only human habitation for miles, that's why. The broken window! They'll know something's happened here. I should have repaired it. Jesus, Mark, I can't let them take you away again."

I thought aloud further. "If I could cut your hair, Mark, if I could get you to wear the clothing I bought, they wouldn't look twice at a smart, well-dressed boy. But you won't comprehend, will you, son? You won't understand that what I try to do will be for your own good. They must have put clothes on you while they had you. Did they? Did you rip them off?"

I drew back my head and looked directly into his tear-streaked face. His head was tilted to one side and in his eyes I saw confusion. He was trying hard to understand, I thought, but what I had said seemed to have meant little or nothing. This was all going to be a damn sight harder than I had envisaged, still assuming I could do anything at all.

I decided to try the bath, and leading him into the bathroom, I gently lowered him to the stool whilst I ran the hot tap, tempering the water,

knowing already that 'hot' triggered alarm. I knelt at his feet and nuzzled, nose and lips, the insides of his rain-soaked thighs, slowly and deliriously working my way groinwards. His body scents, wetness intensified, were infinitely more intoxicating than the booze I'd consumed. My closeness to this fascinating creature of the wild had become so stimulating, sexually, that I scarcely knew how to handle it.

However, I guessed that only by example would I ever get him to do what I wanted him to do. Reluctantly, I detached myself from him and unashamedly took off all my clothes. Then I took his hand and, to my delight, he stepped into the bath with me! A new beginning? The water turned almost swamp-like from the start, of course, but that didn't matter. What mattered was that I was able to hold him and be held by him. The warmth, though regarded with curiosity, seemed to have a strong appeal, and my nudity appeared more acceptable to him than did my clothed form, as witness his ready surrender to my touch. In blissful suffusion and practically overcome with emotion, my fingers, tactile boosted, embarked on an erotic reconnaissance, free-ranging all over his sensational young, wild, wet body. He too became considerably more animated and the two of us, squirming around in brimming swamp water did nothing for my bathroom. There was much slopping over. To properly describe my feelings that night as I wrestled with my boy demands a lexicology far greater than mine. My lasciviousness had hitherto been practically nil. Now here it was, burgeoning with volcanic might.

But enough of this. The outcome was that, following changes of water, I succeeded in coaxing clean my extraordinary wild boy. By my own hand I dried him, all over, extracting the utmost pleasure from each and every contour. Finally, I enveloped his head in the towel, took it close to my own, and rubbed his mop of hair until it was almost dry. How would he react to my intended next step? Which was to attempt a haircut. I gently lowered him to the stool again, fondled him a little to reassure him, then took up the scissors. He balked at sight of them and resisted, though not strenuously. I succeeded in cropping his hair to something resembling the crew cut of my own youth. I stood him in front of the mirror which, again, meant nothing to him. He was more interested in the fallen hair which he examined with curiosity. His hair was much softer now and lighter brown than I had imagined. He looked even more sensational. He allowed me to trim his finger and toe nails. His eyes shone even more brightly. His muscular physique gleamed, burnished bronze, from constant exposure to wind and weather. The new pubertal

hair on his legs was like luminescent gold thread, set off as if back-lit by his tanned skin. We hugged each other some more. He undoubtedly understood the importance of animal contact if little else. He was becoming infused with human feeling and, though he couldn't have regarded it as love, that's exactly what it was. The possibility that his love be denied me at some future time was unthinkable.

It was whilst we were thus employed that I heard a weak rasping sound coming from the lad's throat, and at first I thought he was choking, but the rasp took form. His facial muscles were working overtime, and from his trembling issued the hoarse, whispered, half-formed words, "Mar – Mar—" He was trying to speak. He was trying to say the name I had given him, or at any rate, I hoped it was the name I had given him.

"That's right, son," I exulted, "That's your name. Mark. Persevere, my lad. Say it again, please. Mark. Mark."

It was clearly painfully difficult for him. "Mar – Mar – k!"

"Good old feller. It's starting. You're talking. You're beginning to learn. You – Mark," (I pointed) "me – Pete." (You Tarzan, me Jane.) He lost interest. Don't push it – recognition will come, given time.

Next, I showed him the loft which could be reached through a trap door some eight feet above the kitchen. The counterbalanced door opened upwards. Standing on a stool, a quick shove, an arms heave-ho, and we were up there. The place was full of items which would have been better disposed of, but now they would serve a purpose if needed. I tried to indicate that if he hid along at the far end there would be little chance of discovery, should anyone wish to institute a search, for there was no light. He seemed to cotton on, but I was by no means certain. I heaped a pile of blankets behind a stack of tea chests.

I spent a good deal of the night trying to get him into one of the shell suits I had acquired. I did this by removing my own gear and then re-dressing. I succeeded at length. The suit gave him the itch and at first I thought he would rip the garments to shreds, but though he removed the jacket after a while, he retained the trousers which clung to his lanky loins loosely and delightfully slantwise. The sight of his long brown torso snaking upwards from the triple-elasticated waistband with the dangling tie-cord was as erotic-inducing as all get out. Truly fantastic.

