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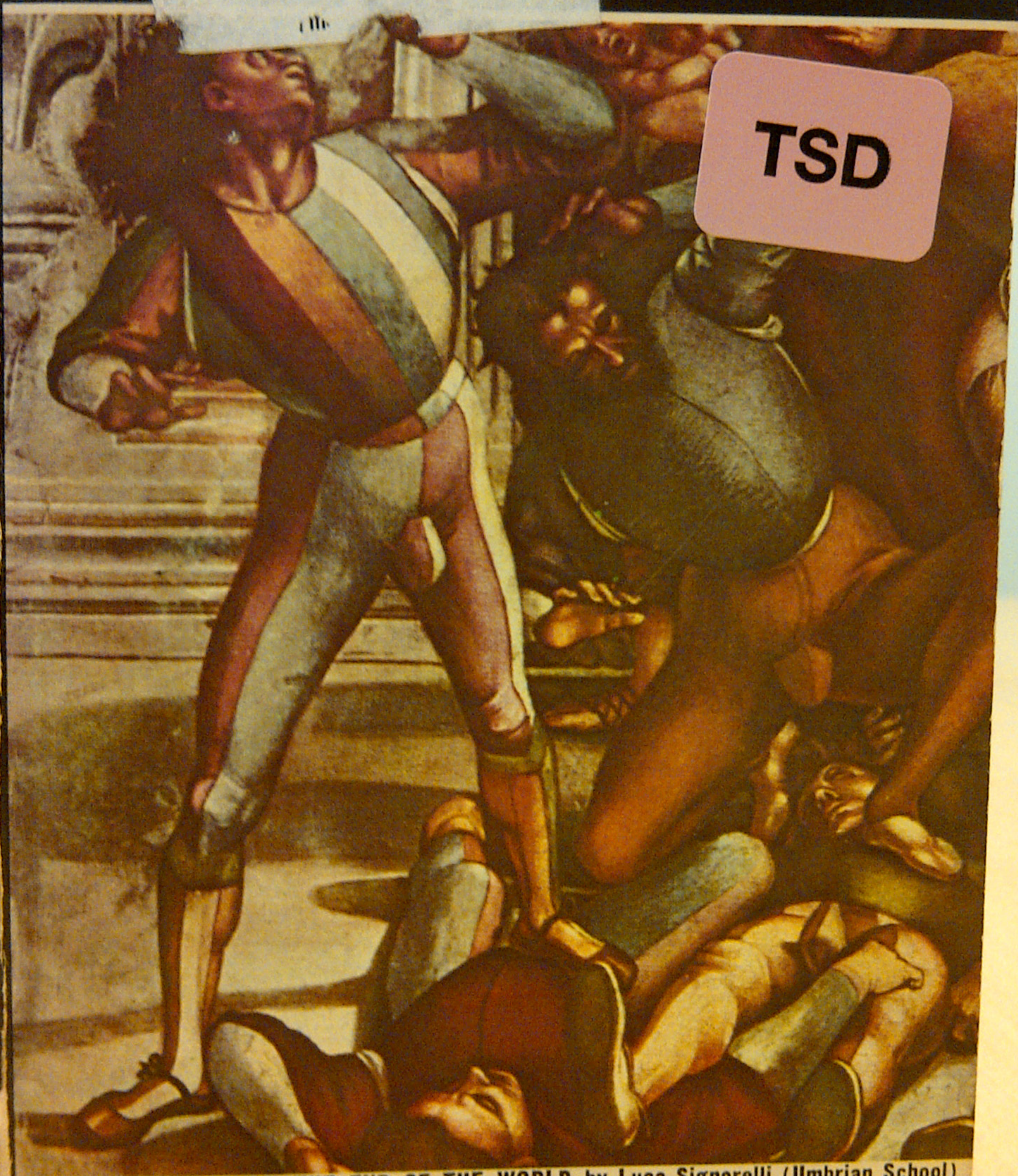
FICTION

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the SAD G MEN

ANONYMOUS

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THE END OF THE WORLD by Luca Signorelli (Umbrian School)

One day he was a married man with a family... The next day he was plunged into the half-world of homosexuality. How did it happen? "It can happen to anyone..." says the author of this book, and tells how — and why...



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FICTION

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ALL the SAD YOUNG MEN

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One day he was
The next day he
to anyone who
tells how...

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**ALL the SAD
YOUNG MEN**
ANONYMOUS

JFC
96 - 1819

WISDOM HOUSE – THE TIMELY BOOKS

ALL the SAD YOUNG MEN

ANONYMOUS

**The tragedy of the man forced to live
in the twilight world of homosexuality.**

**To tell, vividly and in detail, how one
man—the author—previously happily married
and the father of two children, found
himself drawn to this tragic twilight world.
In other words, it is "The Sling and the
Arrow" told graphically, told WHY it
happens as well as how it happens.**



WISDOM HOUSE INC.

520 Fifth Avenue

New York 36, N. Y.

ALL the SAD YOUNG MEN

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All the Sad Young Men

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CHAPTER ONE

I awakened slowly to the sounds of the East River traffic sixteen floors below. I stretched my body luxuriantly between the cool sheets. I remembered a feeling of complete relaxation and of being at peace with myself . . . for the first time in years. In my semiconscious state, I knew I was happy, physically and mentally. The blessed relief that comes from tension, and barriers, suddenly let down. Even before I was half awake I knew that suddenly a new life had begun for me. I felt reborn, *new*, and excitingly young.

At first I was afraid to open my eyes. I turned my head to look at my bed companion. I was afraid that it might not be real . . . That this had all been a glorious dream and that there would be an empty place in the bed beside me. Unrumpled sheets and the cold smooth pillow undented and untouched by the lean young body that I had loved so passionately. But there was the tousled, sleepy head, with its face toward me, that I had kissed so passionately during the night.

I was *not* alone. The thrill of knowing that love was still with me almost made my heart jump from my body. A love that knew no limitations—a love that had come to me in all its glories with a challenge that could only make our love stronger because we had to fight the world together with its narrow moral confines.

I seemed to be riding on the crest of new passions, newly explored and beautiful places that my heart had never been before. Suddenly I realized the meaning of levitation such as Yogis claim to experience. *Love*, the most beautiful love one could ever have, had come into my arms, claimed my heart, and expressed itself in greater abundance than I could ever have believed possible.

Love is a strange thing. Love every glance, every word, every movement, speaks only to *you*. The sound of *love's* voice when it speaks the most ordinary of words can send you to the heights of passion or the depths of despair. And love had come to me at last.

After all these years of searching for something—I didn't know what—, hoping for something I didn't dare, hope for, praying that I would become a whole man, not just the shell of one . . . It had happened at last! The shell of this man looked like a man, acted like a man but was empty, insecure and ignorant of what he really was. But now that love had entered my life the shell had been filled.

Although it was a love I thought I could never accept, one that society frowned upon, and people joked about, or talked about behind closed doors—that was *me* . . . filled to overflowing, . . . and because of this great love, a love has filled me with such happiness, and is so completely natural to me that I want to share my delirium, my joy and well-being with all the world.

I sighed deeply and reached out to feel the warmth of my *love's* body. I am at once filled with desire and all the beauty it represents to me. I

move closer and take *Love* into my arms and it is suddenly awakened with passion, the same as mine. Suddenly we are both alive with the awareness of being *one* on some astral plane. We seemed to be one piece of flesh moulded together by a sculptor's hand.

Love's kiss, though still sleepy, became one of fire that seems to sear our flesh from naked toe to the top of our skulls. Suddenly we are so close that it seems we are moulded together with the heat of our passion and we will never become separate bodies again. I don't care. Here in Love's arms I want to stay forever. I don't want to be freed from this mold that seems to make us one. But the climax of passion is spent so suddenly and with such force that the world seems to stop spinning on its axis and our two bodies are hurled into space of beautiful lights, unearthly music that pounds in our ears. We are together with such force that we hurt one another with the pain of our love. But we dare not let it go. For the time in space we are with one another desperately—as if we were the only ones left in the world and apartness would certainly send us both to a crashing death, back to earth, only to be smashed to bits by life's reality.

Suddenly, our senses relax and we are released slowly and gently back onto the familiar bed of white sheets and the crumpled pillows—a place from where, just moments before we had been elevated, to a misty colorful, unreal and beautiful world . . . a world that belonged to just the two of us.

Slowly my love turned and reached for a cigar-

ette on the bedside table.

"Want one?"

"Not right now, Baby". I answered drowsily.

I was too content to stir, and only wanted to feast my eyes on the perfect symmetry of the beauty lying beside me. I wanted to remember every line, curve, hollow, or muscle on my *Love's* body. I have never tired of looking at perfection. And even a connoisseur of art would say that my Love is a perfect thing of beauty.

My Love took a deep draw on the cigarette and then passed it over to me in spite of the fact that I had refused the offer of one. *Love*, propped up on one elbow, looked deep into my eyes. I marveled at the dark blue of these eyes and the dark lashes that fringed them which were so startlingly long and curled upwards. The blond body was tanned as if it had been dipped lightly in gold. I saw the look of love and respect in those eyes for me. I felt truly humble that Love had come to me in such a beautiful completeness.

"We've got a big day ahead of us." Love said.

"I know." I sighed deeply, hating to come back to reality and the business of the day ahead.

"Gerry," why don't you go ahead and *shave* first . . . I suggested, then I turned my back on him and said "leave me in my dream world for a while. Don't forget we're having lunch with my publisher and you better be sure that both our dark gray suits are packed up and ready."

My Love, Gerry, laughed and, jumped athleticly from the bed and stood and gave me a sharp salute, saying, "O. K. boss."

As I heard Gerry splashing around in the bathroom like a young seal, I had to laugh at myself. Lots of middle-aged authors and business men sleep with their secretaries, but I wondered just how many of those secretaries were male.

My eyes traveled to the large bureau at the end of the room, and there in a Morocco bound frame, was the picture of my own son taken when he was fifteen. Billy was a good kid . . . Although I haven't seen him for five years.

He's twenty now. My God! I thought. What in hell would he think of his father in this situation? Gerry, my love, is only twenty-four.—

CHAPTER TWO

Strange—I have no feeling of guilt about my love for Gerry. I wouldn't like Billy to know of my devotion my passion for Gerry. But, then who knows how Billy, himself will turn out? His life has been a strange one from the very beginning. He's been surrounded by kookoo artists, sculptors, writers, actors, the would be's, and the has-beens, of the theatrical and artistic world all his life. Billy has probably understood all along, *more* about what I'm just beginning to learn, all his life. His mother, talented, beautiful, has always had her lovers around the house, male or female. Our life, his mother's and mine had been miserable from the start. I was a green hick from the country . . . fell madly in love with a glamorous woman, who was a movie star. She made me her leading man in my first picture. It was a flop — I was a flop. The only good thing that came out of that marriage was Billy — God bless him. And I hope to hell that I never let him down.

I could hear Gerry singing in the shower. He'll never make the Met, I laughed to myself, God gave him everything but a sense of pitch and rhythm, but he sure sings with a hell of a lot of enthusiasm. It was really quite terrible, but I loved it. Thinking back over my career, which has been a spotty one, up until now, I had gone to Hollywood originally to become a writer, not an actor. But when Clea saw me, Billy's mother, and

took one look at my lanky farm frame. Body and fresh dumb- face, a writing career was out of the question. She was going to make me the biggest star in pictures.

I was the star that never rose. My star got on a horizon and stayed there dimly for a few short years. Clea lost interest and made other discoveries but she kept me around as a sort of house decoration. In the meantime I tried to write, but no one took me seriously. Little Billy was born and I vowed then and there that I was going to become a writer of note, if only for him. Clea was still going on, and she probably will forge ahead forever. She certainly is not without talent. Clea is the personification of the ageless glamour screen queen.

I thought to myself as I heard Gerry singing in the bath-room that it's a good thing Clea didn't see him first or I would never had the chance of having him as the perfect secretary, because Clea would have had him in front of the cameras so fast that poor Gerry would never have known what happened to him.

Gerry came out of the shower, wrapped in a towel, looking like a young Adonis.

"O. K. boss. Up and at'em. Times' a wastin', Our suits are back from the cleaners and you have a meeting with that theatre group at eleven o'clock. There are some letters that you have to get out today. "There are a few bills that ought to be paid too. I'll write out the checks if you'll sign them."

Gerry was all efficiency now . . . and all man. That's the one thing that attracted me to him

when I first met him. How, I wondered had any young man so handsome, not have been picked up and thrown to the wolves of Hollywood, the theatre, or television. I asked Gerry this, once . . . and he just gave me his big laugh and said, "I know I have no talent and I haven't any ambition to be anything but just what I am. A damn efficient all around man's man." And that's what he is.

With Gerry giving his final orders to me he left my room and I could hear him whistling as he went down the hall to his own room.

As I got out of bed and went to the shower I could envision what Gerry was up to now. He was ripping up his bed, putting some cigarette butts in an ash tray, scattering some newspapers on the floor so that when Mrs. Mulligan arrived at nine sharp it would look as if he had slept in his room.

"Our Mrs. Mulligan," as we fondly called her, is a sprightly gray-bird of a woman with a strength of an Ox, the wit of the Irish and as reliable as the rock of Gibraltar. She made no bones about the fact that Gerry was the favorite man in her life. Nothing was too good for him. I knew that by the time I had finished my shower and shave I would smell the good aroma of coffee coming from the kitchen, and the gay, bright banter that always went on every morning between "our Mrs. Mulligan" and my Gerry.

It's a happy house we have — the large living room and dinette that looks over the river extends onto a terrace is delightful on sunny mornings. Besides our two bedrooms, I have a small den and

office where I work. Knock wood, I just sold a best selling novel to a picture company. Things could not be better for me right now. The biggest thing about this achievement, in my mind, is the pleasure it will give Billy. To know his father is a success on his own — in his own field — It was a triumph over Clea. I was my own man now and not a shadow of a star. Now the theatre group is dickering with me to do an adaptation of another novel for a musical. All this may seem very unimportant to the story, but the fact that I have finally become recognized in the field that I chose to be successful, takes away the deep feeling I had for so many years of rejection. Rejection in my case, I'm sure, is the main factor in my latent homosexuality. We all try to reason things out, go to psychiatrists, talk with people we know, but no one ever knows the real reason for homosexuality as it confronts us personally.

I suppose that all the time I have had a homosexual urge, sometimes under the guise of wanting to be accepted, wanting to be admired for my talent or recognized for my capabilities. Through the ages man's admiration for man has always been accepted. A man wants to be brave for man, in war. A man wants to be successful so that he will be looked up to by other men in his community. Man is homogeneous in the fact that he likes to join clubs and associate with other men; much in the same way that has often been said that women *dress* for women."

In my young days in Hollywood, there wasn't anybody or anything that I couldn't get, if I

wanted it. Men didn't appeal to me in a sexual way, but under the influence of alcohol, on several occasions on gay parties I allowed an intimacy to take place which I now know that I enjoyed much more thoroughly than I did my normal relationships with women. Not until after the end of my career as an actor, the break up of my marriage, did I ever consider the possibility that I might be an actual active homosexual.

Now I realize that for years I had been fighting it, and it wasn't until I left California and came to live in New York that I even let myself accept that fact that I preferred men to women.

Once a man has crossed over the border and fallen in love with another man his whole emotional pattern is set into a new orbit. There is always the fear that one loves one more than the other. The fear of losing your lover to another . . . perhaps in the same way in which you had taken him away from someone else, by being more successful, even more handsome and clever. I, at forty-five, still consider myself a slim, attractive, handsome, clever and successful man. Even with this knowledge, the dread, and the fear, of the homosexual growing old is always the stab in the wound. Age is the one thing that frightens the homosexual most. Youth is the power and glory of the half-world, as they call it. But, if this is the half world, then this happiness I now have—*never* give me the *whole world*. It would be too much to endure, any more happiness than I have at this present writing would be too much to bear. Will it last? Can it last? I only pray that it can and that it will. This is a sad gay world.

CHAPTER THREE

Gerry and I? We're a good team. People like and respect us. Gerry is so un-obvious. He's so courteous, he has beautiful manners, he is a good dancer and a bright conversationalist I like him so why shouldn't everybody else. That's my worry.

The fear of losing him sometimes make me shudder with fear.

Gerry makes my work easier, in fact he even makes it a joy. Loving him and having him close to me most of the twenty-four hours of the day has improved my work, my health and my sanity . . . but there is always the difference of years . . . and how can I hold on to someone with all this charm and talent and physical attractiveness? That's what makes the gay world so sad.

I think now is the time to bring in the women in our lives. Dorothy and Fay, they are our two side-kicks. They both have finally learned the score about Gerry and me. In fact it has helped our relationship and they like our companionship and the courtship we can pay them. Both girls are in their early thirties and are handsomely incombed by alimony and don't want to make any false or foolish mistake by falling in love with a penniless handsome bum.

