

The Twelfth
Acolyte Reader

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Freddy

by Marcel Wright

The dream, in color, with music and titles, was called "The House on Laughing Turtle Drive" and I only realized it was a dream when my dear, sweet hostess showed me the way to the bathroom. It was far too small.

"I'll never fit in there," I told her apologetically.

"That's what I thought." She shook her head sadly. "Never mind, there's a bigger house on Laughing Turtle Drive, just around the corner. Maybe they'll let you use theirs."

Dying to use the toilet, I pinched my legs and listened to her instructions on how to get to the house. But as she spoke, her children started arriving home. They were all boys of about twelve or thirteen and, although I'd never been there before, I wasn't really surprised to see that, somehow, I recognized every one of them. They ran into the house laughing happily and immediately started stripping out of their clothes. Now I didn't want to go anymore. The pee could wait.

"Hurry along," she smiled. Behind her the boys, now all naked, had started playing with each other. All except for one, who seemed a bit shy. I eyed him hungrily.

"No, I'll stay."

"Don't worry, they'll still be here when you get back." I knew it was a dream, and I'd never get back.

"Can't I just feel one before I go?" I pleaded.

"No, no. It will be fine. Won't it, Tim?" The shy boy blushed, then nodded coyly. I'm sure she meant well as she began opening the door for me.

"I don't want to go." I started fighting back desperately as the boys cheered. But she was huge and despite everything I could do, she pushed me easily out through the door into the light. When I turned back the house had vanished, although I could still hear the boys laughing.

Clutching desperately at the vanishing remnants of the dream, it took a couple of seconds for me to focus in the glare before I could make out Jehan standing in the bedroom door with a hand still on the light switch. I still wasn't quite sure which was the real world when he spoke.

"I want my shoes," he said quietly.

"What...?" was the best I could do.

"My shoes," he repeated quite loudly.

"I haven't got them," I mumbled, still hearing the boys laughing, barely awake and not having the faintest idea what he was talking about.

Freddy was no help. He just muttered and rolled over on his side of the bed to bury his head under the pillow. He probably had a dream of his own. Maybe he was also looking for the House on Laughing Turtle Drive. Well, I know the way, I thought, and shut my eyes again.

Instead, I had a nightmare on my hands, as Jehan, ignorant of the pleasures he had so callously robbed me of, marched into the room and started emptying out the contents of my wardrobe onto the floor. I struggled onto my elbows and stared at him, willing him away. Now I was awake enough to know that when he was in that sort of mood it was pointless reasoning with him, and if I tried to stop him he would

just run to Mom to complain that I was hiding whatever he was looking for. So, adding this latest intrusion to my list of reasons to kill him, I let the little bastard be.

By the time everything was strewn about, the whole house was awake and all four of my brothers had put in an appearance, all in search of something, except Paulie who just came to see what Jehan was doing. Departures were such fun. Lo and behold, the shoes weren't in my wardrobe.

"What did I tell you?" I growled at my brother.

"Then they're under your bed." The collection of junk under my bed was my totally private property and he was treading on dangerous ground.

"First, put my clothes back," I ordered, now really awake and totally pissed off.

"No!" he said, "I haven't got time."

"Nonsense. You're only going after breakfast." Probably better if he didn't put them back because he would just have chucked it all in and I'd have to repack it later anyway. It was just the principle of the thing.

"Okay, why would your bloody shoes be there in the first place?" I finally asked in frustration. The way things were beginning to go there would soon be tears, and Mom would make an appearance. For her to do that at six in the morning meant trouble.

"Because he was wearing them," Jehan said, indicating Freddy, whose gangling boy body lay sprawled next to me in the double bed, his head still conveniently buried.

The previous evening Freddy and I had walked to the village to watch a movie in the school hall. Although shoes were not required dress, and Freddy almost never wore any, even to restaurants and church, he'd been wearing a pair of plain white tennis shoes. Our

sixpences had bought us *The Creature of the Black Lagoon*, a truly splendid show. Later we'd tiptoed back, clutching onto each other at every sound in the dark bushes along the road. Not really scared, you know, just for safety's sake. He had only arrived from Cape Town that afternoon, so how was I to know those damn things weren't his?

"Why didn't you ask him, instead of making such a mess?"

"Because he gave them back."

I raised my eyes heavenward. Siblings are such morons.

"Then why the fuck do you think I've got them," I whispered, lest Mom was within earshot. She could hear a 'Damn' two rooms away; 'Fuck' she could detect clear across town.

"Because he didn't bring any. You stole them for him to wear while we're gone. You always do everything he wants."

Next to me, Freddy had begun to stir. I poked my elbow into his ribs.

"Have you got this idiot's smelly little takkies?"

Without removing his head from under the pillow, he nodded. Then, pulling one of his wiry brown arms out from under the duvet, he pointed under the bed.

"See," Jehan crowed, "I knew they were here."

"All right, you can go under my bed," I sighed, wondering why Freddy had bothered: he went everywhere barefoot anyway. Jehan, of course, didn't give a damn about the reasons; he just wanted to do damage.

In true brotherly fashion, instead of simply reclaiming his missing footwear and leaving us alone, he turned and ran out of the room screaming, "Maaaa! Michael's hiding my shoes and he won't give them back to me."

Not a good start. With a sigh, I leaned across and hurriedly, almost imperceptibly, kissed Freddy's sweet-smelling, smooth, tanned back.

Now was not the time. Despite that, I could feel the erection that had accompanied me out of my dream world beginning to stiffen again. To make it worse, Freddy purred and rolled out from under the pillow and smiled at me sleepily.

"God, I love you," I whispered to him, as his bright brown eyes began twinkling mischievously.

"Michael...!" I heard Mom scream from downstairs.

"Ma, it wasn't me," I shouted back, that damn hard-on refusing to go away. Now I could hear her and Jehan making their way up the stairs.

"Quick, give me his goddamn shoes."

Freddy's smile just broadened, and he held out his arms for an early morning hug. God, that this moment could last! Mother was just seconds away and my prick was hard and throbbing and no doubt extremely visible under the thin velum of my pajama shorts. There was nothing for it. Hurriedly, I scrambled out from under the duvet and dived around to Freddy's side. When the Gestapo entered, I was lying on my stomach under the bed.