Came the time when he would normally have left. His internal alarm had gone off and he was again looking disturbed. How could I tell him that if he ran he'd stand a good chance of being recaptured? He tried to pull away. I had to plead like crazy, as best I knew how. I indicated the trap door which we'd left open. I threw a pre-cooked chicken into the oven hoping the scent

would hold him. He quieted somewhat. He was proving incredibly trying and had I not cared for the boy as much as I did, I would have given the whole idea up as a bad job.

To my gratification he took the chicken (after I had cooled it a little) and scarpered into the loft with it. I accompanied him to be sure he took his place behind the tea chests. He seemed to settle down at last and all was silent as a new day broke. I was practically asleep on my feet and took to my own bed a little later.

At around mid-day I quietly heaved myself into the loft and found Mark soundly asleep in the hidey-hole exactly as I had last seen him. The sight of him, tightly curled in something paralleling a fetal position, surrounded by chicken bones, warmed my heart. I gathered up the bones and leaving him undisturbed, descended to the kitchen having closed the trap behind me.

And not a moment too soon. I heard the sound of an approaching car and went to the window. It was drizzling through a mist having the appearance of gray velvet – weather described as 'dreich' hereabouts. The car drew up and four men stepped from it. One uniformed police officer, two plain-clothes, (I presumed) and, to my complete surprise and consternation, Fortescue-Pook himself, the first and last named approaching my door.

I panicked inside, glanced around the room. Any incriminating evidence lying around? I hastily stuffed Mark's shell top under a cushion (why? it could have been my own) and prayed the lad would stay exactly as I had just seen him. How good a liar could I be? This would be the ultimate test I rushed to the door and opened it to preclude a boy-disturbing knock.

"Morning, gentlemen. Problems?" I said, trusting a heavy querulous look to conceal my liar's guilt.

"Good morning, sir. Well – nothing that need concern you overmuch I think," the uniform said. "I'm sorry to intrude on your privacy, but we're making inquiries about a missing child. Actually, this visit comes more in the nature of a warning you might say."

"A warning?"

"Yes, sir. This is no ordinary – erm – I wonder, may we step inside a moment The rain – but if it's inconvenient."

"Not at all. I'm sorry," I said – companionably, I hoped. I ushered him and Pooky in. The other two guys declined, evidently preferring to snoop around outside. "Two solid weeks now. We should be used to it I suppose."

"Right," the officer said. "Hope it clears up by next week. Holiday, y'know."

"Oh then, you'll be looking forward. Going away?" I glanced at Pukey who was wearing his accustomed sour expression. His beady eyes were all



over my room. He'd still love to see me uprooted. (My nerves were pricking. Don't move, Mark, for God's sake!)

"No – well, me and my lad hope to get some fishing in, up north."

"I wish you luck. I dabble myself, but not very successfully. Tea? Or coffee perhaps?"

"Thank you, no, sir, we've a lot on our plates just now. Oh, look, I'd forget my head. This is Councilor Fortescue. Councilor, Mr. –?"

"Haskell," said I, adding, "Yes, we've met." It came out rather more curtly than I had intended. I coughed to cover.

"How are you, Haskell?" he mumbled, not interested in how I was.

I wanted this visit over and done with. "You were saying, officer. A missing child. A warning?"

The police again. "Ah, yes. The reason we're around here, Mr. Haskell, is that we came upon this lad a few days ago, roaming the hills back there. You may have seen the news."

"No, I haven't. I've no radio or TV here and I don't get a paper unless I fetch it myself."

"He couldn't talk, the poor wee soul. It's our guess he's been living rough, maybe since he was a wee 'un."

"What – you mean you had him and he broke away?"

"That's right, sir. Jumped from a moving vehicle. Scarpered before we could stop. Actually, the councilor is anxious to trace him because, well – may I councilor?"

"Go ahead."

"A child of his was stolen, a baby he was, not quite two. Never traced. He has reason to believe this boy could be one and the same."

He was interrupted by the other men who appeared in the doorway at that point. "Footprints out here, Sid. Bare feet. He's been here, that's for sure."

"That's a turn-up," said Sid. "Would you know anything about this, sir?"

"No, I'm afraid I don't," I said, flashing a look of astonishment.

"You have a broken window," said one of the plain-clothes, rather too pointedly, I thought.

"That's true. I've been meaning to get it fixed. It was smashed during the night several weeks back, the night of the big storm. Put the shifts up me like crazy. At least, I put it down to the storm. You don't think –?"

"Dunno, sir. It could have been the lad – after food, y'know. Perhaps you startled him before he could gain entry."

"Could be. I certainly haven't seen anyone. I put up the plastic and went back to bed."

"What happened to your face, Haskell?" Pooky shot at me from the blue, fingering his own face to indicate site.