Both girls like their men when and where they want them and they don't want to be caught with their so called lovely alimonies down. At first, Fay

had a terrific crush on Gerry and even though I was disturbed by it and hated her for it, I couldn't blame her. Fay is a beautiful svelte brunette, with white, white skin and a figure that stops traffic. Like all women, they liked to be shown off at their best. Together with Gerry and his blond Adonis-like appearance they always attract attention wherever we would go. One night, when things got a little hot and heavy and the martinis had been flowing too much, Fay declared her attraction and love for Gerry. I'll never forget how embarrassed, almost to death, I was, or, how happy and proud, when Gerry told Fay, flatly, that he was in love with me. I think it was the happiest moment in my life. That a man so handsome, and so young, would pronounce his love for another *man* in front of a woman in love with him was a thing of courage that I can never forget. Fay got over it of course, and now seems to understand and is still our constant companion.

Now it is time that I mention Dorothy, whose wit and humor are as bright and cold as the diamonds she wears around her beautiful neck. She's a red head, but only her hair-dresser knows for sure. She's as greedy green as the huge emerald she flashes on her petal like fingers, but a *friend* she is. In fact Dorothy is in every sense the beautiful dumb broad who has made good and is going to stay that way. Dorothy is about as dumb as the huge alimony she has been collecting for years and as tantalizing as Cleopatra might have been in her hey day. In fact if it weren't for Gerry I could, I would, have madly fallen in love with her

and married her and settled down in a half normal sense. Dorothy and I had our romantic period. It was shortly after I had first come to New York. We had made the bed scene quite successfully but neither of us had seemed quite satisfied by it. This happened shortly after I had met Gerry but I had had no romantic or physical contact with him at that time. It was Dorothy who said one morning as she rolled over in bed and kissed me warmly, "You know, Wally, you really don't give a damn for women, do you?" I was shocked, I protested seriously that she was wrong . . . but a woman knows.

She laughed as she got out of my arms and said, "Let's face it, darling — we're not for each other but we're *for* each other all the way."

Heretofore in this document I have not identified myself with a name, so shall we just call me Wally, only because I can't think of any name I dislike more intensely than Wally — So I shall be — Wallace Richards. And this author, in spite of his egotism and opinions does not like himself at all.

CHAPTER FOUR

Dorothy preened her proud body in front of me and said, Wally, you know, you and Gerry were made for each other. So why not make the scene?" I was shocked of course and thought that she still was a little drunk from the night before.

There is something brittle and bright, and terribly amusing about ultra-sophisticated women like Dorothy. Once they understand a thing and they know that man is *not* for them they do not lose interest, nor do they try to conquer them any more, but seem to become more devoted and much more loyal as a friend, more protective than ever before. Dorothy is always a constant source of amusement to me. In fact I don't really know how I could live my life without her . . . her friendship, her humor, and her love. Dorothy has a dog, a tiny, nasty little poodle whose hair somehow seems to be tinted the same color as hers. The poodle's name is Rapier . . . and rightly so. Nothing is safe when Rapier is around. A leg, an arm, a chair . . . anything goes with Rapier. One noon in the middle of August, probably the hottest day of the year, Dorothy leaped from my bed and ran naked to the windows on the terrace and exclaimed, "For heaven's sake it's snowing!" I, too, hazily stumbled from my bed to see what in the hell she was talking about, I saw what she meant when I saw that Rapier had ripped one of the

eider down pillows on the terrace lounges where we had spent most of the night . . . until the sun came up and it was too hot to stay out of doors. A gentle breeze had come up and the feathers were flying all over the terrace. It truly looked like a snow storm and Rapier seemed to be the only one in the apartment who had been satisfied. With a couple of Bloody-Marys served with a couple of scowls from Mrs. Mulligan, Dorothy began to realize that it was *still* August, that she was *still* divorced, that she was *still* unhappy, and that she *still* couldn't have me. So she turned me over to Gerry and that is when our love affair started.

CHAPTER FIVE

This happiness that I now feel so secure in with Gerry, has lasted over three and a half years. A relationship this perfect in a homosexual's love life, is truly indeed almost a record breaker.

Actually, it was through Dorothy that I first met Gerry, who has become my beloved. I had known Dorothy on the West Coast, and we had liked each other immensely from the start. We fell into a little romance, more laughs than sex as week-end guests of mutual friends in Palm Beach. When I decided to move to New York from California to oversee the production of my play on Broadway, Dorothy was the first person whom I called. We had become a gossip column item, and a noted couple at theatre openings and in cafe society.

I was to escort Dorothy to one of those highly publicized, sophisticated society Balls.

As I lay in bed, listening to the familiar sounds of Gerry getting dressed in his room, our meeting for the first time at the Oak Room in the Plaza Hotel, seemed only a day or so ago for cocktails with Dorothy's friend. Fay, a well known playwright and his young assistant, who turned out to be Gerry, it was hard for me to believe that it had all happened, and come about only three and a half years ago.

I could recall in vivid detail almost everything

that happened the night of the society ball.

I was Dorothy's prize catch of the season. She wore me like an ornament all around New York. My first novel had just been published the year before — praised and awarded. My first play on Broadway had turned out to be a huge success. I was happily basking in the spot-light of success. I was the man of the year, and Dorothy was playing it to the hilt.

The night of the ball Dorothy picked me up at my apartment, as is her usual procedure. Dorothy is one woman who can not stand waiting for anyone, or for anything to happen . . . she has to push it on ahead herself. She is as quickly entertained, as she is bored. I, as usual, had not quite finished dressing when Dorothy had arrived at the apartment. She yelled into my bedroom, a quick "hurry up call" and I could hear her rattling ice and bottles around in the bar in the living room. She mixed a Martini for herself and walked boldly into my dressing room and handed me one "on-the-rocks." She just said "hurry up," we're meeting friends at the Oak Room before going on to that damned society drag ball", and left me standing with my shorts on, glass in hand and left the room. I could hear Dorothy padding around the apartment, opening drawers, moving ash-trays, and talking to herself, all accompanied to the sound of the tinkling of the ice in her glass.

I recalled pleasantly, the weeks that Dorothy had been kept busy, amused, and *not bored*, by helping me to find this pent house apartment in which I had been so happy. Her taste was excellent

in helping me to select furniture, colors and accessories. I could hear her now pacing through the apartment and muttering to herself. Finally she burst back into my dressing room complaining, "This damn apartment is too normal. There's no dash about it." She eyed me suspiciously as I struggled with my bow-tie, "Haven't you got a dash in you, Wally." She put down her Martini on the chest of drawers and tied my tie perfectly.

"Just a little itsy-bitsy-dash?" she kept pestering me wickedly. "Like wearing red socks with your dinner suit — or may be, a bright plaid cumberbund with a tie to match?"

"No red socks and no plaids", I laughed back, "but lots of dash, Dotty."

"I don't think so, Wally," she said as she gave my tie a final twist, and a jerk into place. "You're one of those squares that write out all your inhibitions, daring, and suppressed desires into your books and plays. I'm afraid you're just beautiful and dull —".

"Thanks a lot, you spoiled bitch," I flung back at her. "In other words, you're telling me I'm a lousy lover!"

"I didn't say *that*, darling," she tossed back at me over her bare shoulders as she left the little room.

"I just mean that you are so *over intense* and serious about your damned love-making that I'm sure you just feel it's your manly duty to make love to me."

I followed her, with my jacket in hand, into the living room. Dorothy was standing, glamorous and

decorative by the little bar. She was making more Martinis.

"You just don't have any imagination in your bedroom exercises, Wally," she laughed lightly as she offered me the pale amber filled glass. I took a sip and said, "Well, if you'd like to skip the ball tonight to strip down naked. I'd be grateful to the highpriestess of sex tricks to give me a few free lessons."

Dorothy shrugged her shoulders, sipped on her drink, and walked out onto the terrace. She stood watching the lights of the city while I slipped into my jacket, "You're a coward, Dorothy," I said joining her. "You like what I give you, the way I give it to you . . . and the way I ration it out to you, don't you?"

Dorothy turned to me, put her glass down on a table, and reached up and gave me a warm and playful kiss.

"You are without a doubt, the most egomaniacal male son of a bitch I've ever come in contact with . . . but I love you."

This was the usual, the *norm*, for conversation between the two of us. It was always this way. She complained a little, we drank a little, she tied my tie a little too tight, and we usually left the apartment a little too tight.

Our conversation in the taxi, on our way to the Plaza Hotel to meet her friends was light banter. After we had arrived at the hotel, and Dorothy swept into the Oak Room, the most masculine room in New York City, in spite of the fact that it was a popular meeting place for the more chic,

set, Dorothy, so ultra feminine in her swaths of gossamer, (whatever it was she was wearing) and her famous diamonds, blazing around her proud and swan-like neck, would have made even the gayest and most effeminate of men look like truck drivers. Dorothy was almost ridiculously beautiful that night. She had a trick of entering a room that attracted attention, and make everyone's eyes focus upon her. Dorothy was a celebrity of her own making and in her own fashion. She was a noted figure in cafe society. She was always exciting and glamorous. Dorothy was one of those women who was always *engaged* to someone who was currently on top. This season I was *it*. And I, too, unblushingly say, was recognizable as a current success.

Isn't it funny, all of a sudden I had become an ex-film star who had made *good* as a literary genius? In the first place I was never a star, and, in the second place, I am *not* a genius. I just write about people and things as I see them, and there you are — . That's genius???? Not really, it's actually reporting on people and telling the people all about themselves more or less. My type of writing makes people recognize themselves in another character other than their own. If enough people transplant themselves and their good qualities into your more interesting fictional characters, they like themselves and their good qualities into your more interesting fictional characters, they like themselves, so naturally they like you, and they make you a genius and a success.

That night Dorothy and I were hailed from

every side of the room to join this party or that. But Dorothy had planned to meet Fay who was spending the evening with Syd Thompson, last year's successful playwright. Syd had had two flops in two seasons and was now tottering on the pedestal of success. As we pushed through the room it was not hard for me to be the center of attraction, with my success, and with Dorothy and her diamonds.

This was my *Don Juan* period, I guess. On both coasts I had been sleeping, and making the scene with every success starved, publicity starved, starlet, divorcee, fortune huntress, women of name — "any name" . . . I was really pushing the loverboy act, and I loved it, but in name only. Alone, I was starved for love and affection. Nothing any woman could do seemed to stem my unknown hunger for love, or to sate and complete my deepest unknown desires. I thought the unknown quantity, the incompleteness of my need for affection, was all slanted towards my son, but I too soon found out that this was not true. My completeness as a person came with my love for Gerry.

When I took the apartment in Sutton Place, the room that is now Gerry's was to have been for my son Billy, when, and if, he ever came to visit me. My heart ached for my boy so much, I wanted him with me but he was always off to camps, sailing trips, traveling with school-mates, or private schools, that when I was in California I hardly ever saw him. For nearly four years I have waited for him to come and share this home I have made for him in New York: but Clea (his mother),

always very sweetly, and now jealously, continuously had plans for our son that kept him from me.

Billy had always been my baby. Clea never had the time, or the inclination, to be a mother in the true sense of the word. Billy had been born at the height of her career. It was the old story of a self-indulgent woman who worshipped her own success more than anything else in the world. Up until now a child of Billy's age, she thought, would make her seem older and less attractive to her public. Billy had been pushed around for years by Clea and her vanity.

Now that I was finally able to do something about the boy because of my financial success, Clea finally discovered her son, and now, Billy didn't seem so important to me as he had in the past. Now that Gerry has come into my life — is my life. Billy's room, that had been empty, now belonged to Gerry, and I could never imagine my son as part of my household, or even as a close thing in my life. How that meeting, through Dorothy, of Gerry Hart and me that night in the Oak Room had changed my life! That night, as Dorothy and I advanced toward Fay's table, I saw Gerry for the first time. Fay and Gerry were sitting on either side of Syd Thompson, the playwright I had most admired, and who also by Faye's command, had taken his place with the fickle public. His young friend, Gerry, was listening intently to every word, old Syd was saying . . . at least, I thought to myself, he still has someone left who worships at his feet, and the young man Gerry, who was the worshipper, was also one of the most

handsome males I had ever seen.

When Dorothy and I finally got through the crowd to join Fay and her two companions, they too had by now had their quota of Martinis. Fay was in a gay, pixie mood, Syd was in a mood for criticising the theatre, and Gerry, who seemed the most sober of them all was just soaking up every witticism, every word that the great Syd Thompson spoke. They were not in evening dress as they were not going to the ball.

I was introduced to Gerry and Syd. Gerry Ford turned out to be Syd Thompson's assistant.

I realized immediately, that I was more than attractive to the handsome young man, and I knew that the young man was attractive to me. When our eyes and hands met in the introduction. I could feel there was almost an electric current between us. I could also sense that our meeting was being closely observed, for what it was, by Syd Thompson, and suddenly I knew that this young man, in some way, belonged to Syd in more than a business relationship. It was at that moment that I first realized that the famous playwright, Thompson, was an old "aunty". It never dawned on me that this man of brittle wit, a master at portraying feline feminine characters which were always so prominent in his plays, stemmed from the fact that the man was filled with all these feminine characteristics himself. Now that I felt this bond that existed between young Ford and the playwright, my mind's eye conjured up scene after scene in Thompson's successful plays and motion pictures that only a woman could have had the insight to

write or to observe. I wasn't shocked upon realizing that Thompson was a homosexual, I was only amazed that how cleverly he had disguised what he really was through all these years in the public's eye.

I was suddenly brought up sharp by the suspicion that perhaps I, in truth, was doing the same as Thompson. Thompson was noted for always having a beautiful woman on his arm in public — and so was I. Tonight he had the raven-haired, glorious Fay Brighton with him as camouflage for Gerry Ford who was his lover as well as his associate.

All of a sudden, I remember having felt a great sorrow and pity for Syd Thompson. Without continued success and an abundance of money to spend, without the glamor of being important on the theatre scene, he, a man in his handsome fifties, was destined to lose his young lover and associate. Homosexuality belongs to youth. Homosexuality is the same as a beautiful girl who has no particular talents or business sense and has to make good before she starts to fade or else she is marked for an average middle-class marriage or whoredom. If she can be kept extravagantly, with trust funds and securities, by a wealthy older man, while the bloom of youth is still working in her favor she has made the best of her assets — youth and beauty. I remember realizing that the male deviate, young and old, have the same identical problem.

Handsome young men have no trouble in getting a *sponsor*, or a rich *daddy* to take care of them while they are still young and desirable — but what

happens to *old aunty*, the beautiful gay boy who suddenly finds himself in his thirties, then forties, fifties, and on and on and on. As the young boys while in their prime and most desirable time of life sing, "Nobody wants you when you're old and gay." How many of these young, gay, giddy-girly-boys — realize that nine tenths of them are singing about their own future? I remembered how I suddenly felt cold and shuddered with a chill at the thought of it. Thompson noticed and remarked, "Somebody walked over your grave, Wally." I tried to shake it off and laughed weakly as I looked into Gerry's bright eyes then turned to Syd and said, "I certainly hope to hell *not*!"

I remember thinking at *that* time how thankful I was that what destined to happen to Syd Thompson would *never* happen to me. I remember of bravely telling myself, at that moment, that whether I continued to be a success or not, suffered, or palpitated by a chance physical attraction to another male, I was not "queer." I might have homosexual tendencies and stray from the beaten heterosexual path now and then, just for kicks, but I would never allow (I remember thinking) a tinge of homosexuality to take over and control my life — that, I declared to myself could never happen to me. Little did I realize just how much I was fighting what was really destined to happen. I thought I loved women too much. Look at the romantic and amusing sex life I was having with beautiful, wonderful Dorothy. No boy, or man could ever take her place of what was between us. Dorothy, as well as the many glamorous women in

my life before her, I believed, at that moment, would always hold more fascination and appeal for me than any man in the world. Still I knew I was excited about being in Gerry's company. To listen to the masculine tones in his voice when he told stories that night delighted me in a strange way. I remember consciously trying not to look *only* at him during that cocktail hour. Gerry seemed as a magnet to which my whole being was being drawn. I remember a feeling — almost a deep pain of anguish because I had to share these moments in Gerry's presence with the others. I had never in my life felt such an attraction for anyone human being as I had felt for this boy whom I had only just met, only clasped hands and said, "How do you do?". It was a shattering experience even though I knew it was only a momentary attraction and I would overcome it. I reasoned it to be just one of those rare physical attraction things that sometimes happen. It can happen in a brief second when passing someone on the street, seeing a face in a car that is passing by. I tried to tell myself that this was the same type of fleeting thing.

I remember the conversation amongst the four of us as being light and bright. Both Dorothy and Fay had on, what I call their "funny hats" that evening, and everything they said seemed to set the whole group into a sort of hysterical laughter. I remember of being conscious of laughing too enthusiastically to very mundane and unfunny remarks out of my guilt feeling for my attraction to Gerry Ford.

Even that mistaken laughter seemed to catch on

and be funny to everyone. There was an hilarious tension among us that only I could explain had I been asked; everyone felt it about them, but only Gerry and I knew what it *really* was. The more I tried to fight down what I consider my warped emotions for this boy, the more the tension and hysterics seemed to mount among us — or had I been imagining all of that? Was I the only one who was aware of what was happening between Gerry and myself? No, I was not. Every time I had a chance to look at Gerry I found his eyes were already pouring into mine. His eyes seemed to hold a very knowing look. It was very disturbing and the excitement of this mental contact was making me more dizzy than the dry Martinis that I seemed to be swilling down in unusually great numbers.