"Here they are." Without changing position I held out Jehan's shoes for him to take. He just left me lying there holding them.

"Why have you got Jehan's shoes?" Mom demanded.

"I haven't got his shoes."

"What are those, then?"

"Freddy had them."

"Why?"

"I don't know. Maybe he wanted something to remember Jehan by."

"Stop talking nonsense, Michael. Get up."

"Ma, I can't. It's too early," I complained, praying that either she or the erection would go away instantly. As it was, I was trapped. She

just stood there drumming her foot on the floor while my swollen prick lay buried beneath me like a broken cricket stump.

"Come on, come on. Your father needs a hand with the packing."

"Okay, I'm coming," I said, not moving.

"Well?" She paused.

I know," said Jehan, and began to sing, "Michael's got a hard-on, Michael's got a hard-on."

"Jehan, don't say things like that," she shouted at him in horror.

"I bet you," he carried on. Above my back the bed quivered as Freddy, now quite awake, was trying his best to control his laughter. Surely it was legally acceptable to kill younger brothers. With murder in my heart and any potential embarrassment outweighed by blinding hatred, I dropped the shoes and leaped out from under the bed to finally rid the world of this piece of inhuman scum.

"Ma!" Jehan screamed, diving behind her for protection.

"Michael, don't hit him," Mom yelled, forcing her way between us to protect her pride and joy.

"I don't want to hit him, I want to kill him. You heard what he was saying!" The fury, now rapidly waning, had done the trick, and as quickly as it had come, the erection had gone. Mom swung around to confront Jehan.

"Yes! Where did you learn things like that?"

"From him. From them both," he replied, completely unabashed. There was a moment's silence. Then slowly, and with meaning, Mom resorted to the bottom line of her power. She eyed me coldly and said, "Just you wait until I tell your father."

Dad, fortunately, was in a good mood and itching to get away. Since only a week before when I got home from school, Jehan and I had been treated to the long-delayed Birds and Bees bit, he was more amused than alarmed by Mom's tale of woe. Mom, of course,

wouldn't let it rest and used that as an excuse to sit Freddy and me down at the breakfast table to listen with glazed eyes to yet another barrage of instructions on exactly how to conduct every moment of our lives while they were away. She sincerely believed that I couldn't understand what she was telling me unless she repeated it, in great detail, at least three times.

Even simple basics like where the keys were to be hidden would turn into a doctorate on passepartout secretion.

"Ma, do you mean the same place they were yesterday, and every day for the last five years?" I could interrupt innocently.

"Michael, don't be rude to your mother." She would revert to the third person, her eyes misting over. Then she would carry on, "Now, you know what I mean about the keys?" It was better just to nod. Sex, luckily, was not a subject she ever touched on. Despite having produced five children, I don't think she'd ever heard of it.

Finally they were gone, the four boys, like caged animals, packed into the rusting canopy on the back of the old Willis truck. From there they could keep up a running report on who wanted to pee next and their general dissatisfaction with life through a short length of hosepipe inserted through a hole cut into the canopy for that purpose. When the demands and the whining became too much to bear, Mom could shut them out with a cork that was kept handy on the dashboard. This was a device she used more and more often these days. She and I were slowly reaching agreement on one thing at least: five kids was far too many. I would have been happier if she had just had one. And, the way the things were going, not necessarily me.

Normally, of course, I would have gone with them. But, having committed the mortal sin of being first-born, that summer I was to be left in charge of the farm. Did I mind? Not in the slightest. The

annual Christmas trip with family to visit more family spread all over the country was pure hell. The threshing season was over, the farm pretty much in control of itself, and for the next few weeks Freddy and I were to be alone together, free to do pretty much as we pleased.

To celebrate our release, we waved a grateful farewell at the departing Willis and stormed back to the kitchen where Sissie, the maid who had been entrusted with our well-being, was already cleaning the breakfast things away. Sissie knew better and eyed us warily as we entered.

"Sissie, look." I put an arm around Freddy and pushed him into the line of fire. "Freddy's a growing boy. He needs to eat a lot. Otherwise he won't win, and it'll be your fault." She smiled, knowing that Miss Annie's horse trailer wouldn't arrive for another week, and that the gymkhana was only a few days after that.

"And you?" she asked.

"Oh, I'll just keep him company. It's rude to let him eat alone."

"Eat porridge," she said, nodding at the pot on the stove. "It's good for you."

"I don't want the healthy stuff. I want that," Freddy said, pointing at the packet of pancake mix on the shelf above the stove. "Please." Freddy, with his wide mouth and radiant smile, was a great favorite of hers. Shaking her head, she turned to the old anthracite stove where, humming contentedly, she set about cooking another mound of pancakes and bacon as we sat drumming our heels at the kitchen table. These disappeared as quickly as she made them.

"That's better," Freddy sighed, the chair creaking as he rocked back. "What now?"

Naturally, I had my own ideas. "Let's go up to the bedroom," I said, wiping my mouth with a damp dishcloth. Freddy's nose wrinkled as he thought about it. Then he shook his head.

"Nah! I want to get on with the haystack." The afternoon before, when Doctor Levin dropped him off at the farm, Freddy and I had eyed the new, sweetly smelling haystack behind the barn. It just cried out for a little redesigning, for a secret hide-away to be burrowed deep in its heart. But there was plenty of time for that.

"Later, man. There are more important things to do."

"Like what?"

"You know," I pleaded irritably.

Freddy was different, he'd been behaving strangely since he'd arrived, and I don't just mean Jehan's shoes. After the movie the night before, everyone else asleep, we had lain side-by-side whispering in the dark while our huge old house whispered around us. Casually, my hand had slowly trickled down Freddy's stomach to the edge of the elastic band of his shorts. Ever since we'd met, although we did many other things together, Freddy and I had enjoyed sex, in whatever form came to hand at the moment, sometimes as many as three or four times a day. I hadn't seen him for three months and I was aching for us to pick up where we'd left off. But now he seemed unaware of my hand and just continued whispering, not doing anything to stop or encourage me.