"Spot of bother with tree roots. Hiking. Fell into a river. Same day as the storm as a matter of fact. No sweat."

"Oh well, sorry to have troubled you, sir," Sid interjected, "but there's just one other thing. He may come back and, well, this character's pretty wild. He put one guy in hospital. If he should show up I wouldn't tackle him on your own if I were you. But we would appreciate it if you'd give us a ring."

"Sorry, officer, no phone either – but I'll get to the village as quickly as I can if I do see him." I was bolder now, and feeling deliciously perfidious. "But surely I could handle some kid. How old is he?"

"Fourteen and five months, if he's the councilor's son, but he's a tough customer best left to us."

"Whatever you think best, but I have a teenage son of my own. In special school just now because he had an accident – head injury – which affected his speech." Inspiration! Lay the groundwork now to allay possible future suspicion.

"Do you stay here alone, sir," asked the uniform, seeming only mildly interested.

"Except when Mark's home. Lost my wife some time ago. I'm a writer." I waved nonchalantly towards the book case hoping no one would look too closely. No one did.

"Oh well, we'll get along now. See if the tracks outside lead us anywhere."

"Surely. I must see these tracks for myself. Are you telling me he had no shoes on?"

"He had no clothes on at all, sir. Stark naked. Miracle he didn't snuff it, the kind o' weather we've been having."

"Regular little Tarzan by the sound of things." I followed him outside and together we examined the 'spoor', me feigning surprise. "What about dogs?" I went on, "Have you tried tracking him down with dogs?"

"Led us a merry dance they did, sir. We had to jack it in. Kep' on losing the scent. Weather didn't help, o' course."

"I suppose not. What can I say? I'm sorry. I hope you find him."

"Don't worry, and thanks for your co-operation, sir. We'll catch up with him."

Not if I can help it, I thought, as they drove off. I thought it unlikely they'd bother me again. They'd been wonderfully apologetic. But thank God the lad was a daytime sleeper.

A little later, flooded with relief, I returned to my boy's side with

feelings of liberation and vindication so great, I'd become supercharged with unyielding desire. He hadn't moved an inch, still maintained a fetal ball. I stripped and snuggled in at his back cocooning as much of him as my physical form allowed. He responded to my touch purring like a contented cat. "Mark, my young savage, you're safe at last, and mine forever. We're free, son, free!"

I wanted more. Coruscating shafts of pleasure and excitement shot through me anew as I shifted position, forcing my head between his strong thighs from below, so that one warm limb rested heavily on my neck. A delirium-inducing location, one in which I could happily remain indefinitely. He didn't move. I inched more closely to his genitals, nosing into them, inhaling deeply, shedding tears of emotion, and at last he came to life, squeezing me almost to black-out and still I didn't object. *Manhandle me as you will, my young, vibrant, virile creature. Let me be your plaything, your prisoner, and never let me go.* He sat up and hauled me higher. My chest scuffed his sudden inflexible penis in passing. His legs scissored my midriff in an inescapable strong embrace and his lips closed on my own. The love I had found for this boy, the passion I felt when in contact with his wondrous body, I could never adequately articulate. Such monumental rapture I could never have dreamed possible. Mark, my boy!

Juices by then in full spate, we rubbed off against each other as rain drummed heavily and unremittingly on the roof over our heads.

Each day thereafter, while Mark slept, I drove into the village to sound things out. Picked up newspapers which were initially full of it. But after a couple of weeks the boy was no longer newsworthy, the hunt was called off and the dust settled.

It was during one of those trips I learned that Fortescue-Pook had actually left the district for good. Went into politics. It figures. What he doesn't know (couldn't help thinking he was not quite convinced, but I was past caring) is that a certain lost baby, the ridiculously named Marmaduke Fortescue-Pook, has become Marie Haskell, my handsome adolescent, my own fantastic boy. So you see, the repellent character did me one good turn after all.

Throughout the year past Mark and I have come more and more into comfortable accommodation. The people in the village, on our rare encounters with them, accept Mark as my son stricken with aphasia. He's taken to the easier life I have to offer, never once thinking of returning to his cave. The rudiments of reputable love are there. He's housebroken, he eats at the table with me. He speaks – a little, Mark and Mars his favorite words. I'm convinced he has a great mind. He is beginning to grasp ideas

and activities more readily than he did. He's adapted to clothing and looks a treat – but still goes starkers when he can get away with it. Mostly in-house. I copy. He even travels with me. The car affords him endless fascination. Perhaps at some future time my embryonic superboy will go into athletics or some other sporting activity on a professional basis. He swims well, self-taught, and I swear he runs faster than anyone I've ever known. You should see him catch rabbits! And at night, oh, at night! My boy, one moment wild with passion rattling in his throat, thrusting himself mercilessly into me, the next moment nestling in my embrace, so soft, so gentle, the rain pounding on our roof and the mists shrouding us as he falls sweetly into a child-like sleep.