At one point during this brief episode, Syd caught Gerry's eyes glued to mine for an instant and he sardonically said directly to me, "You can look and admire, Wally, but you mustn't touch." Syd smiled evilly at me and said, "The goods have already been purchased."

I suffered for Gerry when he heard Syd say this to me. Gerry turned a deep red for a moment. Fay saved the situation by asking, "What was that sage remark, Syd? I didn't get it!"

"Never mind, Fay darling," Syd answered pleasantly as he kept his cold blue eyes on mine. "It's something *real girls* should not know about! You are real girls, aren't you?"

"Are you cracking up or something, Syd?" she flashed back, half in anger, "You left me in outer

space . . . come out of orbit and join the party."

I felt that neither Fay nor Dorothy had caught the meaning or heard Syd's cutting and hurting remark, but I was well aware that Syd was more than conscious of the sparks that had been flying between Gerry and me. I remember of being happy, that it was time for Dorothy and me to leave for the ball and remember the feeling of sadness that I had to leave the electric presence of Gerry Ford. As we left I kissed Fay lightly on the cheek and shook hands briefly with Syd Thompson, telling him of what a pleasure it had been to finally meet an artist whom I had so much admired. I only gave Gerry a quick glance and a nod good-bye . . . I dared not touch his hand again, I don't know what might have happened at the moment had there been any physical contact between us.

I remember I stumbled awkwardly over another patron's chair upon leaving the table. "Are you drunk, Wally?" Dorothy asked in wonder.

"I think I am, a little," I answered.

"Well, we'll get out of this smoky room, get lots of air in a taxi on our way to the Waldorf." Dorothy seemed to have the situation in hand and was feeling very good indeed.

We waded our way through people who were standing three and four deep at the bar. Dorothy seemed to know every one of them as well as everyone in the room. It seemed to me she stopped to say a few words with each of them and I was beginning to think the room was going to suddenly surround and envelop me in a cobra like embrace—and I would die a slow horrible claustrophobic

death if I didn't get out of there immediately. I could feel the penetrating force of Gerry's, as well as Syd's eyes burning into my back as we inched through the mass of humanity towards the door.

The din of many conversations, all unrelated in theme, the clank of ice cubes against their glass sides, wild bursts of laughter, the clatter of dishes, the smoke hanging heavy and sickening sweet in a cloud over the room, the aroma of many spiced perfumes and colognes hanging listlessly in the air almost made me panic . . . in fact I did.

"Dorothy," I said, trying to keep my voice calm, "I've got to get out of here right now."

"Oh, Darling! Just one more minute . . .", she protested warningly, "Jean is sitting over at the corner table and she has spotted us. We've got to go over, especially you, and gush over her or we're both *ruined*! I'm sorry, Wally, but you know that, and now that I've seen her and waved to her it would be public suicide to ignore the bitch!"

Dorothy took my hand and started to pull me over toward Jean Hays, the most vicious and powerful lady gossip columnist, table. I remember I balked, stood stock still and refused to budge an inch in her direction. I thought I was going to faint if I didn't get out of that room immediately, and away from that searing feeling of Gerry's eyes burning on the back of my neck.

"Come on, Wally," Dorothy tugged at me. "Don't be a fool . . . It will only take a minute and we'll be safe from her barbs for a whole week . . ."

I stood firm, refusing to move toward the columnist's table. Miss Hayes must have noticed my refus-

al to bow to her presence, in fact I know she did, because of incidents and things she printed about me as well as Dorothy after that evening.

"Wally!" Dorothy exclaimed, "You *do* look sick, you're as white as a sheet. Get on out of here and get some air, grab and hold a cab, and I'll try to explain to her highness that you are just plain drunk . . . She'll say it anyway so I might just as well beat her to it."

Dorothy gave me a little shove toward the exit and wiggled her lovely fanny through the jumbled tables to pay homage to the vicious presence of Jean Hayes.

I remember standing still for a moment as the room seemed to wheel around me, with my eye on the door, my escape to air, my escape from Jean Hayes, I still had to turn back and look once more into the eyes to Gerry before I went any further. I knew before I turned back to his table that his eyes would be looking directly into mine . . . they were, but so were the cold, frightened eyes of Syd Thompson. It was only a moment's glance, but what I saw in that fraction of a second both thrilled me and froze my heart with a sense of foreboding, of fear and sadness . . .

Syd's eyes had a hopeless pleading look in them, also there was the look in those eyes of a knowledge that he knew what was going to happen — what would inevitably happen. There was also a look of understanding and a sensing of the situation at hand, along with the bitterness of it all. I knew that there was a recognition in Syd's eyes that even at my age, in comparison to his, my youth,

success and money, had won out again over age. As usual, and as expected, though no queen ever dares to admit it to himself, until it comes piling down upon him like a ton of bricks, youth is the power and the glory of this sad gay world.

In that brief look into Syd's sad eyes I felt like an executioner. I felt as if I had actually passed the death sentence on his creative life as well as his love life. I wished to God that it had not happened, but it had. It was over and done with without anyone saying a word. In that one glance two men's lives were undergoing a complete change. I knew from the look in Gerry's dark blue eyes that somehow *our* life and love together was just beginning. My head swam in circles until I got out and onto the curb into the cool night air. The doorman produced and held a taxi for me until Dorothy appeared, flushed and furious — I hardly remember hearing what she was saying, all I was conscious of was that somehow, somewhere and soon Gerry would be with me — mine. I had no idea how our next meeting would come about, but I knew it would. I couldn't erase his face from my mind's eye. I remember that I had devoured so many features and characteristics about the boy in that short meeting that I suddenly felt I knew him intimately already.

"That Hayes bitch!" Dorothy was saying as the taxi carried us down Fifth Avenue toward 48th Street where we turned left over to Park Avenue and drive up under the bright canopy of the Waldorf Astoria. "She's really going to blast hell out of you in tomorrow morning's column . . . want to bet?"

CHAPTER SIX

I can remember hearing Dorothy as if she was in another place, not sitting near to me. But I could see Gerry's strong hands and his broad finger nails, in my mind's eye, as he lifted his Martini glass to his full, sensuous, but vitally masculine mouth, as clearly as if I were still sitting opposite him in the Oak Room. I remembered his teeth, when he smiled, were perfectly shaped big teeth, square and strong. There was the faint indication of a dimple in his chin . . . I remember I wiped my damp forehead with my handkerchief. His presence was so much more real to me than that of the beautiful and desirable woman, who was carrying on a bitter monologue to herself. Dorothy's words came through to me as fog rises from the ground. I was too completely immersed within myself, and with the boy I had but briefly met less than an hour ago, to be aware of anything else.

"There she sat," Dorothy went on, "like a spider in the center of her web, flanked by that closet queen-dilletante artistic-husband of her's plus a couple of simpering post-debs of about ten years ago. There they were hanging onto every word she spits out as if she were some oracle or something . . . she gives me a royal pain in my royal you-know-what."

I recalled at that moment Gerry standing up to greet us at the table and how our eyes met straight

on. We must be of the same height. I remembered how his well-tailored jacket hung from his broad shoulders and tapered down to a slim boyish waist. I imagined that he just flowed down in perfect measurements from his shoulders to his ankles . . . I remember trying to listen to Dorothy and shake the vision of this young man from my mind.

"Don't think that Hatey dame won't be after your hide after the slight you gave her tonight," Dorothy panted on, "why that blood sucking printer's ink bitch wouldn't care if you were dying in front of her with beri-beri, you still must recognize her and pay homage, kiss her hand, tell the ugly thing she looks beautiful, rave about her reviews and her column as if they were written by a divine hand, and that she is a genius and is guided by the Great Power from above. How in hell do women get that way? What makes her tick? . . . Can't she look in the mirror and see that she is one of the most unfortunate looking women of our times and has a long scrawny giraffe-like neck and a pin head? . . . jeez!"

Neck . . . head . . . I could see how Gerry's handsome blond head, hair cropped short and curly had been placed in perfect proportion on his strong, muscular neck. What was Dorothy saying? I tried to focus my attention on her as I was amazed at how much of Gerry I had unconsciously absorbed of him in such a short time. The traffic was slow and we hit every light down Fifth Avenue. All I wanted to do was to jump out of that cab and leave Dorothy mumbling half drunk to herself, catch another cab and run back to the Oak Room . . . and

Gerry.

"Well, Wally-dolly, you've really fixed yourself up with Hayesiedaysie, you're not only going to be her target for tonight, but we're both in for a lot of slander and slush until you grovel back into her good graces again . . . and that ain't easy, honey . . . jeez!"

Grovel? . . . good gravy . . . My mind's eye immediately recalled an almost realistic picture of how gracefully Gerry had moved, his poise and his pleasant manner with everyone . . . How I wished I had dared to look at him more, but old Syd had got the message that had been flashed in an instant between the boy and me, and although brilliant and clever as he was in conversation, I felt that Syd had trapped me and had dared me to pay any more than casual attention to his handsome young companion, whom Syd had taken under his wing and made him his assistant. I realized that Gerry, for a very young man, held a very important position in the theatre world . . . and it was all through Syd's interest in the boy.

"That Hayes dame is as sharp as a tack, though," she laughed viciously, "she's got brains under that ever weird hair-do of hers and she's seldom wrong about anything. She hits so low below the belt that you can't fight her back . . . the power of the press . . . jeez!—wonder how many wigs she has . . ."

Dorothy was more than half tight and was having a ball for herself running Jean Hayes down. She was enjoying herself because she was saying things about Jean and her paper the *Daily Globe* that she would never dare say to her face. She was having a

typical female flurry and I was grateful that she didn't expect any answers from me. I just seemed to ride along beside her in what she thought was an agreeable and an appreciable silence. Little did she know she had allowed me to be left alone with my sickness for Gerry. I realized that I had let my imagination run amuck and over the border . . . the border I swore I would never cross, but try as I might and with the greatest effort to think of other things, or to listen to Dorothy's ravings and rantings my thoughts jumped back to every detail of Gerry Ford's physical, and I believed, mental impact upon me. I was being a fool and I knew it, but there was nothing I could do to control my thoughts of him, or my aching desire to be near him again, if only to look at him, to touch his hand . . . that's all. I was disgusted with myself, but at the moment there had seemed to be no way to cure my desire for this boy. I remember how I silently prayed that I would shake this mental image of this boy when we got to the ball at the Waldorf . . . would we *ever* get there? It seemed we had been driving for hours. Dorothy was still dronning on and on happily about Jean Hayes, her white shoulders and brilliant diamonds were like a vision in the corner of the cab where she sat, but still, the only thing I could see was the face and features of Gerry Ford. I felt frustrated and miserable, this had never happened to me before and *I was not going to let it happen now.*

Dorothy snuggled over to my side and even the fragrant warmth of her nearness could not completely erase my feelings for Gerry Ford.

"Wally, this new musical you're working on had better be a classical all-time smash hit or Jean the bean stalk will chop you to pieces," Dorothy suddenly turned to me and asked me a straight question which snapped me out of my dream world.

"How is the damn thing going, anyway?"

"Oh, slow, honey, but sure," I answered, "but she's got a long wait to chop me down on that project."

All of a sudden I found myself anxious to talk about myself as it seemed to push the physical image of Gerry out of my mind.

"The production isn't planned to hit the boards for three seasons yet . . . so everyone is taking plenty of time with it."

That was true; this was to be the most fantastic musical ever produced in the history of the theatre. There was already more money available for this show than there was for Lincoln Center. Everyone connected with the project was working on a two to three year basis. The reason for such extravagance was the forth-coming World's Fair and the millions of people it would bring to New York from all over the world. Already a whole city block had been torn down to build the theatre just for this production. The theme of the show was the history of the Seven Arts and a lot of sex thrown in. It was a good thing in its way. Thousands of people were being given employment and already scenic designers were working on sets, designers were working on costumes using materials that were not even manufactured as yet, four directors were already huddled together working with a

team of eight top writers of which I was one. Every one was on a skeleton salary which included a block of stock in the show. I realized that if the World's Fair went off before the world was blown to bits by war, I would be a wealthy man the rest of my life if I never wrote another word. It was an unrealistic and unheard of project, but everyone felt that if war didn't stop us the show could run ten years in its own theatre as one of the world's greatest entertainment attractions. But still my thought could not get away from young Gerry Ford. I recalled how I had gone to a rehearsal of one of the six choreographers who were already at work on dance routines with a few lead dancers. I noticed how young the dancing boys and girls were. Then I realized that in three year's time they would be at just the right age to enter the theatre. I thought of how young Gerry Ford must be, not more than 21 I assumed, but with the sophistication of a man of my age. It was another poignant finger pointed at the power and the importance of youth in the world of arts, as well as science and business. Youth was beauty and beauty was youth. It was a thing that anyone over 25 years of age was becoming increasingly, frighteningly aware of . . . especially a homosexual. "She's nothing but an old bag anyway! Jean's been making the Broadway openings since I was a Copa girl in the late 30's and she still claims to be only 29 years old . . . wow! She left her 20's in the 40's, she's not kidding ME" Dorothy started to arrange her skirt, removed a mirror from her jeweled purse and scrutinized her face in it.

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"Old Jean's a smart one, though, you have to

hand her that—I'd like to hand her her head!" Dorothy bitched on as she arranged her hair as we were now nearing the Waldorf.

A smart one . . . smart! I recalled thinking what a smart fellow Gerry Ford was too. At 21 or so he had already been connected in the business and creative side of several smash Broadway and Hollywood productions. Gerry had a good head on him, he had been smart enough to attach himself to people of importance and stick with them. He was, in his way, some kind of a young genius . . . somehow I was beginning to have doubts about the handsome young man before I even really knew him . . . I was even then trying to fight off, this powerful frightening attraction by trying to relegate him permanently to my subconscious.

"She knows every moves she makes. She's calculating like a smart chess player . . . jezz!"

I remember shuddering when she said this, and I thought to myself whether or not Gerry Ford might not be of the same calculating, shrewd chess player with other people lives, careers and emotions, as Dorothy claimed Jean Hayes to be. I didn't like to think of him as cold and insensitive, or even one driven by ambition . . . but, if he was, he was smarter than most of us had been at his age. He couldn't be that way, I protested to myself out of desire, he projects too much warmth, loyalty, and masculinity to merely be a climber on the frailties of others to further his own interests.

The taxi slowed down and we arrived under the bright lights of the Waldorf Astoria canopy.

"Well, we're here, Wally-dolly, Dorothy an-

nounced. "Smile your prettiest, the fans, the photographers are all ready and hoping to ruin any pretty face of any celebrity they can."

When we stopped and the doorman opened the door, the cab driver turned back to Dorothy while I was paying him and said, "You sure got it in for that Hayes dame, ain't you?" he laughed.

"How can you say that, cabbie!" Dorothy snapped back, "she's my dearest friend, I just adore her."

She gave the cabbie a playful pat on the cheek and the doorman took her arm and helped her out into the blaze of lights and the fans and autograph hunters who were held back by the red roped began to oh and ah at Dorothy's glamorous appearance. I crawled awkwardly out of the cab and took her arm and proceeded to the hotel entrance. We got the whole treatment. Flash bulbs blinded us and we both smiled falsely as we made the few steps to the entrance . . .

"She's going to marry him." I heard someone say . . . "Wow, is he *handsome*," someone else stage whispered loudly. There were other remarks, more pictures taken before we were allowed to enter into the lobby and on to the great ball.

Handsome? yes, I thought to myself as we passed through the mob. Gerry Ford is one of the most handsome young men I have ever seen.

"You see, darling," Dorothy murmured in my ear, "the public and the gossips already have us engaged to be married," She giggled joyously, "Mrs. Wally Richards," she mused. "Not bad at that if I were sure you could keep on making lots

of money to keep me in the style I've grown so accustomed to."

I remember I wondered then if Gerry and Dorothy had something terribly in common . . . money and both thought the same way. Dorothy would never marry anyone with less than she already had received in a divorce settlement, plus a huge monthly alimony. As she said, "I'd be a fool to marry any man for love. Love is not worth sacrificing an income like mine. Unless the man is richer than I am, . . . and I get lots and lots and lots and lots of stuff in writing, and I'm sure, like a Doctor's certificate, he won't live too long . . . I'd never take the chance . . . I'd be a fool . . . jeez!"

Dorothy was female all the way through, but she had a vault for a heart. I wondered if Gerry was secretly as mercenary as she was . . . well, what if he is . . . *I want him*, I admitted to myself, against my own better judgement. The boy had gotten to me and had in a few minutes wormed himself into my heart.