I'd stopped listening or whispering, my mouth too dry and my heart threatening to tear itself from my body. Enjoying the moment and fantasizing about what was to follow, my hand crossed over the ruffled elastic to the bulge where his prick should have been waiting, fired up and ready for action. But instead of being huge and stiff, it just lay there flaccid, wasted. Slowly I started rubbing, trying gently to tease it to life. But, just as I felt its heart begin to beat, he suddenly pushed my hand off it and rolled away from me.

"What's the matter?" I croaked.

"Jehan," Freddy whispered.

"What about him?"

"Maybe he's watching."

"Bullshit. He's been asleep for hours."

"No, he was taking a piss when I came to bed."

Unfortunately Freddy was right. Jehan was inclined to spy. Not because Freddy and I shared a double bed – all my guests slept there, Jehan too if necessary – but because he was jealous. Freddy was his age and, really, the two of them should have been friends. But because Freddy and I were friends, and now that he had officially been warned of such things, his malicious little mind assumed that we were up to no good. After we denied him permission to accompany us to the movie, he had as much as said so.

"If you don't let me go, I'll tell Ma," he angrily confronted us at the gate as we set off.

"Tell ma what?" I asked.

"About you and him."

"I think she knows about us. I mean, I've been around for fifteen years, and Freddy rides for the Western Province Juniors."

"No, I'll tell her what you do."

"What do we do?"

"You play with his wee-wee."

"What do you mean wee-wee? It's a cock, a dick, a fucking prick. Don't give it such a rude name just because you haven't got one." That wasn't exactly true. It had been a little late in coming, but now that Jehan was approaching puberty, he was developing quite a healthy little weenie. It's just that he hadn't been to boarding school, so it had been up to us to show him what it was used for.

Next to me, Freddy laughed, seemingly unconcerned.

"And if you talk to Ma about anything," I added, "I'll just tell her about Darwin." There, of course, I had him. Jehan had no idea of

what potential damage he might do to me by spreading tales about our sexual exploits, but if I told them about him shooting Mom's beloved dog, he was dead.

"Ag, Jehan means nothing," I whispered, needing Freddy so badly at the moment that I would happily have gone ahead even if Jehan had been in the bed with us. So I reached over again and tried gently massaging the back of his neck, something almost guaranteed to get him to relax.

"Tomorrow," he whispered, wriggling even further away.

"But what about my hard-on?" I complained.

"Wank," he laughed. "You do it all the time anyway." True, but that wasn't what I wanted. Grimly disappointed, I decided rather to brave it out. I mean, I'd waited three months. What was one day more?

"Okay, tomorrow," I whispered back.

Well, now it was tomorrow, and my fifteen-year-old libido was crying out for release.

"So, what about it?" I prompted.

"I told you, I want to go to the haystack."

"Ag, all right," I sighed. The time would come.

So Freddy, an innocent barefoot ragamuffin in his crumpled T-shirt and shorts, and me in my flaming passion and brand new, slightly oversized you'll-grow-into-them blue jeans, went off to dig a hole in a haystack.

Any fool can do it. The art is to construct it in such a way that no evidence of its existence remains visible from the outside, and that requires a little more work, some pieces of wood, and a ladder. Two hours later we settled back, tired and sweaty, and looked around our musty new cavern with satisfaction. Freddy seemed particularly proud of it.

"What do you think, better than last year?" he asked.

"Too small. The other one was bigger."

"No, it's exactly like last year. You're bigger."

"So are you. Last year we could lie down."

"I can lie down in this one." To prove his point he lay down and stretched his legs.

"That's all right for you, but I can't." I tried to settle back, but the best I could do was get into an uncomfortable sitting position with Freddy's legs across my lap.

"You know who I hate most in the world?" he asked, as the dust settled around us in the dim light.

"Me?" I responded dryly.

"No, man," he laughed. "Remember when I wrote to you at school I told you about Mr. Jennings?" That was his maths master who was constantly giving him hidings. Now it seemed the same guy had accused him of cheating on a test paper. When Freddy got excited he talked very quickly, only pausing to chew his bottom lip. I smiled at him, pretending to listen, eyeing those beautifully smooth, dusty bare legs lying across my lap. My cock was already stiff in the confines of the baggy jeans. I had worn them without underpants because I hadn't planned on keeping them on that long. All this cave building had caused my cock to rub painfully against the hard material they use to make jeans. By now my prick probably had blisters. But, to make up for it, at least, Freddy seemed to have unwound a little. Maybe, just maybe, the time had come.

Almost without bidding, my trembling hand sort of found its way onto his knee. Straight away he forgot about the hateful teacher and looked at me with one of those wry little smiles. My heart sank again.

"What's wrong now?" I asked in despair.

"I want to go for a swim."

"Later." What was the matter with him? "Not now. I'm hot."

"And me? I'm about to burst into flames."

"Then a swim is just what you need."

"Can't we at least do something dirty first?" I pleaded. Again callously pushing my hand away, he struggled past me toward the entrance. There he paused.

"Listen, I'll swim naked, if you want me to." Well, that was better than nothing.

"All right, let's go," I groaned. I seemed to be doing a lot of that these days.

Our farm was fairly remote, about three miles from town, and it lay along a five-mile strip of beach. It was very lovely, actually, although the land was pretty arid, the water cold, and the wind could blow for days at a time. It was perfect for skinny-dipping, something Dad and his friends did regularly after a few drinks. My younger brothers all joined in but, since puberty, I'd steered clear of such barbaric practices. With them anyway. With Freddy it was different. Freddy wasn't shy, and he had good reason not to be. He ran happily around naked, even in front of adults and girls, and I loved running around naked with him, as long as it was just the two of us alone together.

But even that was not to be. Down at the beach there was a couple sun-bathing, probably as pleased to see us as I was to see them.

"Tell them to go. This is your beach," Freddy suggested, eyeing my disappointment.

"I can't. Maybe they are friends of Miss Annie's, or something." Miss Annie's cottage was right next to our house and friends of hers that I'd never met before pitched up there regularly.

"Well, I'm going anyway. Come on."

"But I can't swim in these." Meaning my jeans.

"So, swim in your underpants."

"I'm not wearing any."

"That's not my fault."

"Yes it is."