The phantom of Gerry Ford had penetrated into my subconscious and there was nothing for me to do about it but wait for our next meeting. The thought of our next meeting, and the mysterious and strange way in which it would happen, also gave me a feeling of excitement. Those few brief minutes basking in his presence had completely hypnotized my emotional and physical being. I knew I was living in a half dream-world of unreality, despair, hopefulness . . . but I was bound to this boy as tightly as if someone had taken a rope and bound the two of us together. Was it the Martinis,

or had I finally left myself unchecked and let all my hidden desires for the love of a male and the companionship that would come from it? Had my homosexual tendencies been suddenly released from bondage and come to the top like heavy cream turns to butter in a churn . . . had I, in this brief span of time crossed over the border of normalcy and sanity into the half-world which I had always fought against, taking homosexual experiences lightly, just for kicks and just for the moment, never believing that these extra-curricular sex bouts with the gay world could ever envelop and hold me; or was it just my writer's imagination that was having a fling my literary mind coming forward with a weird and fascinating new plot, letting one brief physical attraction build itself into an exaggerated and imaginative web in which I placed myself in the center.

Would the night air, the promised gaiety of the Charity Ball, new faces and new surroundings, the glamour of being with Dorothy, and the comfort I had in her outgoing casual love for me erase this madness from my being . . . or was I not facing the truth. Did I really desire this handsome youth as passionately as I now felt, or was it all a lopsided illusion . . . a phantasy . . . No matter how I reasoned with myself I could not quiet my desire for the boy's presence, or obliterate him from my conscious or subconscious self. Thoughts of him came in great sickening waves that also held great happiness for me along with its torturing pain. This whole evening had taken on the aura of a great mystery story, it had all the elements of the almost

supernatural, the chase, the hunt, and the unknown . . . this mystery story would end, only when I would meet my emotional murder, this story held me spellbound and taut as any fiction piece I had ever read. I knew that Gerry Ford would be my executioner.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Ball turned out to be another flesh pot of perfume, smoke and the clinking of ice cubes and the popping of champagne corks. The whole scene in the Ballroom seemed unreal. It was another conglomeration of false fronts, eyelashes, bosoms and causes. These people who had gathered together for some charity or other at \$100 per person had no interest in the charity, or the money spent. Each and every one of them would have dropped that much cash or more just spending an evening club-hopping from one local East Side upholstered sewer to another. It was not for a charitable cause that they were here . . . it was to see and to be seen by others like themselves, the climbers, the curious, the would-be's and the has-been's. It was a social debauch. A Meyer Davis orchestra attempted to play over and drown out the gushing bauble of voices from those in attendance, but to no avail. It was the usual scene. The very young tried to dance to the society beat but the soon became uninterested and one couple after another disappeared to the several bars placed around the great ballroom to drink as much of their share of the \$100 paid for their attendance. Then, soon bored with the free booze, they would disappear with their free load to haunt even more crowded, expensive and uncomfortable nightspots. But they, like the stern hangers on, had made their point. Their names would or

would not be in the society columns of tomorrow's newspapers, some will be photographed and printed too, but the main thing was that everyone in the room had made the point of being recognized by the press and had bowed to those strange members of society who make its even stranger policies of acceptance into a lost, decadent, unreal and unimportant world. There is no real society left today. The old family names of honor and distinction have had to bow to money and the strange sort who hold it in their hands as power today. Society has had to accept some new and undesirable people of wealth in order to exist and not perish in this last class called society.

This night I was more sensitive and aware to the great wave of homosexuality than ever before, and to the homosexual's acceptance in today's social world and in all walks of life. Among the guests I noticed many handsome and youthful young men of fashion escorting and paying court to elderly ladies of some social standing, but of definite wealth. I watched these gay boys avidly. They fascinated me in their foppish dress, their tight fitted trousers and skimpy short dinner jackets. I watched them gossip, giggle and simper with their lady sponsors while they eyed openly every attractive man in the room. I was given the straight-on look, then the lowered lash which was the invitation look by two out of five of the men in the room, but my thoughts were still filled with the vision of Gerry Ford, he seemed to be with me everywhere.

I was suddenly acutely aware of the flirtation

going on between men over the jeweled and beautifully gowned women whom they were escorting. I was slightly shocked at their daring and their seemingly open approach. How could any of these men dare to make such bold passes with such obvious invitation for a later meeting with one another in such public light . . . I found it most disgusting, but fascinating. I was receiving my share of attention from the gay set . . . I wondered if I were somehow obviously marked as a possible target by these deviates. Had men been attracted to me all along and I was unaware of it, or had my recognizing my desire for Gerry Ford brought out something in my personality that made these men and boys feel that I was available . . . one of them? Pushing through the crowd with Dorothy—so glamorous, sexy and feminine, I wondered how they dared to take the chance to be so obvious as they were. I had been in the company of homosexuals, but did not haunt their hide outs still I felt that I was marked. All my homosexual experiences had mostly been experimental, non-emotional, or the result of too much to drink and too little to lose.

Dorothy and I managed to be seen by the right people, shook hands and made nonsensical sallies to faces that seemed faintly familiar and to names that were vaguely recognizable from somewhere or someplace. The huge ballroom was jammed packed. Because of the crowd and Dorothy, and my mental fascination with Gerry, I did not respond to any of the obvious invitations. I remained smiling pleasantly until my facial muscles ached. They

would just get the message that I was not interested and would saunter smoothly unembarrassed into another crowded group where some other male had taken their fancy . . . none of them seemed hurt or disappointed, it was just their way of making a gentlemanly contact with another of their own kind who would share their sex desire and need.

I suppose I had been through this same thing before at large parties in Hollywood. I remember the advances, at private showing of films in dark projection rooms, by some eager director, producer or writer . . . but the whole procedure took on a new meaningful madness tonight. Before tonight. I had been the master of the situation, I could take it lightly and playfully and toss it laughingly aside. I could be remote, passive or agreeable . . . it had never meant anything to me. But tonight I realized the change that had come over me all of a sudden. My desire for Gerry and for him only, turned the blank faces into the face of Gerry. I knew I had to get out of there immediately.

"Let's jump this joint, Dorothy," I whispered into her diamond-encrusted ear, "I've had it."

"Right, Wally-dolly," Dorothy agreed eagerly as she turned to another group to exchange greetings, "I'm starved! We'll make a break for P.J.'s in a moment."

Satisfied that I was not going to fight Dorothy in getting out of this farcical charity ball I relaxed, I remember we were standing with a group of people who all looked alike, talked and gestured like everyone else in the great room. In the blur of faces

I suddenly recognized AVRIL, the famed dress designer. I had met him at several parties in California. He was a pretty, aging little man and was riding the crest of popularity that year for his designing some of the new Princess's gowns. The new Princess and her puppet prince were sitting in the royal box along with Elsa and a very rich widow of some newspaper dynasty. They were the honored guests of the ball, and everyone had come to see them as well as each other. I remember being amused at the ridiculousness of it all. The ladies present were at loss at to whether to curtsy to the new papermache princess, kiss her hand or just bow and gush giddily. I somehow had the illusion that most of the men present just curtsied.

Avril suddenly recognized me and made his way through the crowd to my side.

"Hello, Wally," he greeted me as if we were long lost friends. "I've been meaning to look you up and congratulate you on your great success." His once pretty, round pink face was now lined and etched by time and degeneracy. I had no idea how old he must be, but he had been a favorite in the theatrical and social world for years.

"By the way, that is my gown the Princess is wearing," he gushed, "isn't she divine?"

I looked up at the familiar, plain face of the new princess sitting in the box in all her glory and all I could see of the gown was a splattering of sequins over white satin over her well publicized breasts.

"Lovely, lovely," I replied politely.

I was suddenly amused within myself as I remembered the stories I had heard how Avril usu-

ally modeled most of his own creations on himself before turning them over to his client for a final fitting. Avril claimed that it wasn't so much the kick he got out of getting in *drag* and wearing women's clothes, but he liked to feel how the material hung, moved from the body. I couldn't help but look up to the royal box where the Princess sat serenely, elegant in Avril's gown and knowing the pleasure Avril must have derived by knowing that he had swished around gaily in her gown before she had had a chance to wear it. At least, he had been queen for a day before her royal highness exposed herself grandly to her social subjects. I remember I laughed out loud for the first time that evening. Dorothy turned to me with a mock shocked expression on her face.

"Are you really enjoying yourself at last?" she asked me. Then she turned back to her group and said, "That's great, just as I'm ready to make the grand exit to the comfortable confines of a Third Avenue bar . . . this one wakes up . . ."

"Have you seen any good shows lately?"

"Why yes, Avril, I've seen everything on Broadway this season."

"I mean, *good* shows."

I suddenly realized of what show he was referring to. It had all seemed so long ago and I could recall the story and the show he referred to vividly in my mind. It was something I had pushed way back in my subconscious in order to forget it and I found myself pushing back the memory of that show once more. The little dressmaker was rattling on and moving his hand higher on the inside of my

leg. Thank goodness Dorothy then turned and grabbed my arm to make way for the nearest exit. Avril exclaimed, "Let's all get out of here together, we've all made our point now." He looked at me with eyes that were hungry with desire, and the boldness of one who has made a conquest. How disappointed Avril was going to be.

"Good," Dorothy agreed, "let's eat, I'm starved!"

Avril was in a tizzy. He looked around the room madly. He practically stamped his little foot in impatience.

"Where's that man-hungry model of mine?" He threw his eyes to the ceiling in disgust. "I have to watch her like a hawk," he complained, "she's wearing a little number that cost me \$750 and she's apt to run off to bed with the first man who asks her . . . she has no sense at all. She's the type who goes off with the bus boy instead of the maitre'd."

He went whirling off into a sea of black ties and white shirts, looking for his expensive gown.

"I hope to hell he doesn't rip it off the poor girl, when he finds her," Dorothy quipped.

"I'll meet you at the 50th Street entrance", Avril sang back to us, "please wait", his eyes met mine pleadingly. I don't remember if I reacted to his look or not. I definitely did not want to see him again. Meeting him had brought back only too clearly the memory of that *show* he reminded me of, and that experience together with the ever-present thought I had in mind of Gerry caused me great confusion in trying to separate my dream world from reality. Dorothy and I pushed and

shoved our way through the mass of humanity toward the exit.

That evening sent me into an orbit of past and present realizations that I had never allowed myself to experience before. Although I was in the midst of hundreds of people, it was as if I was holding up a mirror and looking at myself and my life. While pressing the guests attending the ball I realized I was a young forty-two years old, successful, rich and considered by most, a handsome man. Up until now I had never thought much about it but my physique had remained trim and slim, after all I had played tennis and swum for twenty-some years. In my mental mirror I still had to find a grey hair on my head, my skin was bronze and firm, I was in possession of good white teeth—all mine, all in all I was in damn good condition and I realized that physically I was a standout among men of my own age in New York City.

Few people could guess my true age and only those who traced me back to my early motion picture career as an actor, and my marriage to Clea, who was ageless, could possibly guess my age . . . and then they usually added another ten years to the actual age, claiming I was either a phenomenon or the result of clever facial surgery. When these stories about my eternal youth came back to me I accepted them with amusement and some flattery. I thanked God for my blessings.

I thought to myself, if I, in middle age, receive so much attention from the gay, queer, faggots and queens in the social set that night, a beautiful young man such as Gerry would have been eaten alive among them. Had Gerry been present he

would certainly have been the victim of an all out cannibalistic orgy. He would have been devoured by both the faggots as well as the sex starved females on the prowl for a real man. I remember how thankful I was that Gerry, along with Syd and Faye, had not planned to come along with us. Perhaps Syd is playing it smart. I wondered, had Syd at one time in the glory of his conquest of Gerry, made the mistake of escorting the beautiful young man to one of these fiascos only to find himself being pushed aside by these man-eating vultures and find himself in the danger of having his prize snatched away from him . . . I knew I would never expose Gerry to the masses at large if he were mine.

If he were mine . . .

CHAPTER EIGHT

I was suddenly taken back a few years to the *show* in which Avril had reminded me. I couldn't fight it back. There it was, the whole thing clear and bright coming up from the dark depths in which I had been hiding it for so long. The whole affair flashed through my mind in what must have been only a split second. I remember how I had been sitting in a Sunset Strip bar in Los Angeles drinking with other out of work actors from late afternoon until about 7:30. I did not want to go home to Clea. There was no place for me in the midst of the people she had lately surrounded herself with. I remember how I was perfectly contented to remain seated at the bar until unconscious. That is when little Avril entered the picture. He had come into the bar and sidled up next to me. He was a pleasant and witty conversationalist.

After a few rounds of drinks with him he was becoming more and more personal with his hands and his conversation. He suddenly asked me if I would like to see something *different* that night.

"It's a show like you've never seen before," he said. "It's really something one should experience at least once in a life time."

"I was drunk and curious and was becoming bored and had the attitude of 'what the hell, anything goes'."

"The show is at 8:30," Avril said, "but first I want to brief you on how this whole thing came

about."

Avril invited me to take a drive in his open car out along the beach to get some air and clear my head so that I would be ready to appreciate all the details of what I was going to see. I gladly joined him in his big convertible and he started to talk as we drove through the clear, fresh air toward Malibu.

Avril was not on the make for me particularly. He had a story to tell me and he told it well. I remember of sitting fascinated, gazing up into the sky while he told me in the greatest detail about a very famous European motion picture director whose homosexual quirk was as odd and strange as any I had ever heard of. This famous director was a man who was respected for his work in the industry. He was always seen at social functions with a beautiful woman, usually the star of his pictures, on his arm. He lived alone high in the Hollywood hills in a villa built like a fortress. He never entertained at home, but gave big and lavish parties in various hotels or restaurants. This great man of motion pictures was considered more or less as a hermit-like genius. No one knew, or seemed to be interested in his personal life. But he had one, one that would leave his friends and co-workers breathless and shocked had they known what it was. Had his personal life ever been discovered it would have destroyed him, and the world would have lost the touch of his genius forever.

As Avril told the story it went something like this. The director was a homosexual who never practiced his devious desires in or around Holly-

wood. Any activity in the sex department he carried on far away from the prying eyes of Hollywood. His one great pleasure was to sit for hours at Santa Monica's famed Muscle Beach and watch the handsome young men flex their muscles and exercise their bodies on trampolines, barbells, and with each other! But one day the director saw a youth who was so perfectly formed, a blond Adonis-like looking man, that the director threw caution to the winds and made contact with the blond young man. In his conversation with the golden boy, the director learned that the youth, then about twenty, was seeking a career in pictures, this, of course, was the famous director's first hold on the boy. The director told the young Adonis that he would be his discovery. He suggested that the young man come home with him to his villa high in the Hollywood hills. The young man, knowing the power and fame of the director, and knowing full well that the proposition was and what was to be expected of him, went along with the director after all, the young man thought, he had given his body to so many to enjoy who could do nothing for him that by tying up with the director, this was sure to be the big break in the pictures the easy way . . . the big way.

The young blond god was happy to leave the muscle building gay boys of the beach behind and felt honored to be picked out by this famous man.

Avril had received the details of the meeting, and his life with the director, from the boy long after the affair had ended. I remembered the wierd tale in sequence as it had happened and my brief part

in it.

The affair between the director and the beautiful young man flourished and thrived, and their relationship was so perfect in the eyes of the director that he soon became obsessed by the boy and his beauty. Soon the boy came to live in the director's house, on the understanding that the director would coach him for acting, modulate his voice, teach him manners and social graces and to be his protege. The boy came willingly and was happy with the arrangement. The director soon realized that the boy was blessed without too many brains, absolutely no talent, and the only thing in which he excelled was in the various sex acts he performed with enthusiasm and his moronic pleasure in the beauty of his own body and the adoration of having someone who would worship him. Two servants were employed in the hillside villa. A cook and a maid came early in the morning and cooked and cleaned the house for the day. The two servants had access to every room in the house except the one the director shared with his young lover. The young man never showed himself to the servants. He explained that the forbidden room was his study where he worked, and that the room was never to be entered or disturbed. This among Hollywood servants seemed a mild idiosyncrasy compared to some of the oddities and strange requests of other so-called geniuses. In this room the young lover closeted himself until the servants left, so as far as anyone knew the great director lived in lone elegance and splendor.

The director became obsessed by the blond

young man's perfect golden beauty. This perfect physical specimen of his discovery soon without knowing became a prisoner within the walls of the villa. The boy roamed the gardens, patios, and swimming pool in his natural perfection. The director explained to the boy that he should become one of nature's true representatives. After a while the boy's clothing disappeared from the house and his patron replaced them with white Grecian tunics. These were to be worn on rare occasions such as dinner, or if it was raining or cold. The director brainwashed his beautiful specimen into believing that he should wear the tunics and learn to drape them in perfection as if he knew of no other clothing.

The director also wore tunics and togas around the house. The boy was told that he could not be seen or venture into the outside world until the great picture in which he was going to star was ready and prepared to shoot. The young animal believed every word of it and lived in a world in which he was a great motion picture star. The director told the young man that the picture was going to be the greatest picture ever made. The director, along with writing out scenes and dialogue for the youngman to work on occasionally, also furnished a large patio with every known apparatus known for muscle building. The young man loved the high trapezes, the trampoline, barbells and various other equipment. The director would watch the boy perform hour after hour, day after day while the crazed director lounged on the sidelines in his tunic and watched admired and desired his musc-

ular possession. The boy was ready to be taken and used by the director at any time of day or night. The director became so worshipful of the boy that he treated him like a young god. He adored his beauty, he could never take his eyes from the boy. His passion was insatiable and the boy never tired or refused his protector's advances and lovemaking. Soon the young god was returning kiss for kiss, act for act, everything his master lavished on him. Now, instead of being just the recipient of the director's passions, the boy became active in the sex acts and returned equally the man's affection and passion.

This idyll of perversion continued on for three years. The boy became more physically, muscularly perfect to the eye as his brain stayed immature and childlike. His desire for sex and his need for more and more praise of his physical beauty only delighted the jaded senses of the director more and more. While the golden boy went on childlike in developing a body already too perfect, played naked in the pool and gardens, and occasionally tried to memorize a few lines for the movie, the director, living in complete exile of happiness and sexual satisfaction, was busy making and turning out the finest motion pictures of his career. The director's twisted mind was satisfied to perfection, and after a day at the studio he was anxious to go home to his beautiful, protege and bask in the beauty of its perfectly trained acts performed as willingly as a trained dog.

One day, on a hot August afternoon, the whole private wierd world of the director began to topple

and shatter without his knowing it. The golden boy had been given strict instructions to stay inside their bedroom on the day that the gardener came to mow lawns and clip hedges. He believed the myth that his career as a star would be over before it began if any outsider, no matter who, saw him. Any outsider could expose the fact that the director was grooming a new star and the boy believed that the mystery and illusion of his magnificence would be destroyed.

On the particular Thursday in August, the boy stayed within the confines of his quarters, as it was gardener's day. The gardener usually came early and left the place before noon. The boy waited restlessly in the room. He felt like a caged animal. He listened intently for the purr of the gardener's mowing machine or the snap of his clippers. Hour after hours passed but there was only the sound of the wind in the trees. Finally, in desperation, and the heat of the day, the boy decided that the gardener had not come that day. It was 11:00 and if the gardener had been there, he thought, he would have left by now anyway. Listening for sounds of the gardener and hearing none, he stepped nude and golden out of the room onto a terrace and stood handsome in the high noon sun. There was still no sound to be heard. He ran freely around a high hedge and plunged himself into the cool blue of the pool. He swam underwater the length of the pool to the shallow end. When he surfaced and raised his blond head from the water, to his amazement, and later joy, he saw the figure of a tall, dark young man standing in the grass at the

side of the pool looking down at him. The young blond couldn't believe what he was seeing. The darker young man with short curly hair and dark soft eyes was looking directly into his. The blond boy's eyes went slowly over the perfect muscular symmetry of the boy's neck, bare shoulders, biceps and his eyes wandered in pleasure over the dark young man's torso down to his tiny muscular waist and narrow hips which were glued to his body in faded blue jeans.

The blond young boy walked unashamedly up the steps of the pool and out of the water and stood near the silent dark young man. Their eyes held fast. The dark young man's eyes moved slowly over the perfection of the young blond's body.

"Come in the water with me," the blond boy invited.

"I haven't any swim trunks," the dark boy answered.

"I haven't, either," the blond boy needlessly said as he backed away to show himself all the more to the stranger.

"OK," the darker boy answered, as he unbuttoned his jeans and dropped them around his bare feet.

Both young men, the light and the dark, stood before one another and gloried in the other's perfection. Without a word the dark muscular one made a shallow dive into the pool and swam its length. The blond one stood watching him in wonder, delight and fascination. He saw that the stranger's rugged darkness as it rose now and then from the white foam to kick up behind him

as he stroked strongly and expertly to the deep end of the pool. The flesh where he must have worn very brief trunks was cream color. The dark boy came up out of the water, and his dark curls crowned his head like a Grecian god. The blond boy stood still, and statue-like in his perfection, at the other end of the pool. Their eyes met and held. The dark boy, the god-like head and shoulders raised out of the water, stirred the desire that was building and growing within the blond golden boy who was watching him so intently. The blond boy saw the invitation in the eyes of the dark god and he dove into the pool and swam the length under water to the stranger.

The kiss seemed a beautiful thing between the two young men, they seemed to naturally meld together with the youth, the passion they felt for each other. Without saying a word the two beautiful young men were out of the pool and lying passionately in each other's arms, in the hot grass beside the pool. Their passion over, they still lay side by side in the hot sunlight. When at last the thrill of finding one another so perfect had subsided, the two boys lay on the grass and talked as intimately together as two life-long friends.

From the moment the two young men met there had not been one sense of embarrassment or rejection. It was merely youth serving youth, two beautiful bodies that met as strangers and burned with desire for each other.

Their conversation was as simple and basic as they themselves were. They exchanged their names, common ordinary names that seemed to them, sud-

denly glamorous and new. The blond one learned that his dark companion was the son of the Italian gardener and that he had never been on these grounds before. The gardener's son had been sent to dig out crab grass that day and that is why there had been no noise of the mower or the clank of the clippers. The dark one learned that his handsome blond companion was the son of some migrant fruit pickers. The blond was not sure, exactly, in which state of the union he had been born. He had never had any formal schooling and was one of seven underfed and underprivileged children. One day when the fruit picking was over in the San Fernando Valley, and the migrant workers were on their way North to Washington and Oregon, the whole family packed in, with all their belongings, into the battered old family car, passed the beach at Santa Monica. When the family car rattled to a stop at a traffic light the blond boy just dropped off the back of the car and wandered toward the freedom of the beach. The old car and its family went on without him . . . he supposed he would see them again when he was a big motion picture star. It would be fun, he told the dark boy lying close to him, to give his folks all the luxuries in the world.

The handsome young blond, already muscularly developed from hard labor since an early age, stumbled onto Muscle Beach and immediately became absorbed in watching, then participating in the physical activities of the body builders. This was a whole new world to the young man. He made friends easily and was soon broken in to the realization that his beautiful body could earn money for

him . . . all he had to do was relax and hold still for the odd men who adored his physical perfection and craved satisfaction of their desires from his youth and virility. This all came easily to him from this beginning. The young blond Adonis immediately found himself in great demand among the rich faggots and slightly ageing queers who would feed him, take their pleasure of his youthful body and pay him. He lived a glorious life of a pagan, he spent all day on the beach exercising, showing off and glorying in the admiration he received from the onlookers. This is all these two young animals needed to know of one another. Suddenly, in the midst of their staccato-like conversation they would once again be carried away with their desire and animal passion for each other.

I remember how sharply and clearly this evening with Avril had come back to me while pushing and plunging my way out of the crowded ballroom. Why. I wondered to myself, had the particular strange evening come back to my mind in such completeness. Had I, perhaps, been so intrigued by this wierd set-up between the director and his beautiful young protege, that it had somehow not only captured my imagination but had made the whole thing desirable to me, would I, if I dared, the way I was feeling about my own handsome young man, Gerry, like to have imprisoned him within the privacy of my own walls? The vivid memory of that night with Avril, and what I saw later, mixed with the emotional crisis of my meeting Gerry tonight, was utter madness.

My mind whirled back again briefly to my ride

to the beach and back with Avril. I remember we stopped at a little dark bar in Santa Monica and fortified ourselves with a couple of drinks. Avril noted that it was about time for us to go to the Hollywood hills and see the show. I did not know what to expect, I only know that the story which Avril told well, had intrigued me and sent my imagination soaring. While we were drinking and waiting out the time to attend what I now knew would be some kind of an orgy or a sex rite, Avril continued on with the story which held me in fascination. It seemed, Avril said, that the two young lovers managed to meet for at least a few hours every day after that first romantic meeting. The dark one, who worked for his father on the grounds of other estates, would come to the villa when his work was finished. The blond boy had devised a signal of some sort to let his young lover know if he was alone. His days were usually spent in solitude, until his meeting with his new lover had come into existence, and his evenings and weekends were spent with his director-lover and discoverer. The handsome dark youth entered the villa gardens through a secret space in the high hedges at the bottom of the property. He would immediately remove his clothing, and then together the two young men spent their hours in paradise, nude and unashamed they would swim in the pool like playful dolphins, swing on the trapeze together, work out with barbells, practice tumbling on the trampoline, always together and always ending in the worship of one another's bodies and the thrill of being together. They never tired of exercising together.

After great physical exertion they would end up holding one another tightly on the trampoline or lounges, or sometimes on the grass with the hot sun beating down upon their bodies, or in the cool shade underneath the tropical plants and bushes. They never tired of the excitement they experienced in exploring one another's bodies passionately, until they reached an explosive, dynamic climax.

The two boys played together with the abandon of two young tiger cubs playing in the freedom of their jungle. They were almost a silent team. There seemed no point in their talking with one another very much. A look, a glance or a touch seemed all they needed to communicate their thoughts, ideas and desires together. They played at sex as innocently — in their eyes — as two children play together with the surf at the beach. They practiced, invented and experimented in all devious ways in the practice of sex in which they would enjoy greater fulfillment of their passionate desire for one another.

Avril continued telling this fantastic story to me as we drove in the darkening twilight to attend the *show* at the villa. I inquired of Avril of what to expect and why I had not heard of these weird goings-on before, especially in Hollywood where every known vice, degeneracy and oddity practiced by human beings was known and discussed by practically everyone. As we drove up to the villa Avril told me how this whole thing had come about. It seemed that one day, after the boys had been spending their afternoons together for quite some

time, the director arrived at the villa unexpectedly early one afternoon. He went immediately to his room and because it was hot, stripped himself of his clothing and put on one of his cool, flowing togas. Then he went in search of his love idol. As he went through the rooms of the villa he felt cool and relaxed. He entered the large living room with the plate glass wall that led onto the terrace where he had installed the gymnasium equipment on which his young muscle man played for hours. The director could not believe what he saw . . . it was too beautiful to be true. There on the trapeze swung two beautiful and perfect physical specimens. He watched in awe and wonderment at the grace and perfect form of the light and the dark gods. The director sunk weak with passion and desire onto a couch as he watched them. The director felt himself growing passionate with desire to be a part of both of them. He was not filled with anger or jealousy in finding his prisoner with another. He only noted that the dark young god was as perfectly formed as his blond protege. At that exciting moment the director did not wonder or care where this dark beauty had come from. The perfect symmetry of the light and the dark bodies swinging next to each other in the air aroused him. The director watched the two boys fall onto a large padded mat beneath the trapeze. In a moment of mad, almost crazy desire the director threw off his toga, opened the glass panel and stepped out into the sunlight and looked down at the boys. Not a word was spoken. In a moment, the three of them lay silently, satisfied and as one together.

It seemed that the new director reveled in the addition to his private collection. He encouraged the dark boy to come and participate in the gymnastics and orgies which he enjoyed so much, as often as he could. The director swore the dark boy to secrecy concerning what took place in the villa, and also begged him not to expose the blond boy's presence there to anyone. The director explained how he would some day make a star of his young blond lover whom he was now sharing with the boy. The director, too, promised that he would give the handsome dark Adonis a career in films. So for many months the two young loves loved, played and romped the villa. The director became insane with the pleasure he derived from watching his two young men perform sex acts, or participating in this degeneracy with them.

Avril explained that the director suddenly had the desire for exhibitionism, and he began inviting other sexual deviates to join him in the living room to watch the antics. The director began to serve liquor and wines to his guests. When the director and his guests were sufficiently stimulated by liquor and desire after watching the beautiful young men go through their paces on trampoline and trapeze, It always turned out to be an orgy such as one would imagine the early Romans participated in with their young boys, who had also been trained to commit these acts of perversion.

Avril told me that the director's madness to exhibit the beauty and perfection of his two beautiful boys, which he considered as priceless as any work of art any collector could own had branched

All the Sad Young Men

out to where these sex evenings would include as many as four or five members of the half-world of Hollywood.

The two boys seemed to have no objection to being exploited, as they both enjoyed being in the blue spotlight which the director had rigged up in the patio, which made their young and splendid bodies seem almost ethereal to the onlooker. The drunken guests were explained to the two boys as men who were the most powerful and influential people in the movie industry, by their nude performance and their allowing these personages to enjoy sex with them, they would be furthering their careers, the boys were told.

Avril and I arrived at the dimly lit villa a little past the set time of 8:30. The great heavy wood door was opened to us by our host, the director who was wearing his white tunic and was already half inebriated and seemed almost drugged by the anticipation of what was to come. Avril and I were led into a small room. I could guess that Avril, who had been there before, was already becoming excited and stimulated by what he knew we were going to experience. I, too, was feeling a sense of anticipation. When we had put on the tunics we left the small room and walked down a dark hallway and into a large candle-lit livingroom. There was soft music playing from somewhere, the unidentifiable faces of two other tunic clad figures were lolling on great sofas and ottomans facing the huge glass window which had now been opened, making the patio and the livingroom one. Our host gestured vaguely for us to be seated and brought us great

glasses of some liquid mixture which tasted exotic and heady. No one in the room spoke to one another. There was a tension and an excitement in the air. The patio was dark and we sat in silence waiting breathlessly and fearfully for something to happen. After a while our glasses were refilled by our host. Whatever the drink was, it was definitely very potent as an aphrodisiac. Again we waited quietly, then I heard, but did not see movement on the patio. All eyes turned toward the sound of movement, then suddenly a pale blue light was turned on and flooded the patio and there on the trampoline stood motionless and statue-like the two young men. It was hard to realize that they were alive and not statues or figments of one's artistic imaginations. Suddenly they began to jump higher and higher into the blue night. They were flying into the air doing turns and twists in beautiful perfection. At the end of this performance the two young gods jumped down from the trampoline and stood facing the living room in all their masculine perfection. Slowly and smoothly the two young men moved separately, silently, and sinuously into various art poses. None of the guests took his eyes off the two young men performing in the blue light. I remember I reached for my drink, half drunk, already. My head swam and I felt that my body had been lifted into space as I watched the two young men start to swing face to face on the trapeze. The whole thing seemed nightmarishly dreamlike and unreal. I took another drink of the strange concoction and laid back, relaxed into the soft pillows of the sofa. I knew that I was strangely aroused, filled

with some primitive emotion that had dwelled dark and hidden and silent within me. I could half sense little Avril's being filled with the same emotion. A moment later, I knew it as we silently watched the strange and beautiful performance of the two swinging bodies in the blue light.

I watched through dull, though still unbelieving eyes as the blond boy on the trapeze let go of the swinging bar. The actions so perfectly performed excited all those watching. Avril sat up to watch more closely. Suddenly the dark boy began to breathe heavy with passion. It seemed as if one were watching a divine ballet instead of an act of perversion. In a moment the host and the other guests were part of the ballet. I too, somewhat drunkenly, found myself entangled. This moment of madness did not last long. Everyone had spent themselves of their passion quickly, as the drink and the beautiful weird performance of the boys had aroused every participant to a quick climax.

When everyone had quieted down, the blue lights were turned off and the music came on with brighter tunes and louder. One by one in the darkness the participants in this orgy went back into the living room where we put on our robes again. There in the candlelight, relaxed and satisfied, the men in the room began to converse and identify themselves to one another. I remember how surprised I had been upon discovering that two of the men were "respectable married men with children," one a producer and one a director. The third young man was one of our top box office draws and had just returned from his honeymoon in Europe after

marrying one of the sexist girls in pictures. Our host returned to the room wearing his tunic and carrying a large tray of sandwiches and fruit. He opened the bar and we were all invited to make ourselves any drink we preferred. Apparently the aphrodisiac drink we had been served upon arrival was no longer needed. I mixed myself a scotch and water and went back to my place on the couch. The two boys who had performed for us and participated in the sex acts with us came walking across the patio wearing their white tunics. From a distance they looked like two Roman senators walking from out of the past into the present. They seemed at ease with the guests, they were quiet and not forward. They helped themselves to sandwiches and the blond one came over and sat beside me in a very natural way.

I remember I was at loss as to what to say, but the young man put me at ease by talking lightly about the weather, the motion picture business and inquiring as to what my part of the industry was. I remembered him as being one of the most beautiful boys I had ever seen. There was only one thing wrong with the blond god: there was no light or spark of intelligence in his eyes. I remember I felt sorry for him because he seemed so retarded and simple. After a while we put on our clothes and I left with Avril and he drove me back to the bar where he had picked me up; and without much conversation he left me there where I picked up my own car and drove partially in a haze of disbelief at what had happened in the last few hours, to my home and to Clea.

Seeing Avril this night at the ball had brought back more than these memories. Had I somehow secretly desired the handsome blond god, for myself, stored him away in my subconscious, and found in Gerry's blondness and physical perfection my ideal of a male lover.

I definitely did not want to meet Avril at the Fiftieth Street entrance of the Waldorf that night or any other night. I was relieved that Dorothy and I were able to get a cab before the frantic, frustrated little faggot dressmaker and his emaciated model could join us. The bizar memories that his presence conjured up in my confused mind only added to the sense of despair and emotional trauma that I was already experiencing on my own. The presence of Avril at this time was like a thorn in my side. I think I felt fear, I think I feared most that Avril, a flamboyant and dedicated homosexual, with nothing to lose by being open and obvious about his perversion, just might, for old time's sake, or to gain attention to himself, let slip a hint directed to Dorothy that he had been on a sex binge with me a few years past and plant the idea in Dorothy's mind that she was getting second's with me. Old queens love to flaunt their conquests before others . . . real or imaginative, their perverted and exaggerated egos find strange and cruel ways of being satisfied and placated.