Ignoring my feeble humor, he tore off his T-shirt and ran toward the water. Why was my best friend being so bloody difficult? For a second I watched him galloping madly through the surf. I just could not put two and two together. Every time I tried I came up with a minus. I should have been his maths master. Could it be possible that Freddy didn't want to have any sex anymore? The thought was devastating. Now, really expecting the worst, I reluctantly turned and went off to change.

The worst it was. When I got back, Freddy had rigged up the little battered dabchick and was far out to sea. Dad had told us not to use it until the small rip in the sail had been repaired, but that rule, like Mom's list of instructions, was just made to be broken. The sun-bathers were busy pouring themselves a brandy and something from their cooler bag. They looked at me, then at the little boat out at sea, said something to each other and laughed. Even the seagulls weaving overhead were laughing. When we went out for snoek, we would clean the fish on the way back to the harbor, exhilarated by the day's success. The scraps were thrown overboard for the seagulls that followed us screeching madly for their tidbits. I liked them then. But now, if I'd had a gun, I would have shot them, and the sun bathers, and anything else in sight.

For a moment I contemplated waving. No, I didn't want to risk it. Freddy was probably coyly watching to see what I would do. What would my smiling brandy-and-cokers have thought if I'd waved and he'd ignored me? Lovers' tiff?

"Fuck you," I shrugged at them, the words rolling easily through my mind now that Mom was so far away. Then I turned and strolled

off as nonchalantly as I could.

My only real duty on the farm was to attend to the dairy, and, as usual, I need not have bothered. The dairymen were milking away, cheerfully yelling at each other as they every so often jerked their buckets out of the way of steaming jets of cow piss. Our little dairy's customers were mostly Dad's friends. They too, being military personnel, didn't believe in pasteurization or sanitation, or minded greatly if an occasional droplet of cow dung came their way along with the milk they poured into their tea or fed to their babies.

Once the milk was chilled and bottled, my other task of importance was to give the laborers their daily bottle of wine. They liked it when I was in charge of this because I was more generous than my old man, probably because I didn't have to pay for the stuff, and usually filled their bottles to the brim. Sometimes I even gave them an extra glassful.

They took that bottle of wine very seriously and would argue passionately if, by mistake or intent, the bottle passed up through the cellar door wasn't filled to their satisfaction. I suppose the idea was for them to take the wine home to share with their wives and families, but they usually drank it right there on the steps without even pausing to take a breath. I tried it and, believe, me, it's just not possible.

An hour later, when I got back to the house, Freddy, lean, salt-encrusted, was draped across my still-unmade bed. He was glued to a tattered old Superman comic and ignored the dramatized aloofness that I entered the bedroom with, not even bothering to make space for me when I slumped down at the foot of the bed, now feigning exhaustion.

"Did you put the boat away?" I asked, pushing his legs out of the way.

"Nope," he replied, shrugging, settling back to his comic.

"Well, excuse me for asking." I knew he was lying because I had gone down to look for him and saw it turned upside down above the high water mark, its torn sail dutifully furled underneath.

For a few seconds all was quiet as I sat wondering what to do next. Was this whole holiday going to be such a bore? A big bluebottle fly buzzed and butted its head against the half-opened window. Just two inches to the left it would have found freedom, but it continually flew past the open space to crash into the glass. The erratic tap of the bluebottle into the window was like the wasted seconds of my life ticking away.

Despite the uncertainty seething inside, at last I decided what the hell, and started playing, apparently unconcerned, with the almost invisible feathery wisps that had started to sprout around Freddy's ankles. He didn't react, but at least he didn't move away or push me off. Then, to my great relief, with a little sigh, he lifted a foot and laid it across my lap. Perhaps the little drama hadn't been wasted, or maybe he was beginning to feel a bit sorry for having behaved like such a cunt all day.

The foot on my lap was instructions for me to massage it. So far, so good. Gently at first, I began to caress the instep and those lovely, hardened, tough-as-leather soles.

Freddy was fourteen, thin, sinewy and suntanned, racing toward manhood. His face, with its clear boyish skin and deep brown eyes, was surprisingly sensitive, considering his sinewy body and all the little scars that enhanced rather than marred his elbows and knees. His hands were large and callused from riding. His feet were wide, brown and beautifully formed, with long, prehensile toes that now began to curl with pleasure as I began squeezing the instep a little more firmly.

Finally he threw the comic book aside. "All right, tell me a story," he said, looking at me at last.

"First give me a smile, dickhead."

His eyes twinkled as his lips curled into a little 'up yours' grin.

This was better. It was a regular ritual when we were together. He liked the lies I told him about my imaginary sexual conquests. Mostly he liked my flights of fantasy, especially about ghosts and things that went bump in the night. Those I usually "borrowed" from radio serials like "The Creaking Door" and the Australian "Lux Radio Theatre." My grandfather had introduced me to Mike Silver, the old man who wrote those stories. After dinner, over a cigar, he confessed that he in turn had borrowed his ideas from some or other English radio series. So I guessed it was okay for me to lie a little. I searched for a story. Nothing. I started making one up.

"Imagine a small Arab boy."

"Why an Arab? Why a boy?"

"Shut up, it's my story."

"Okay." He settled back, bending his leg slightly to allow my hand to move upward. There, still as absently as I could, I began to caress his powerful calf muscle.

"Imagine a kid that lives in the desert with camels and things, you know, Lawrence of Arabia and all that." He nodded vaguely. Not a great reader, my Freddy.

"The boy is about five or six years old. All he's wearing is one of those caftan things and it's torn and terribly dirty. His face is also very dirty with lines washed through the dirt by his tears. It's quiet now, a dry, crackling desert silence. The body lying in the sand next to him is twisted and horribly mutilated. It could be his father, but because the blank, dead face is still quite young, it's more likely his older brother. You can smell the fear, a lingering aroma of exploded

gunpowder mixed with a trail of human excrement left by men who had no need to die." I paused.

"Good so far, go on," Freddy ordered. He shifted downward a bit, bending his knee to give my wandering hand further access to the inside of his smoothly muscled thigh. A few delicious ball hairs peaked out through the gap at the bottom of his shorts. Now, feeling a bit braver, I tweaked one playfully.