While Dorothy and I were standing in the clear night air waiting for the doorman to hail us a cab my mind recalled the strange ending that quietly and tragically happened to the galas that had

taken place at the villa. It seemed that the director had become more crazed with exhibiting his two living male objects d'art and delighted insanely more and more in the participation of multiple sex sessions. His guest list of male deviates grew to larger audiences, and more frequently were these evenings of madness taking place. One night the blond young god, who had begun to drink of the strange aphrodisiac concoction prepared by his keeper, sat talking freely in his tunic after one of the orgies, and let slip to one of the participants that he had been living with the famed director for three years and was being groomed to star in the forthcoming production of his spectacle movie. So brain washed by the director had the young man been concerning his future career, that he had kept the movie's name and his part in it, even from his dark young lover. The man to whom he had confided took the whole thing as a joke, he laughed it off lightly and told the young man that the motion picture in which he supposed he was to star was already in production and that his director had no connection with the production at all. The young man was stunned, but having no real emotions or great intelligence, did the most aminalistic thing that he could do. He walked over to his handsome lover, gave him a silent message with his eyes, and the two white tuniced young lovers walked silently side by side from the livingroom, across the terrace, disappeared in the darkness and never came back.

The only material thing that the director ever saw of his two human possessions was the dark boy's white tunic dropped to the ground near the

whole in the fence where he had put on his jeans and shirt, and together with his blond friend, still wearing his tunic, the two bronze gods had escaped in the dark one's old jalopy and they returned to Santa Monica and Muscle Beach, never to return to the villa, or to see the demented director again. Only a few weeks later the director was found dead in his livingroom, by the morning maid. She had discovered him sitting on a sofa, in a white tunic, a half finished drink on the low table beside him, and his open eyes staring unseeingly toward the patio filled with gymnasium equipment shining brightly in the morning sun. The police closed his case as death due to natural causes, heart attack. There was nothing to be found in the house to show that anyone other than the director, had visited there or lived there. The only unexplained note of mystery about the death of the director was the great number of white tunics found hanging in the little dressing room off the hall. It was concluded by those who knew him in his public life, and had not been initiated into the dead director's inner circle in his palace of perversion, that the man was a genius and apparently had been a fanatic on body building who had merely carried his exercising, along with his drinking, to the breaking point. So, his death was briefly mourned and his genius properly praised and then, as a puff of smoke appears on the horizon and as quickly disappears, he was as quickly forgotten. The two boys? They were both soon rediscovered again, but this time by a queer movie scout and agent who had a penchant for signing up young handsome men and re-chris-

tening them with tricky and catchy names that brought them into immediate attention when the agent thrust his handsome stable of muscular clients on the Hollywood scene in a blaze of publicity. As fate would have it, and strange as it seems, both young men of the flying trapeeze were now co-starring in their own television series, I remember of meeting the blond one at a cocktail party of not so long ago, and he looked me straight in the eye without any sign of ever having met me before, and I'm sure I was just one of many faces that had all seemed the same to him during his imprisonment at the villa. He was now living a new life and he was playing it straight to the world under the guidance of his agent. He was a success now, because he was used to taking directions, being admired and not having to think for himself. His acting was as smooth and slick and uninspired as the trained animal he was . . . but both he and his dark lover had become stars . . . another Hollywood fable . . .

Dorothy and I fell into the back seat of the cab with a sigh of relief from the boredom of too many people, too many minor irritating situations to cope with, and too many drinks.

"P. J.'s Clark's," Dorothy instructed the driver. "Just give me a bowl of chili and thou," she sighed, "and I'll never ask for wine."

P. J.'s was agreeable to me and I had always enjoyed myself there. The food was fair and the atmosphere casual, but I missed the Third Avenue El that had disappeared and the stumple bums that had lived in its shadow. Ever since Ray

Milland had made that picture "The Lost Weekend" in which a portion of it had been filmed at P. J.'s, the place had become a smart and chic watering place for Madison Avenue's young men and women, in and out of work TV actors, visiting movie stars, newspaper columnists, and college kids. The place now sported a new large back room where everyone gathered to see and be seen, to eat and drink, and to make contacts. P. J.'s was always crowded but there was a pleasant informality about the place in which one could relax and throw the mantle of reserve one was forced to wear throughout the day. Everybody stared at every new comer as they entered the room, quickly categorizing them, acknowledging them, and forgetting them and returned back to their own private conversations. Thank God there was no table hopping at P. J.'s, and anyone who did so was very poorly received and soon felt it and either left the restaurant or went to a table to sulk alone and unwanted. I liked the clubby atmosphere of the place but most of all I liked the unwritten rule that had been established there of 'recognize me . . . but leave me alone! When we arrived at P. J.'s it was jammed packed and Dorothy led the way, again pushing and shoving our way through a mass of humanity. When we finally got through the bar and to the little middle room we were recognized by the maitre d' who upon recognizing Dorothy shrugged his shoulders hopelessly telling us most eloquently that there wasn't a table to be had in the large back room. Dorothy, not taking no for an answer, charged with me behind her, up to the entrance of the back room, kissed the maitre d'

briefly on the cheek as she passed him, and we walked into the dim room.

"There *has* to be someone who *adores* me, darling . . ." she said confidentially as her eyes swept the room for an acquaintance. A waiter went by and she reached out and grabbed him by the arm, "Get me a double scotch on the rocks, honey," then she added, looking at me, "Make it two and bring them to whatever table some fortunate people we chose to sit with . . ."

"Yes, Miss Brighton," the waiter beamed, "Right away . . ."

Dorothy was already waving her arm in the air as she recognized someone she knew, sitting at a table in the middle of the room.

"Luck just has it, Wally, that we *do* know someone here . . . and it looks to me as if they were about to leave, c'mon."

Dorothy led the way as we pushed through the crowd to the center of the room.

I was moving slowly along behind Dorothy and could not see whom we were to pounce upon. Dorothy greeted them gaily and as two young men stood up to grab extra chairs for their small table I saw that the man facing me was Gerry Ford, his eyes were looking directly and mockingly into mine. They seemed to hold a challenge, and an invitation for something to come, but their eyes were also glazed from drinking. Although half-stoned by booze myself, I felt a great disappointment in him. Gerry introduced us to the attractive dark-haired young man sharing his table, I shook his hand without hearing his name. We all sat pinched together

in a tight little circle. Gerry, without taking his eyes from mine, put a cigarette in his mouth, and in a flash, his companion whipped out a match and lighted it for him. Gerry watched my reaction to this gesture of attention he was receiving, and his eyes seemed to say to me, "Even I have someone to worship at my feet." The bastard, he knew he was putting me on. All of a sudden I felt a wave of deep hatred for him. He was being brutal to me for some reason. Our drinks arrived, and while Dorothy gave orders to the waiter to repeat the drinks all around and then bring us chili Gerry sat back and basked in the attention his young friend was paying him. I gulped my drink and waited impatiently for the next one. I was really beginning to feel my liquor now. The room seemed to quiet down, and the conversation at the table seemed to come through to me in heavy layers of cotton.

"Where's Faye and Syd?" Dorothy asked.

"Well, its the usual night out for those two," Gerry laughed lightly. "Faye found a friend and went on to other voices and other rooms without him, and dear old Syd got his usual load on, so I took him home . . . as usual . . . and tucked him lovingly into his bed . . ."

Now I detested that boy at that moment. His arrogance, his selfishness seemed to show itself off as if the liquor had loosened the ties he kept on his true self. I hated him for flaunting another handsome youth before my eyes. I raged within as I thought of how this boy had probably most eagerly allowed his lover, Syd, to get so drunk to be rid of him for the evening in order to keep a date, pre-

arranged, with a younger and more attractive male. I was thankful that Gerry had exposed his true nature to me before I fell into the bondage in which he could hold me . . . I suddenly felt free of him and a great physical desire to make love to Dorothy came over me. Suddenly the thought of Dorothy's voluptuous body writhing with animal passion beneath mine was able to wash all thoughts of any personal relationship with the handsome Gerry Ford. My tortured mind was free of him, and the danger of my having crossed over the border into the half world of homosexuality with this once desirable male had fled.

Our second drink arrived and after awhile Gerry and his companion signaled the waiter, paid their check and left us. Gerry's eyes met mine meaningfully as he passed my chair, "I'll be seeing you," he had said. I did not answer him, or even look at him to say goodbye. I remained seated and sipped rudely on my drink. "Goodbye, adios, so long and good riddance, young man . . . may our paths never cross again," I thought happily, "go on with your young lover and do whatever you must do in each other's arms . . . but spare me from your clutches . . . I'M NOT ONE OF YOU . . . thank God I'm a *man*." I was released, in my hatred, and perhaps jealousy of the boy from falling into the pit of despair that only a homosexual knows when he is gone overboard and has walked the path of no return. I had been saved at the last moment by seeing what the object of my imagination was really like. I had been shown proof that Gerry Ford, like all faggots, was promiscuous and a cheater by nature . . . in spite

of him masculine beauty, I believed Gerry Ford to be no better than a male whore.

"You don't like Gerry Ford much, do you?" Dorothy asked when the two boys had gone.

"No, I guess I don't," I answered positively. "But, I hardly know him—there's something about him, I don't know what it is, it's something in his personality that doesn't ring true."

Dorothy interrupted, "I know what you mean, Wally. For a very young man he's so damn sure of himself . . . is that it?"

"Yes," I answered, "maybe that is it . . . he's calculating, cold and cruel at times . . . then one feels in him a complete turn about of warmth and understanding . . . for some strange feeling, Dorothy, I wish I had never met him or Syd," I confided foolishly to Dorothy. "I feel there is some evil undercurrent running beneath Syd and Gerry. There is something very sad about Syd's fading glory, and Gerry's ruthless command of the whole situation. Gerry seems able to let the paths fall like chips where they may, step over them, kick them aside, or leave them unnoticed behind him to be ground into the earth by others who follow in his path." I paused, Dorothy seemed to be listening but said nothing. "No, Dorothy, I'm afraid I don't like young men like Gerry Ford . . ."

"Well, Wally," Dorothy answered drily, "you're just not queer enough to fall in love with a man," she stated plainly.

I was shocked at her frank statement . . . did she suspect me of being bi-sexual, or on the verge . . . or what? I was stunned by her analogy, and

I was more determined than ever to show Dorothy that night that I was man, all man.

"Syd and Gerry have been an item for years, Wally. Syd practically robbed the cradle when he took Gerry on, but in spite of all the odds against such a relationship, it seems to have worked out wonderfully for both of them. Gerry is building a foundation for a wonderful career somewhere in the theatre. And Syd? He has had love and companionship from the boy for a few years. He has the respect and the pleasure of grooming and teaching, and loving, a boy who in many ways probably represents to him the son he could never have."

"But, that boy?" I protested, "has no loyalty or respect for Syd? Isn't that throwing too much crap in Syd's face to take him home drunk and put him to bed and then go out on the town with a man of his own age . . . or does Syd realize what is going on. I think its hateful and disgusting!"

"But he's young," Dorothy patiently explained to me as if I were a child, "Syd is *old*, Wally . . ." she went on seriously, "Gerry is *young*. Syd has had his day . . . they have both had the best of each other, they have both served one another well. It's only natural that Gerry would seek young companionship once in a while. After all, as quiet as it's kept, Gerry is as gay as a peacock and he's kept it pretty much under cover and he has gained a certain amount of respect from everyone in whom he has come in contact under the guidance and protection of Syd . . . he's got to have a fling once

in a while."

I was amazed at how much Dorothy knew and understood about a subject that had never been mentioned before between us.

"Wally, how can you be so naive and still live in the crazy world you float around in? Half of the men we both know in the arts are queer, married or not," she looked at me directly and said, "you're about the only man left, my dear, and I've often wondered how long you'll stay that way . . ."

"Dorothy!" I protested, "you don't think . . .?"

"It's the times and the pressure, darling," she laughed bitterly, "it's because of women that more and more men have turned to their own sex for the need of love, understanding and a satisfaction. Women want to be man's equal in every walk of life and business, and women have succeeded to the point where they have taken over almost completely *everything*. I, as a completely feminine woman, can understand how the aggressive females have pushed men together in clubs, society and eventually sex relationships, because they have to identify themselves with each other and to prove to one another that they still are men."

I was amazed at Dorothy's deduction.

"About the only thing a woman can't do," Dorothy added on a bright note, "is grow a beard." And with that remark as her finale, she outstretched her arms to encompass the room and said, "Did you ever see so many beards and moustaches in your life?"

I looked around and saw that it was true and estimated that at least one out of five men were

sporting fancy beards or elaborate moustaches.

"Don't grow a beard, darling," Dorothy warned, "I know you're a man alright," she laughed, "you don't have to prove a thing with me."

I laughed delightedly at the gorgeous Dorothy. She looked like a cottoncandy dream, but when turned loose she had the vocabulary of and talked like, a truck driver.

Gerry was fading from my conscious mind, and I hoped, his image had not hidden itself somewhere in my subconscious. At the moment I was secretly enjoying the anticipation of having an all out, no holds barred sex bout with Dorothy . . . and as soon as she finished her bowl of chili I felt like dragging her by the hair, caveman-like fashion, out of this cave of smoke and hamburger grease . . . but to my horror Avril and his expensive gown, hanging on his cadaverous model slithered up to our table. Avril was beathless with the excitement of finding us where we said we would be. (I remember of thinking sadly, of how many times people had said they would meet the poor little faggot at some designated spot while they turned up in another part of town . . . this sad, gay world.) I don't believe the model breathed at all. She just sank onto a chair listlessly like a rag, bag of bones, and a hank hair, and I'm sure that she never uttered a word, she just sat quietly behind her mask-like face and drank whatever drink was put before her.

Avril's little hands flew limp and daintily in the air while he gushed, gossiped and talked and talked and talked . . .

"I never thought I'd find *this* one," nodding his

wrinkled, pretty little face toward the model, "but there she was . . . standing over by the elevators," he threw his eyes to the ceiling in disgust, "anything with a uniform on for this one . . . oh, by the way, the silent one's name is Lelanie Schwartz, or something."

The unreal girl nodded her head to Dorothy and me without going to a change of expression. I couldn't help being fascinated by this lifeless-like creature Avril had brought with him. She looked like a blown up cover girl on Harper's or Vogue that had been placed on our chair by some gay prankster.

Avril was all excited, "I just saw that *beauty* leave here, you know, that living doll that Syd Thompson thinks he holds in captivity? Well, did he ever have a *trick-for-the-night* hanging on his big arm! Really, the two of them were too, too much!" Avril's beady little eyes flashed to mine and he said, "those two together I'd like to see," his girlish laughter trilled high and he directed to me . . . "eh, Wally?"

Suddenly Avril had brought Gerry Ford's image back to my mind's eye . . . I hated him for it. Avril plowed on unmercifully and unendingly telling us, or at least me, everything I didn't want to hear.

"Poor old Syd, I really feel sorry for him, those she's such a bitch, but she's going to lose *that beauty* sooner than she thinks. Old Syd's on the way down, and that boy is on his way up. His wings have sprouted and he's going to fly Syd's coop giving Syd a lifetime membership to the *wrinkle bar*."

"Wrinkle bar," Dorothy asked, "what the hell is that?"

"Oh, you know, darling," he answered brightly . . . loving to be the center of attention. "There are several spots around town that cater to the old queen and dowager set. All these old mothers, who have passed their prime . . . lose their beauty, and most of their money with it, congregate in these wrinkle bars and talk about their conquests of past and present, tell one another how wonderful they still look, and bolster up their egos . . . its as hopeless as an AA meeting . . . they all want it badly but they know at their age that they have to buy it . . . and there are plenty of young dolls out selling their bodies to them."

How disgusting, I thought, this could never happen to a man like Syd Thompson . . . but, there was his boy Gerry out for the night with a young lover while old Syd slept painlessly in a drunken stupor while his lover was slowly setting the scene for his bit exit from Syd's life.

"Oh, that Gerry Ford is a clever boy," Avril wagged his head. "He knows where he's going and that's for sure. That boy has been brain picking Syd for years. I think he drinks too much myself, especially when Syd's not around, but his big hold on Syd is SEX." This conversation was beginning to make me nauseous. Why didn't the old fool shut up, but on he went, unmercifully. "Why, Syd wouldn't believe that his precious boy would even look at anyone else, let alone go to bed with them. But I've heard that in his sneaky way Gerry Ford knows all the tricks of the trade . . . and knows

very well how to use them."

Shut up! Shut up! Shut up! you faggot, my mind screamed. I found that I was vacillating in my thoughts of Gerry Ford. At one moment I want to believe him perfect in every way, then the next moment I was putting him down and stamping on him . . . trying to believe all the horrible things I could about him, but I found that if anyone else said anything uncomplimentary about young Mr. Ford, I was the first one to come to his defense. It seemed alright for me to condemn him . . . but no other person had the right to. Mentally I fought everything that Avril was saying, Gerry could not be all these things that old decadent Avril was suggesting. I told myself with great conviction that Avril was just an old queen who was fighting off his own exile into the membership of the wrinkle bar he had so far been able through money and prominence been able to evade . . . how I wished I could shove him into his place at the bar now. I had to get away from him and his death-like model and get Dorothy to bed and prove my manhood with her before it was too late. The whole evening had been centered on sex, male sex, and I could feel my mind, with the help of the alcohol I had consumed, the memories of the past surging wildly to the top all building up a frightening desire for sex expression within me with another male . . . Gerry, Gerry, Gerry . . . please, make it Gerry. The way I was feeling I felt I could take off with any average good looking young man. I had to get Dorothy home and to bed to satisfy my mounting passion, believing that having satisfied myself with her, these

dark and evil sex patterns running dismally in my brain would be released and I would return to normalcy and sanity once again.

"Dorothy has a bad headache," I found myself saying, "and we have to leave immediately."

Dorothy started to object and deny but when she saw that I was half way standing from my chair and she saw the desperate plea for escape on my face she complied with my feverish plea and we excused ourselves and pushed our way out onto the street. I remember the look of disappointment on Avril's face as we left. He half whispered to me, "Later? Here . . . ?"

"No, Avril . . . not tonight, or any other night . . ." I answered unemotionally.

"Let's walk to my place," Dorothy suggested. The walk was alright with me. I was happy to be out in the night and give my brain some air. Dorothy lived in duplex splendor in Beekman Place. It was not too long a walk and we both needed it badly. Arm in arm we started leisurely down Third Avenue.

After we had walked about two blocks I realized, even in my inebriated state, that we must have made quite a picture, or rather spectacle of ourselves at that time of night. Dorothy in her flowing veils and blazing diamonds, and me, probably walking too erect and concentrating on a straight line, as most drunks do, must have given the passers-by something to think about. When Dorothy insisted on sitting down on some dirty stone steps and removing her shoes, I hailed a taxi and pushed Dorothy into it and we sailed back up the avenue,

turned over toward the River and Beekman Place.

The doorman was new at the apartment house in which Dorothy lived, and I remember, vaguely, Dorothy inviting him up to her apartment for a drink. I thought he was rather attractive too, but the young doorman played his role straight and managed to get us into the elevator and up to Dorothy's floor without further incident.

Dorothy weaved and dropped her small evening bag several times while searching for her apartment keys. "Seems I'm suddenly taken drunk!" she giggled as we finally found the key and stumbled through the door into the livingroom.

"I'll fix us a little nightcap," she said as she staggered over to the bar. I started to remove my clothing while her back was to me. I had only one thing in my mind and that was to give Dorothy in bed a night she would never forget, thus proving my masculinity to myself and erasing any doubts Dorothy might have about me. By the time Dorothy returned with the drinks, I was standing stripped naked down to my socks in the center of the livingroom. Dorothy took one look at me and started to laugh hysterically, "Oh, Wally . . . no!" she cried. "You look so funny . . . its better with your shoes off!"

I didn't see anything so funny about me in the nude, as I had always been rather vain about my body. Ignoring her laughter, I went over and took her roughly in my arms and we fell together in an embrace on a large sofa. The two drinks she had made had spilled over us. They were cold and tasted sweet as I licked the beverage from between

Dorothy's lovely breasts. My hands explored her body so well known to me and with our lips together in a soul-kiss Dorothy was soon writhing with passion and pushing herself closer and harder to my body with desire . . . this night her flesh seemed to be burning with fire, her hands pulled my hair in passion, then she explored. As she grabbed hold of me she cried with savage desire, "Now Wally, now." She moaned with pleasure and pain as she held me tight and directed me. Aroused, I was without emotion or any particular pleasure as her body experienced wild waves of satisfaction . . . her fingernails dug into my back and buttocks as she tried to get closer and closer. I had the feeling that she wanted to possess my whole body . . . it gave me a smothered feeling of being trapped by someone whom I had no desire for. Dorothy kept reaching one climax after another and with each one she relaxed and seemed to die a little, but I remained virile and unsatisfied. I had never held back the joy and thrill that comes with completion of the sex act before . . . I was unable to come to a climax and to be satisfied by Dorothy. I pulled away from her almost exhausted body and looked down at the white flesh I had just covered with my own body. I was suddenly repulsed by its soft curves and the full rounded breasts I had just kissed and sucked passionately in my mouth. Suddenly I desired the long, lean muscular body of a man's body next to mine. Just as I started to draw away from her completely Dorothy pleased softly, "Kiss me, darling, kiss me," and her soft hand caressed its way up around my neck and shoulders,

pulling me down to meet her too soft and open lips. As she pulled my head down to hers so that I could kiss her gently back to reality from the outer space her wild passion had hurled her. I dreaded meeting those soft lips, and suddenly Dorothy's face became the face of Gerry and I threw myself roughly upon her and kissed her waiting lips with a sudden mad passion and desire. Dorothy was suddenly aroused to the breaking point again, and as long as my mind held the image of Gerry Ford my passion was reborn again. But as Dorothy was becoming renewed with desire, the vision I held of Gerry faded away and I withdrew myself as quickly as I could from her, explaining, "It's no good, baby—I can't reach that mad high note tonight—too much liquor," then I added "But you're alright, aren't you, darling?"

Dorothy sighed deeply and continued to caress my body with her long and graceful fingers. "You're *too* much, Wally," she said in a voice that was weak and far away. "I've never . . . you've never . . . well, I don't think I could take much more of you tonight, darling . . . that was the greatest . . ."

I filled with pride that I had been able to give Dorothy such complete satisfaction even though I had been unable to do the same for myself, but I had proved I was a man . . . at least to Dorothy.

I slipped off the couch after untangling her arms from me, and walked nude over to the bar to mix us the nightcap we did not have. Finally Dorothy went to the bedroom and returned in a filmy negligee under which her lovely body was in complete

sight, only softly encased in the voluminous material. On her way through the livingroom she picked my shorts off the arm of a chair and came over to the bar and handed them to me.

I slipped into my shorts and handed her a drink. Dorothy was looking all soft-eyed and her skin was beautifully flushed from our lovemaking. She had sobered up considerably and I could see the light of romance shining in her eyes. The thought that she might begin taking me seriously was pleasant, but at the same time frightening as it was suddenly the one thing I wanted least in the world. My body and my senses were madly craving to be claimed and satisfied by a male. I felt sorry for Dorothy, sorry as if I had pulled a dirty trick on her. I loved her as a friend and companion but suddenly my desire to take her as a lover even again revolted me. We smoked a cigarette and I finished my drink, dressed again and left the apartment as quickly as I could without being noticeably rude. At the door Dorothy kissed me long and passionately . . . I could hardly endure it as I wanted to be away from her and the memory of what had taken place between us.

Once I was out of the building and on to the street I asked the young doorman for a match. He lighted my cigarette for me and we discussed the weather briefly. I was not making a pass at him, I just wanted to talk with him for a moment. In his masculine presence I felt once more, secure and exhilarated. I breathed deeply of the night air and I had the feeling of wanting to strip off my clothes and run naked in the streets covered only with the

black night and the refreshing air. The warmth and sweet softness of being consumed by a passionate female had become almost repugnant to me . . . I felt the need to walk home to get the smell and taste of women out of my system. I knew then that I would never be thrilled or enjoy sex with any woman in the world ever again. As I walked across Fiftieth Street I was still a little woozy when I arrived at Third Avenue. I debated with myself whether or not to take a taxi home or walk up the avenue; I decided to walk up Third Avenue. I remember having heard that the faggots had taken over Third Avenue, but I had never been so conscious of it until tonight. The whole evening had been one of revelation to me, an evening of mixed desires and confusion, one of soul-searching and finally ending in an act of fornication which had left me unsatisfied and filled with dark unnatural desires. The Avenue seemed alive with men who were cruising for a bedfellow for the night. I remember that someone had jokingly said that they were going to re-name Third Avenue to Queens Boulevard. There were men with searching eyes strolling languidly up and down the sidewalk. Many of them stopped and leaned on light posts or stepped out of doorways in order to look you over more closely to see if you were worth their effort of trying to make contact with you. Most of the younger boys wore the same costume of black leather jackets, trousers so tight that they looked as if they had been poured into them. They were the bolder ones. They would walk past you and mumble under their breath, "Hey how about it, hey? . . . any way

you like it, hey." I remember of being told that these were whore-boys and they were selling their wares to the highest bidder and there was always the danger of the buyer being rolled for everything of value he had on him, but only after their purchased boy had completed his business deal. I had heard that one was always left completely satisfied as far as sex frustration was concerned, but he may not only end up black and blue but a target for blackmail. Most of the male hookers on the street were lovers, but would go out and pick up customers to support themselves. If these boys somehow discovered that their pickup lovers was in the public eye or held a particular position of prominence in which the exposure of homosexual practices would mean public disgrace, the end of career or the breaking up of homelife, these boys come through with such threats that the object of their blackmail usually pays the price they demand, or in many cases, they are so fearful at being exposed that some have committed suicide, and others have just disappeared from the city, friends, family and job to seek asylum in another part of the country. Although I was feeling "the call of the wild", and was craving desperately to make some contact with another male with whom I could find relief for my frustration, I was fearful of being placed in the hands of any of these young half-crazed homosexuals who were on the prowl. The older queens would be safer to go to bed with, but, if I was going to go the whole way, I wanted to share myself with youth. There it was again . . . youth . . . damn youth to hell! I had never been made so conscious

of the importance of youth before in my whole life. Youth . . . such a fleeting desirable and dangerous thing . . . and cruel. Youth never believes that age will overtake it. Youth stands up and mocks at age in a mirror that has already begun to peel and crack around the edges. Youth does not realize that every day it is one day older . . . but the aged know that every passing minute is ticking away not only youth but taking its toll of what is left of life.

That night I was so wild with desire that I wanted someone attractive to be attracted to me, to love me for only a brief span of time, to drain me dry of that volcano that was rising to the bursting point inside me . . . then leave me spent and exhausted and go faceless and nameless back into the night from which they had come and keeping their secrets along with the darkness of despair.

I tried to walk casually up the avenue, but I felt a strange panic inside me, a combination of great anticipation for what might happen to me. I realize that I was as guilty of *cruising* the men and boys I was passing as much as they were cruising me. I found myself meeting vacant eyes and featureless faces every few yards, but all I could see was the face of Gerry Ford. I realize that if I were going to allow myself to be picked up by one of these night-phantoms it would have to be with someone who was so completely physically different in every way from Gerry that I could not possibly identify him with the boy who had crept into my brain and insisted on remaining there no matter what I did to destroy his image. I knew I was good and ready, and right, for a good psychiatrist's couch. I knew I

was hopelessly lost in my desire for the boy, but now that I realized I had crossed over that thin line that divided the bi-sexual from the homosexual. I had found that night in my sex expression with Dorothy, that women repulsed me. I wondered if they always had repulsed me and I had consciously kept rejecting the idea that I preferred men, and that I hung onto relationships with women out of my great inborn sense of middle class morality and afraid to face the truth about myself. Now that I realized that I was emotionally and sexually stimulated by men I shocked myself by realizing that I had come so far into the world of homosexuality, without any immediate experience with it, that if I could not be in the arms of my imaginary lover and the one I desired, Gerry, I would give release to myself in the arms of any male . . . I had crossed over, I had fought it desperately, but there was no turning back now. I was on the prowl for a man, out in the open and on a notorious avenue as much as those who were so bold, open and above board about what they were searching for, while I was held back from being just as obvious as they . . . hold back only by fear and inexperience.

These thoughts clashed and clamored inside my sick head. I remembered how relieved I was to see that I was approaching P.J. Clark's again. The bright lights of the bar seemed to give me some sort of sense of security. I stood at the old fashioned colored glass door and was about to enter the bar and drown myself in its noise and brightness, and to feel some human contact, even with strangers. I was desperate in my need to attach myself

to something solid even if it was leaning on a bar and holding a glass, I somehow felt as if I had become detached from reality and the security of the world I had been living more or less comfortably in.

Just as I was about to open the door and go into the bar, I noticed a young man standing in the shadows of the next building. He was long and slim of frame. I noticed that his trousers were skin tight. I remember thinking how vulgar such a display was and it struck me that he wore it as an advertisement. Then I looked at his face and saw that it was a handsome face. There was the invitation in his eyes, dark eyes that were slightly tilted at the corners. He had high cheekbones and a full sensuous mouth. His delicately arched nose gave him the appearance of being oriental, but his suntanned skin was coffee and cream color. He was exciting to look at and I stood transfixed briefly and stared at him.

Our eyes met again and we silently made contact with one another. The tall boy moved on up Third Avenue with the animal grace of a panther. I declared myself all kinds of a fool to do what I was doing, and I half opened the bar door but let it swing back and found myself almost in a hypnotized state following the young man up the street. I felt as if I were sleep walking . . . this couldn't be me, I told myself, stalking my prey on Third Avenue. The boy was less than half a block before me. He stopped in front of a lighted window to look at a display in an antique store. He waited for me. I stepped up to the window and stood a

few feet apart from him.

"Nice night," he said softly. His voice was deep and musical.

"Thirst making, isn't it?" I replied hesitantly.

All of a sudden I felt struck dumb . . . I didn't know what to say, it seemed my heart was in my mouth and for a moment the tension mounted within me until I thought I couldn't stand it. I could not look at him directly so I looked down at my own feet, then shifted my eyes toward the boy's sueded boots on up his narrow trousered legs to his hand that held a cigarette. They were the hands of an artist and the color of light tobacco.

"There's a bar on the next block," he said.

"There is no sign outside and it's very dark, but you can't miss it because the juke box is always playing very loud."

He was silent for a moment then added, with a slight laugh in his voice, "I ought to know . . . I live right above the bar and I've gotten so I don't hear the juke box at all."

We stood there side by side in silence and I waited for him to lead the way but he remained standing transfixed in front of the antique store window. After a few moments I stepped away from the boy and started walking up the avenue. It had suddenly dawned upon me that he would meet me in the bar.

I was filled with the sense of excitement of a new adventure. Several various and assorted fag-gots approached me before I got to the corner. In one darkened doorway I saw shadowy figures of

two men kissing one another passionately together. I could hear their heavy breathing and although it excited me strangely, I started to walk faster to be away from them. When I got to the corner I stopped and leaned on an old iron fence that went around a darkened sunken place that led to the basement of the old brick building. I lighted a cigarette so I could look back to see if my young man was following me. I saw him standing in the same place in front of the window where I had left him, except that another man was standing with him. I remember having a feeling that I had been stood up, rejected. I thought of running away, grabbing a cab and escaping from this rendezvous while I was still able to think clearly, but I was distracted for a few moments by some scraping and sounds of movement that came from the dark depths of the basement yard below and behind me. At first I thought it was rats or a cat rummaging through a garbage can lined down there against the wall. While I listened I heard, from that stale and dank darkness below the muffled cry of 'ouch!' Then I heard another voice warning 'shhh, not so loud . . . just a minute now . . . there . . .' then the sound of human passionate moans of pleasure rising from the filth of that darkness. I panicked and crossed the street quietly . . . had the whole world gone mad, or had my eyes only been brutally awakened to what life around me was. Sex, wild unabandoned sex, was being practiced by men in doorways and open cellars. My head whirled and I glanced back to see that my young man had left the antique store window and was

slowly approaching the corner. I crossed the street, heard the blaring juke box and opened the door into a narrow and crowded dark room filled with men. It was impossible to see anyone clearly. The only light in the room came from two neon beer signs placed on top of the bar, the working light under the bar and the crazy changing colors of the juke box. It was impossible to tell how many men and boys had crowded into that small space. The place was permeated with the odor of stale beer, urine, and cigarette smoke.

As soon as I stepped through the door I felt as if my entrance had stopped time for a few moments. The hubub of conversation and laughter came to a halt at my appearance. There was an empty bar stool near me and I felt all eyes in the room upon me as I went over and sat on it. Only the blaring of the juke box kept blasting away in my presence. The bartender, eyeing me coldly, took my order for a scotch on the rocks. The conversations slowly started to gain momentarily again, then stopped as abruptly again when the door opened and the tall young man came in and stood behind my barstool. There was almost a sigh of relief when the dark young man came directly to me as if claiming me for his own. Immediately the noise in the room climbed to high feverish pitch again. I realized that this little bar's clientele was exclusively for the gay boys, and they all seemed to know one another, and I had been a stranger, therefore not to be trusted, among them.

Without taking an order from him, the bartender bought over a bottle of seltzer water and an ice

filled glass and placed it before him.

"Is that all you drink?" I asked the young man standing behind me.

"I've got a real cotton-mouth," he answered. "Real cotton."

"Oh —," I answered dumbly.

"Pot and liquor don't mix, man."

"Oh — they don't?"

"When you go out the door just turn to the right and the next door is mine . . . up the stairs and straight back the hall. The door will be open a bit and you'll hear the drums . . ."

He downed his soda water quickly and I sensed him, rather than saw him, leave from behind me and go out the door.

I ordered another drink. The bartender seemed more relaxed with me this time. I sat there quite a while before I could summon courage enough to leave the bar and join the dark young man with the cotton-mouth where the drums played upstairs.