"Ouch!" he exclaimed. Then it was my turn to yell as he suddenly grabbed my hand and bit it. Freddy was very strong and it was all I could do to pull my hand out of his grasp. In the fighting it brushed briefly, not really by accident, across his shorts and touched the penis etched clearly under the damp black cotton.

He didn't react. My heart skipped a beat. But, after all the bullshit, I knew better than to rush it.

"The boy is on the slope of an enormous sand dune. All around him the brown desert sand has been churned up by the tracks of tanks and the footprints of fleeing men. The tracks lead off in all directions and he would not know which direction to follow, even if he had the strength or the courage to get up and leave that place. It's late. The shadows left by the setting sun form graceful patterns across the dunes. A slight breeze has sprung up and the sand has begun to drift. Soon the footprints will vanish and the body of his brother will be buried.

"Now, imagine you are a movie camera, one with a zoom lens, and you start zooming back..." I put my hand back on his leg and resumed gently stroking the inside of his thigh.

"As the camera zooms back," I continued, "the boy gets smaller and smaller, until it seems that he is just another grain of sand in this wasteland. In turn, the dunes flatten into an endless brown desert that, just for a second, turns a brilliant red as the sun sets. Soon you

see the sea twinkling away to the north and then, as you zoom further away, all around the continent."

Freddy's cock was beginning to stiffen and now lay at an uncomfortable angle, trapped downwards under his loose black rugby shorts. Almost unconsciously he slid a hand under the elastic to change its position. I moved to help.

"No! Not now," he ordered. "First finish the story."

This time I didn't mind. Now at last we were on our way. I struggled to remember what I'd been talking about.

"You are moving into space. You can see Africa kind of the way it looks in an atlas. At the top there's Europe, and there, somewhere in the middle, is the equator. You can't really see South Africa or our part of the world because they are down there, below the curve of the horizon."

Freddy began to chew his bottom lip. Leaving his thigh, I started tracing the muscles of his abdomen, until my hand settled lovingly over his heart. There I heard the angels sing. It was beating furiously. My own was pounding so hard that my whole body was shaking. He was ready, the devil that had plagued him earlier banished. Gently, I pushed him further over onto the bed and lay down beside him. He took the arm to which my wandering hand was attached and pulled it away from my body so that he could snuggle closer and rest his head on my shoulder.

"Hello, Freddy," I said, wrapping my arm around him and tightly squeezing his gangly body.

He raised his head. "Hello, Michael," he whispered in my ear, and began nibbling my earlobe between sharp pointed teeth.

"You hungry again?" I tried to laugh, my voice cracking dryly.

He dropped the earlobe and growled, "Sorry, allergic to uncooked humans. But I'll make you sorry if you don't carry on." And, to prove

his point, spat, just a little, into my ear.

"Clean that shit out!" I demanded, enjoying it.

"Only if you tell the story."

"Okay, okay, okay," I agreed. The tip of his tongue flicked briefly to retrieve a minute portion of his spittle. The rest had begun to run down the side of my face and I pressed it against his cheek to wipe it away. He laughed and wriggled even closer to lay his moist head on my chest.

"God, are you sick or something?" he giggled, hearing my heart threatening to tear itself from my body.

"Sick of waiting for." My own erection had started to throb, aching to be set free. Freddy looked down and saw it pulsing under my faded yellow swimming trunks and reached out to pat it.

"Down, boy," he said, letting his hand linger. I kissed the top of his head.

"Now you can see the earth..." – my voice continuing to break – "...and all the other planets sort of moving gracefully around the sun, except it all happens so slowly that you can't really see it going on. They are just sort of... there. And you move further away.

"Soon our solar system takes its place on the edge of the universe. Out here it's cold and formal. The millions, uncountable millions of stars and planets twirl around you in a stately order. But look carefully: if you know anything about the stars, you'll recognise them. There's Orion, the hunter, and Sirius, the dog. An old English sailor might have looked for Arcturus because it recalled legends of bravery, like its namesake, King Arthur."

"Are there any of them named after cats?" Freddy asked.

"I don't think so. Big cats like lions, maybe."

He meowed, getting silly.

"The range is enormous, beyond comprehension. Staring at these stars, you think you know the meaning of time, of eternity. Here nothing changes. Nothing that you have ever learned has any meaning. Everything just is. But you keep on traveling back, moving farther away. Back and back until slowly this vast universe begins to take on a form. Suddenly you realize that you begin to recognise it. These stars, these galaxies are just molecules and atoms, millions and millions of atoms.

"Hey, you say to yourself, that's oxygen, and that one over there is chlorine, there's hydrogen, and nitrogen. So maybe you're not so lost after all.

"You're in the midst of life, the most basic of life. The atoms around you are combining, forming elements, discarding ions, giving off energy, vast energy. Things are flying around you and you have to duck and dodge to escape all the processes taking place everywhere. And you keep on traveling until you are far enough away to see what is taking place in all this seeming confusion. It's some sort of fluid, a saline fluid, but you're still too much part of it to taste it, or feel it. Your journey continues. Suddenly you know exactly where you are.

"This mass forming all around you, beneath you, is a single teardrop. And, as you continue to pull back you begin to see it more clearly. It's a teardrop running down the cheek of a small Arab boy lost in the desert, smelling the remains of battle, weeping for his brother..." I paused, suddenly weary from my imaginary journey.

"Is that it?" Freddy asked.

I nodded.

"What does it mean?"

The bluebottle fly butted against the window. In the distance somebody yelled. Freddy smelled of boy. I didn't know what it meant and I didn't care.

"It means that now it's your turn."

Without further bidding, he arched his back and slid his shorts to his knees. I sat up and helped him remove them altogether.

Watching Freddy drop his trousers was like watching a magician perform. Without mirrors or anything, that simple move would turn a scarred, skinny boy into a savage, sensual beast and produce, as if from nowhere, what to me was the biggest, best and most beautiful cock in the world.

Before I met Freddy I had heard about him. I heard that, even though he was the youngest member of the juniors, he had uncanny prowess as a show jumper, and that he was fearless to the point of stupidity. But what had interested me most were the stories about his precocious prick. Although we had been friends for over a year, and having had sex since the day we met, the sight of him lying on my bed was as awesome to me now as it was the first time I saw it. Then, although still a few weeks away from his thirteenth birthday, Freddy had a penis just as large as any of those I had seen flashed about by the seniors in those steamy school showers. In proportion to his body, just losing the last of its puppy fat, it seemed absolutely monumental. Since then he had grown quite a bit. And so had it.

Off duty, it was still longer and thicker than mine was standing at full attention. He wasn't circumcised, but as it stiffened, the large, smooth glans with its beady eye would peak provocatively out of the foreskin until it popped right through, as the skin stretched back, unable to accommodate. Athletic, supple, Freddy could actually bend down and take it in his own mouth.

In fact, taking his prick into his mouth was one of his favorite party tricks. It was the one he was most often asked to demonstrate, even by boys he'd never met. Freddy didn't mind. He had always seemed rather offhand about displaying his prick to the world. But it

bothered me, especially when he started smacking it around and treating it roughly. For example, once he walked up to the dining table where I was sitting with a couple of the riders our age, his fly open and his huge cock hanging out of it.

"Anyone here not met my friend, Dick?" he asked, slapping it down hard onto the table. "Say hello, Dick," he commanded. Dick, of course, said nothing. "What? Can't hear you," he carried on, banging it down again. The others laughed, but I cringed.

"Listen," I tried jokingly, "if you don't want it, I'll take it." There was a chorus of approval around the table. They all probably felt the same way.

"You want it?" he teased, holding it out to me. Had we been alone, of course, I would have. But there I was forced just to laugh like the others. Then, to my horror, he picked up one of the blunt table knives and stared sawing away at it, carrying humor to the extreme.

"Jesus, Freddy, stop that – you'll hurt yourself!" I cried out angrily. To me it was the most delicious, delicate thing in the world, to be gently handled, to be protected with lotions, to be tenderly kissed and lovingly caressed, not something to be beaten about like a turbulent child or made fun of in public.

But that was just Freddy trying to act tough, to be one of the boys. Alone with me he was different, loving and affectionate. He loved it when I massaged him and would happily lie for hours while I rubbed his back, his feet, the insides of his thighs and finally his balls and his monster cock. Then I would start masturbating him very slowly with both hands, first tickling that soft, fleshy acorn that extended invitingly beyond my cupped hands with the top of my tongue, then taking as much of his cock as I could into my mouth to suck up the delicious creamy semen that spurted into me as he groaned with pleasure.

Or for fun we did things like coating each other's cocks with peanut butter and jam and licking it deliciously off the shaft, until we'd finally suck the last bit from the head, seeing who could carry on longest until the other ejaculated. He nearly always won.

Or we would get silly and devise ways to have sex as publicly as possible without anyone knowing. Once in a restaurant that had benches instead of chairs, six of us boys and one adult were sitting around a table eating hamburgers. I feigned a headache and claimed I had to lie down for a bit. There, with Freddy still eating and laughing with the rest, I gave him a blow-job he would never forget.

But mostly he wanted me to fuck him; he liked that more than anything. I was desperate for him to do it to me but he always refused, sometimes angrily. It got to the point that I didn't bother asking any more. But I dreamed about it, fantasised about it, and when I was alone I started sticking things into my ass to find out what it might feel like, starting with fingers and working my way up past just about everything that came to hand, eventually to cucumbers, fat and smooth. I discovered that with enough lust and a little Vaseline, virtually anything was possible. But exciting as these experiments were, they paled beside fantasies of The Real Thing.

Then one evening in a hotel room, in Bloemfontein, after we'd known each other for about three months, I got my turn. It was the last day of the competition and Freddy had just missed winning the junior championship because of a silly mistake in the time trials. As usual, he laughed it off and, since we'd come second in the competition, even beating our major rival, Transvaal, no one really minded.

But during the prize-giving he disappeared. There were a lot of us there, including some people I really liked, so it was a while before I realized Freddy had gone. After a quick search of the clubhouse and

the stables, I figured he must have walked back to the hotel. He had been just a fraction of a second away from winning, and despite the joking I knew he was upset and really felt he'd let the team down with those four stupid points at the last combination.

It was raining when I set out to find him. Bloemfontein is one of those towns where they should roll up the streets at night and put them away until needed again. I wandered around in the cold, damp darkness with my Freddy radar set at maximum intensity. Eventually I found him sitting, alone and dispirited, on the steps of the Women's Memorial.

Without saying a word, I dropped down and put an arm around him. For a few minutes we just sat there.

"I'm not crying," he said suddenly.

I nodded. "No, it's the rain." Then, "Have you heard this place echo?" Miss Annie had taken me to the memorial earlier that day and shown how one person could whisper under the domed end of the memorial and another person could hear it loudly quite a long way off.

"Nope," he shrugged, completely disinterested.

"Listen, it's weird." I left him for a moment and stood under the dome and whispered, "Prick!"

The acoustics surprised him right out of his self-pity.

"Balls!" he whispered back, with a smile.

"Cunt!"

"Shitface!" He started laughing, and soon we were dancing around the memorial in the drizzle screaming like banshees.

When we got back to the hotel the rest of the team still hadn't returned from the prize-giving. Nothing better to do, and since there was nothing better than that anyway, we grabbed a couple of Cokes, locked the bedroom door, stripped each other naked and climbed

into bed. Freddy cuddled close to me and, with his arm around me, his head on my chest and his huge prick pressing hard into my side, he whispered, "Michael, you know what?"

"What?"

"I love you."

"Really?" I was thrilled. Despite the sex and everything we had done, we'd never said anything like that to each other before. "Oh, God, Freddy," I whispered back, "I love you more than anything on earth." Then, without a word, he slid his head down under the blankets and took my cock in his mouth.

Normally he was very good at it and knew just how to manipulate it and make me ejaculate in endless spasms, all of which he swallowed with satisfaction. That night he was fantastic, and to make it even better, as he sucked he spread my legs and forced two fingers into my ass. I could feel myself about to come, but suddenly I reached down and pulled his head gently away.

He looked up at me in surprise.

"Freddy, fuck me."

He just stared, then quietly moved back to carry on with the blow-job.

I stopped him again. "Why not, man?"

"I told you before, that's my business."

"No, I love you and you just said you love me, so come on."

Suddenly he rolled onto his back and stripped the blankets away to reveal his massive penis gloriously erect. "You see this thing?" he said, giving it a hard, angry slap.

"Ouch!" I held out a hand to protect it. "Yes, I can see it and I can feel it. What's the matter with it?"

"That thing is a fuck-up, like me."

"God, I think you're both wonderful."

"Ya, but what do you like the most, me or that?"

"Good question." I smiled, trying to calm him down a bit.

He was not amused. "I know you. People always say they want big ones like this, but big ones're just useless."

"Why?"

He was silent a second. "You remember Wilson?"

I remembered Wilson, a quiet guy that came down to the farm once before I even knew Freddy. "Yes," I shrugged.

"He wanted me to try."

"And?" I asked, jealous it hadn't been me.

"It wouldn't go in. He just started screaming for me to stop."

"Did you stop?"

"I couldn't. I sort of went mad. I was mad at him, mad at me, just mad."

"So what happened?"

Quietly, Freddy said, "He had to go to the hospital." Then his body started shaking and he buried his head in my chest, wetting it with tears. "There was blood everywhere. We said it was from riding. But he knew. The doctor knew."

For the first time I realized that despite the way he flashed his cock about, Freddy, the boy I worshiped and envied because of his heroic riding style, his ready humor, his uncomplicated family life and the ease with which he made mockery of all the dragons that had plagued me since birth, in his heart of hearts was unhappy about having been blessed with the one physical part of him I would easily have exchanged my soul for. To him his phenomenal penis was too big and he was a freak, just a circus sideshow act. I knew the time had come.

"Freddy, if I can take this, will you stop being such a retard and let me try?" He'd stopped crying by now and we were sitting up in bed

naked, finishing off our Cokes. It was one of those bottles I was talking about. For the first time he smiled, especially when I held the bottle next to his cock to compare sizes.

"You're nuts," he laughed, snuggling up to me.

"No, you're nuts. I'll show you." Then he watched, at first dubiously, as I coated the Coke bottle liberally with Vaseline, and then in awe when, after a bit of persuasion, I managed to ease it with only a little pain all the way in.

"Jesus," he winced, "now I know why I like you. You're also a freak."

"You see," I panted proudly, "don't try and screw people like Wilson. You and I were made for each other."

Freddy bit his lip, then said, still cautious, "All right... but I warned you."

"Then lie on your back."

"Why on my back?"

"Because I'm in charge." I didn't want him to back away if things became difficult.

Slowly, carefully I covered every inch of his cock with all of the Vaseline that was left.

"Ready?" I asked.

"Suppose so. Are you?"

"I'm happy. Just hold it for me." Then I climbed over and started slowly lowering myself onto the greasy erection he was aiming skywards for me. My heart was beating furiously, as much in dread as in anticipation, as it's head began to enter the crack.

"No, stop!" he suddenly ordered.

"What, have you bloody changed your mind?"

"Let's try it the other way. I want to be in charge."

Actually, I agreed. I wanted to be able to watch him applying the pressure, watch him trying to enter me. Quickly the two of us changed positions. Now, with me lying on my back and my head on the pillows, Freddy lifted my legs onto his shoulders. His expression was deadly serious. He slowly came forward and I reached around to help guide it in.

"Ready?" he asked again, obviously far more frightened than I was.

"Please, Freddy, stop asking stupid questions. I've been ready since I met you."

Then he grunted and began to apply pressure. I don't know which of us was sweating more as, gradually, it began to ease its way in.

Despite the preparations, the pain was sudden, blinding. He was tearing me apart. I yelled for him to stop.

"No, you asked for it!" he said grimly. He continued, steadily forcing himself deeper and deeper, until, pain no longer a factor, that monster slid all the way in and finally our bodies touched. For a while we just lay there, Freddy panting as I gasped for air. Slowly the agony in me ceased and pride took its place. I had Freddy, all of Freddy, inside of me at last. That was the first time we kissed.

The three months of waiting, the twenty-four hours of uncertainty, were finally over. Here lay Freddy naked, happy and hugely erect. And suddenly in more of a hurry than I was.

"Come on, you too," he demanded. I stood up and tore off the T-shirt and that annoying bathing suit. For a second I stood just enjoying the sight of him. This was surely the most beautiful creature on earth. To him, no doubt I must have looked like a love-sick cow. He patted the bed next to him and I sat, wrapping a hand gently around his stiff cock. The bluebottle went bang, bang, bang. Somewhere in the distance a car started.

"Do you still love me?" I asked for reassurance.

"Yes, I love you. For fuck's sake, don't pull the skin down so hard."

"Shame. Let me kiss it better." I leaned forward and started to take its broad head in my mouth. But Freddy sat up and pulled me towards him, his arms wrapped tightly around me, his face close to mine.

"No, just kiss me," he said. He must really have enjoyed the story, I thought. I leaned forward until our lips touched. Freddy gave a little shiver of delight. We kissed again, first with lips barely touching and then, suddenly, with fierce passion. As our tongues entwined, his body stiffened.

"Lie back," he commanded.

"What's the rush?" I asked, surprised by this sudden change.

"Come on."

"Front or back?" I asked uncertainly. This wasn't like him.

But he didn't answer. Without another word, he pushed me back on the bed and rolled roughly on top of me, forcing that long, thick shaft between my thighs with a desperate urgency. He pushed it so hard that it must have hurt him. Not knowing what would follow, I gripped it as tightly as I could between my legs, trying to hang on, trying to be part of him.

This uncharacteristic urgency was exciting and a bit frightening. "I love you, I love you, I love you," I heard myself saying. Despite that, I wasn't sure that I was enjoying this that much. One moment I couldn't get him going, and now he was like an express train.

He wasn't my catamite: I was his. His strong, thin arms were wrapped tightly around me. My hands clasped his buttocks, helping him force himself deeper between my legs. His hard stomach slapped against mine. His long, thick cock slid in and out, partially lubricated by the sweat that was now flowing freely between my thighs. His prick reached right through my legs to the bedspread below. I

wanted to stop him, to change position so that I could enjoy the beloved pain as he rammed into me, to have him penetrate, to feel him deep, deep inside. But by then his rhythm had become frantic and I knew from his panting it was too late.

"God, I wish you were a girl!" he groaned.

Instantly, with that mumbled wish to an uncaring deity, I felt drained of life. Unaware of my shock, he ejaculated in what seemed like endless spasms, his semen spurting between my damp thighs, the crack of my ass and all over the bed cover. Finally exhausted, he laid his sweat-soaked head against my chest and relaxed, trembling, completely oblivious of the mortal blow he had just dealt me.

"Why are you crying?" he asked, without moving.

Freddy, without you I cannot live. I want to be part of you forever. I want you to be part of me. Say the word and I'll tear my heart out, anything. Just don't discard me like some worn out adventure you had on your way to manhood. Just don't leave me here, covered in your cum, while you move on to take your place with the others in a world in which I don't, can't, belong.

If he heard what I was thinking, he ignored it. Still breathing heavily, he crawled heavily over me and climbed to his feet and stood staring at me, his half-erect prick hanging just above my head. Anger, self-pity, raged silently through my heart.

"Hey!" he said, "I didn't mean it, about your being a woman, I mean. It's just that... well, sometimes I wish... you and I were doing normal things, rather than, you know, with each other. But..." He paused and then smiled with his usual radiance, "...I don't mind, really."

Sulkily, I rolled away and reached for his discarded T-shirt lying at the foot of the bed. Deliberately I used it to wipe away his now

offensive effusion between my legs and on the bed cover. He ignored my obvious rejection and strolled, calmly naked, toward the window.

"Shoo, shoo!" he ordered the bluebottle, which, obeying his command, sped out into the afternoon sunlight. Freddy stood unashamedly for all the see, a boy quivering on the brink of manhood. I had no right to impose my limitations on him. Seeing him like that, my bitterness melted. I had made my choice. He was my fate, and what came next was up to him.

"Freddy," I called, my voice breaking softly, unsure. He turned, smiling, and raised an eyebrow, knowing exactly what I was struggling to ask. Before I could arrange my thoughts, he raised his arms above his head and started shuffling toward me, his still-extended penis swinging like a pendulum.

"Is that all you ever want?" he mocked.

No, Freddy, I want to ride and swim, and joke with friends, and fight with my brothers, and explore life. But, yes, right now I want that more than anything on earth.

"I'm afraid so. We have a little unfinished business to attend to."

My own prick, for the moment limp and rejected, had begun to stir. Freddy stopped teasingly, just out of reach. In what for me was a lightning movement, I made a grab for him. But he was far too agile. With a taunting laugh, he skipped away.

"Ag, no, man!" I swore. "I've been chasing you ever since you got here." Chases, usually with one or both of us in the nude, were a regular feature of our love-making. Freddy stood swaying seductively.

"If you want it, come and get it," he challenged.

"If you stop fucking around, I'll let you drive." I countered.

"I thought you *wanted* me to fuck around."

"No, I just want to fuck."

One of the pleasures of farm life was the fact that I had learned to drive at about eleven or twelve. When our dairy got large enough to warrant our delivering milk, I started by driving to the edge of town. It wasn't long before I was completing the whole route behind the wheel of the little Ford truck. Douglas, our wonderful Zulu dairyman, was the epitome of a milk boy. At each stop he would jump out with much whistling and loud crashes of bottles that seemed totally unbreakable when in his care.

"Can I drive all the way to town, even along the tar?" Freddy asked.

"Umm..." I pretended thought, but knew the odds, like his swaying cock, had swung back in my favor. This was more like the old days.

"Along the tar to the shop?"

A little cafe had opened at our end of the caravan park and we considered it safe enough for Freddy to drive that far. The very first time we did, we arrived there right as a patrolling traffic cop was pulling into the parking lot. He must have been off duty, or drunk or something, because he didn't even look in our direction as we sank, terrified, under the dashboard.

Freddy took a step forward. Now he was within reach. With great effort I held myself in check.

"Okay, to the trees, then, the trees by the graveyard. To that big tree that looks like it's going to fall across the road." He shuffled forward until he was standing close enough for me to touch his cock with my tongue.

"Come on," he prompted, grasping it in one of his horny young hands and smacking it lightly across my mouth. "Open up and take it like a man."

What could I do? Tasting his drying semen as I sucked it into my mouth, feeling it grow. How could it get so big? My cock stiffened as

Freddy reached down and ran his fingers through my hair, arching his body, choking me as he forced himself deeper...

"Michael, Douglas wag virjou." [Michael, Douglas is waiting for you], Sissie suddenly called from downstairs. Jesus, the milk delivery – God, not now! "Michael!" she called again. Naturally, I couldn't say a word. *"Wat mak jullie twee dar bo? Moet ek vir jullie kom haal?"* [What are you two doing upstairs? Must I come and fetch you?] Like lightning, we separated.

"Nee. Ek kom, ek kom, ek kom!" [Wait, I'm coming!], I shouted, not believing that fate could deal out such cruel blows. *"Ons trek net an, moenie op kom nie, ons is nou daar. Se net vir horn hy moet wag."* [We are getting dressed. Hang on, we'll be there right away. Tell him to wait!]

Frantically, we scrambled into our clothes. Freddy left his T-shirt lying where I'd tossed it and grabbed one of my shirts from the pile on the floor. It was far too big and in his haste he put it on inside out. I hopped around, trying to force one of my legs into the stiff new jeans. Laughing, he gave me a shove and I tumbled backward onto the bed. Like a rugby forward, he dived over to join me. The hundred-year-old heirloom creaked in protest.

Okay, so we were lovers, but we were also friends. With a sigh of relief, I hugged him. He nuzzled my neck, a playful puppy relieved of duty.

"You little bastard, you planned that," I grumbled. "And your shirt is the wrong way round."

"I know. It doesn't matter. It's your shirt."

"Remember, you owe me," I said. He nuzzled closer.

"It's only Friday. We've got the whole week." Then he growled in my ear, "Tonight I'll fuck the shit out of you. But..." He paused, "...remember you said I could drive."

Yes, Freddy, you can drive. You can do anything you want.