I finally finished my drink and it seemed that every eye in the bar was on me as I went out the door. Once out in the clear night air again, I hesitated about entering that dark doorway and climbing the stairs to meet the dark stranger. I felt a moment of panic and almost fled from the scene, but my curiosity and my pagan desires led me numbly through the doorway and up the dirty stairs, where at the top I heard the faint beating of bongo drums coming from the half open door at the roard of the hall.

As I approached the doorway slowly, the sound of the drum became louder and seemed to pulsate

and pound through my half drunk, aching body. I could see a pale blue light glowing in the room behind the open door. I hesitated again, and just as I was about to turn and make my way back down to the street the door opened and there, silhouetted against the blue lights in the room, stood the slim figure of the young man who had just left the bar.

"Come in," he invited. His voice was soft and musical. "Take my hand," he said. I took his hand, it was warm in mine and I seemed to relax and allowed him to lead me into a room that was lighted with only one dark blue bulb. He closed the door quietly behind me. I stood still and tried to bring the room into focus; it was a room without furniture except for a large mattress covered with a clean white sheet that glowed luminous in the pale blue light and was placed in the center of the room flat on the floor. There was a sweet smell in the air which I recognized as marijuana. I also saw the orange eye of a portable record player placed on the floor at the far corner of the room. The bongo drum records that were playing on it could not completely drown out the blare of the juke box which was playing loudly in the bar beneath us.

The slim young man stood and held my hand quietly. I studied his dark body closely. It was the body of a dancer I thought, a tribal dancer. He was wide of shoulder, full chested and long waisted. His hips were tiny and his long legs and arms seemed beautifully muscular moulded. As he stood there an arm's distance from me in the blue light,

he looked like a statue of some pagan god carved out of blue-back stone.

We stood there silently appraising one another for a minute or so, then without a word he stepped over to me. I was passionately alive now. The drums played on and when I opened my eyes and drew myself away I could see the beautiful body that was stretched out in passion next to mine. Then the boy sat up slowly and I watched the gracefulness of his lean body as he moved in the blue light as if in a dream. I was wild with desire and felt I could not stand his teasing me any longer.

This was not like what had happened to me with Dorothy, for whom I had felt nothing. This lover made my sense boil. He stopped abruptly and rolled off the mattress leaving me alone at the height of my passion. He stood up and from somewhere he found and lighted a cigarette. The match flame lightened his face which was handsome and stoic as a statue. I watched him inhale deeply from the cigarette then hold and lock the smoke in his chest until it seemed he would burst. When he could hold the smoke no longer he exhaled violently and seemed to collapse his chest under his heavy shoulders for a moment. Then he straightened up and took a deep breath and sank down beside me and held the cigarette to my lips.

"Inhale deep and hold it as long as you can," he said.

I did as he directed me as if I had been hypnotised by his presence. I inhaled the weed-sweet smelling smoke in my lungs and held it there

until my sense began to soar. I exhaled and as I did so it seemed my body had begun to rise into space. He held the marijuana to my lips again and this time I inhaled eagerly and held the smoke in my lungs longer. I was in a blue and wonderful world of phantasy. The room seemed to be filled with many lights other than the blue one. The rhythm of the bongo drums seemed to be a living part of me. I felt a complete sense of relaxation . . . so much so that I felt I could float around the room on my own. My sexual craving for immediate release seemed to fade away. Somehow, I felt that I was two persons. One who was enjoying being made love to, and the other looking down watching the scene on the white sheet. I wanted this sensation to last forever. Then my lover stood up and started to do a dance before me. It was sensuous and full of desire. I felt as if I were watching a ritual and that I was being made a human sacrifice. When I could stand it no longer, it seemed as if the room were filled with fireworks and there was a great roar in my head.

It seemed a beautiful and pagan act to me. Suddenly it was over and we both fell from the heights at the same time and with sexual desires fulfilled, I lay drugged in a dream sleep. We must have slept for a long time for when I awakened I raised my head and saw that a faint light was coming through the edges of the heavily draped window. I managed to get up on one elbow and look at my still sleeping companion. I saw that he had in truth a native beauty of body and a delicately carved handsome face. I had no time or

energy to feel disgust for myself, or to berate myself for what I had done. All I knew was that my mouth was full of cotton and I slipped off the mattress and went to a small refrigerator at the end of the room that I had not seen before. I opened it and saw that it was filled with bottles of club soda. I opened one of them and poured its cold, sparkling liquid into my parched mouth. I heard the figure on the bed stir. I turned toward him and he was looking directly at me and holding his hand out to me. I opened another bottle of soda and handed it to him. He drained the bottle and with his other hand pulled me down next to him again. I recoiled in horror. The thrill I had felt of his lips on mine, his body next to mine was gone and in the faint daylight filled me with disgust and loathing of myself . . . not of him. I wanted to be away from there immediately. I didn't want him to feel my rejection but at the first chance I pulled myself quickly from him and stood up. I started to dress.

"I have to go . . .," I explained breathlessly as I pulled on my shorts.

The boy stood up without saying a word and stepped over to a shelf and brought out another stick of marijuana. He lighted it and I watched in fascination as he inhaled deeply and then released the smoke from his lungs. He stepped silently over to where I stood and put the cigarette to my lips and I automatically inhaled the smoke and held it in my lungs. He smiled at me and saying nothing he took another drag and when I'd exhaled he put the marijuana back to my lips and

watched as I inhaled and exhaled again. He wet his thumb and first finger with his tongue and nipped out the glowing end of the cigarette. I watched him do this in fascination and I began to feel relaxed and free again. I was glad he had given me the marijuana as the fear and guilt dropped from me suddenly. With the false courage the smoke had given me, I felt I could manage to get home without incident and forget all about this affair . . . strike it out of my consciousness and pick up the threads of my very well organized life as if any of this madness had never happened.

Now I felt good. The nagging sensation that I was going to have a hangover and completely disappeared, but my mouth felt dry and arid again. As I went over to the refrigerator and opened another bottle of soda the handsome fellow stepped over to the record machine with his panther like grace and started the bongo records beating again. Time seemed to stand still again. I remember that I was suddenly aware that there was something missing. I stood listening intently, then I laughed to myself when I realized that the juke box downstairs was not playing. The man returned to my side. I reacted immediately to his touch. . . .

After hours of lovemaking, sleeping, waking and smoking more marijuana and drinking cold soda I finally came to my senses again and realized dully that again it was dark outside and blue inside, and the juke box was playing again. I had spent a night and a day in a dope-sex orgy with this silent boy, and I had enjoyed all of it — but I was suddenly ridden with guilt. I jumped up

and put on my clothes. I was thankful it was night again as my dark dinner jacket and black tie would not look so strange as it would have had I left the building in bright daylight.

I looked down at the sleeping and still body of the drugged boy. I felt compassion for this silent companion and I seemed to understand his need for marijuana, or anything that would keep him from the cruel world of reality that waited for him outside these rooms. I suddenly felt and understood his love, and others like him, for the night. His world was a small one. He was accepted as a person, sick, or queer in that dirty little bar downstairs. He was *one* of them. I opened my wallet and took out a \$50.00 bill and placed it inside the refrigerator on the shelf where the few bottles of soda were left.

I was happy I could do this for him, for I realized what he had done for me in my time of greatest frustration without asking for anything returned . . . not even my name.

I gave one last look at that young dark body stretched out, doped and exhausted on the rumpled sex-warmed sheet and left him sleeping soundly in his dream world with his blue lights and his pounding drums. I would be only a vague memory to him when he awakened and I had a feeling of sadness for him as I looked around the barren room only to know that another stranger's body would lie on that mattress beside him tonight. What a sad, gay world it is for all of us who live in the half-world and have no hope of ever finding a way out of the web that has ensnared and imprisoned us.

CHAPTER TEN

Once again I found myself in the neon-lighted night of Third Avenue. I felt numb and exhausted on the dirty brick wall for a moment and searched my pockets for cigarettes. . . . I had none. I could hear the juke box moaning low in the dirty little bar next to me. I went into the dark interior and took my same place at the bar. The bartender, without a word, placed a Scotch over the rocks in front of me. I glanced around the already crowded room. Only after a brief moment when I had opened the door and they had seen that it was I who had entered their sanctity had they been quiet. All the boys were in gay bantering again. Apparently I had been accepted as *one* of them since my disappearance with the boy. I became aware that I was the only one who was sitting down on a stool at the bar. Everyone else was standing neat, or leaning on the side wall behind me. Also, I seemed to be the only one who was drinking liquor from a glass. All the other men and boys were drinking beer straight from the bottle, a few had poured their beer into a glass. It seemed strange and I had wondered why they had not seated themselves comfortably at the bar.

One by one the boys came up to me and stood by my side. Each time the bartender placed a bottle of beer in front of them and took money for the drink from the change I had left there from

a ten dollar bill. I noted that beer cost a dollar a bottle, as much as my Scotch.

Each boy, about three of them, had come up to my side and said nothing. When I had not responded to their advances, nor looked at them, except at their reflection in the foggy back bar, they had quietly left me. When I saw the fourth young man advancing toward me I studied him closely. He was well dressed in a dark suit and white shirt and tie. His face had good features and his hair was crew cut. He seemed as out of place in these surroundings as I felt that I did. He stood looking at me in the mirror. "Care for a drink?" I asked the boy in the mirror.

"Yes, thank you Scotch on the Rocks."

"No beer?"

"No need now," he smiled back at me in the mirror.

"I see . . ." I smiled in return, although I hadn't a clue as to what he was talking about.

We drank our drinks in silence. "Are you ready to blow this joint?" he asked me. I was ready and we left the bar together.

Once outside that airless room I breathed deeply of the night air. I felt weak as a cat. "Let's eat somewhere," I invited. "I'm starved. . . ."

"That's a good idea . . ." my companion said agreeably. "Where would you like to go in that drag?" he asked in an amused tone of voice.

I looked down at myself and realized that I had forgotten that I was still in evening clothes that looked rather bedraggled. "I don't know . . ." I stammered. "I had forgotten that I . . ."

"How about my apartment?" he offered generously. "You can order something for both of us from the corner delicatessen."

"Good," I answered quickly. I was relieved that I had not been forced to invite him up to my place. He stepped to the curb and hailed the next taxi that came our way.

In the taxi I had a better chance to study the young man who had picked me up. He was very calm and matter of fact about our being together. I noticed that his grey suit was of good material and well cut. The broad hand that he rested casually on my knee was well manicured and without jewelry. His white cuff was adorned by expensive small links of good and conservative taste. He spoke well and with a slight Harvard accent. His profile against the window was strong and clean. I realized that here was no young and giddy faggot. This man was in his early thirties, dignified and to all eyes of the world, except the gay world, was an upstanding young executive of normal moral behavior. I relaxed in his company during the short ride up to the east sixties. The cab stopped at the address he had given and we got out of the car in front of a handsome brownstone. He paid the cab and we entered the foyer of the building. He unlocked a beautiful heavy glass door which was heavily fretted with decorative wrought iron, and stepped into a carpeted entrance hall. There was an elegant crystal chandelier above us which glowed with enough light for us to see our way up a curved stairway to the next floor where we stopped in front of a high carved doorway

which he unlocked and stepped in and turned on a light switch which turned on several soft lamps in the huge high-ceilinged drawing room.

"Magnificent . . ." I commented as I gazed around the room. Everything was in perfect taste and very masculine.

"Thank you," my host answered graciously. "And this is *it*, all of it," his hands swept the large room, "Except for a small kitchenette in that closet and a huge old fashioned bathroom which is my secret passion." He led me over to a tall door and opened it and invited me to inspect his huge bathroom. The tub was the size of a small pool. The walls and floor were of pink marble. In one corner under a special light was a group of tropical plants and on the center of the marble floor was a large white fur rug. The room was very exotic and exciting.

"I'll run a tub for you," he said calmly. "While you disrobe and get into this." He held a black silk robe up to me, turned on the water in the tub. "You'll find shaving things in this cabinet. . . . and please use the stall shower over here," he indicated a glass door in the wall. "It will take the tub some time to fill up and in the meantime I'll order some food for us. Please join me in the living room. I'll be waiting for you . . . Mr. Richards. . . ."

He knew me! Who was he, and how did he know me? I wanted to follow him into the other room and find these things out, but my mind was confused with exhaustion, drink and suffering from pangs of hunger. I quickly removed my clothes and

entered the luxurious shower where I ran the water over my body, hot and cold over and over again. I felt I had lost twenty pounds. I finished my shower with an ice cold needle point dowsing and stepped out into the marble room somewhat revitalized. On the marble-topped ledge of the water basin I saw among the shaving things laid out for me while I was in the shower, a Scotch and drank half of its contents. It tasted good. I prepared myself for shaving. The door opened and my host walked in. He was wearing a black silk robe identical to the one he had laid out for me. "Is everything alright?" he asked as he seated himself on a low iron bench placed beside the marble basin.

"Fine," I answered as I reached for a towel to cover myself.

"Don't bother," he flipped. "I've seen all I need to see of your masculine beauty. Finish shaving and by that time the food will be here."

"You know me," I stated as I whacked off the remaining stubble of my day old beard from my chin. "How come I don't seem to recall ever meeting you?"

"Oh, you're somewhat of a celebrity, or don't you know it? I've seen you around and about town several times, but you never made yourself available until last night when you took off with that handsome young fellow. I was intrigued with you and decided to *wait* you out, that's all." He lighted a cigarette which he took from a brass container on the marble counter, took a sip of Scotch from

the glass he had brought me, unfolded his well formed legs and stood up allowing his black robe to fall back. He stood posing in front of me as my eyes examined him. "I had a feeling that you would return to the scene of your *rape* and I intended to be there and make the most of it. You see . . . you fascinate me, Mr. Richards." He kept his eyes on me and sauntered out of the bathroom, saying to me over his shoulder, "by the way, I took a five dollar bill out of your wallet to pay the delivery boy when he comes with the sandwiches." He lifted a leather riding crop from an ornate brass hook on the wall and carried it into the living room with him as he closed the door behind him.

What the hell was *this one* all about? I asked myself as I rinsed my face and toweled it. I didn't dig him at all . . . and what in the devil was I doing here anyway. I had stupidly followed him into this trap of some kind. True, I was now strangely aroused and interested in him. More out of curiosity than desire. He was apparently a fellow of means, if the way he lived indicated anything. He seemed intelligent and educated, and very sure of himself. He knew who I was and was not afraid that I was aware of it. The whole setup was full of mystery and intrigue. This roman bath bit was at least different. I wonder what the next step was and what his particular kick was. I noticed that the huge tub was hardly one-quarter filled. It would be some time before it would be filled. I dried my body with a great soft towel and slipped into the black robe he had furnished me. I emptied the remains of my drink and desired

another. I remember reflecting upon the changes that had taken place in my life in the last eighteen hours, and how I was accepting these weird changes as if they were not new to me, but had been waiting there in the shadows for me to accept them from the beginning of time. As I slipped into the coolness of the silk robe I suddenly had a vision of Gerry Ford. I cursed it and forced it from my mind. "Damn him to hell," I screamed to myself. "Stay out of my way! I'm fine now . . . let me play the field and find my happiness without the torture of your evil presence" . . . I felt that I was proving to myself that I didn't need him or desire him . . . that sex, free and easy, and without any ties to it emotionally, was what I wanted. I hurried to the living room and the odd young sophisticate who waited for me with a new drink in hand and a new experience before me. I was terribly excited and anxious for it to reveal itself to me . . . whatever it was this young devil had in mind to put me through, I was *ready* for it. Anything to keep my mind off the sickness I felt when I recalled the mystic presence of Gerry Ford.

We both settled on a large comfortable couch and sipped our drinks.

"The sandwiches should be here very soon," the good looking gentleman informed me.

"That's good," I answered. "Thank you for the shave and shower, I feel like a human being again".

"I know how that 'blue room' experience can exhaust one . . . most pleasurably, however," he laughed back at me.

"Oh," I replied in surprise. "You have been

with the boy above the bar too?" My question did not seem to disturb him.

"Yes, many times," he answered. "I find it an orgy that is very satisfying once in a great while. Was it your first time on the weed?"

"Yes it was . . . it was a whole night of *firsts* . . ."

"Good," he beamed. "Then I got you at a good time, didn't I?"

"What do you mean?"

"I simply mean that what I plan for you tonight will send you home cleansed and free of any guilts you might have. . . ."

I wondered if he meant that by inviting me to shave and shower and then later cavort with him in that Roman bath would wash away what I had been doing these last hours, I doubted it . . . soap and water could never cleanse my perversion from me, and besides I had enjoyed my sexual expression completely. It wasn't something that I wanted the world to see . . . but it was something that I knew that I could never give up now that I had stepped up to my neck into it of my own accord . . . or was it my coveting of Gerry Ford that had brought it all to a head.

We sat together in easy conversation until the food arrived. My host made us another drink and transferred the turkey and ham sandwiches onto fine plates of fragile china, supplied heavy linen napkins and we ate with relish and continued a very pleasant conversation.

I noticed that my young and pleasantly mannered host seemed to enjoy exposing as much of his black silk draped body as possible, whenever

possible. He seemed to manage this quite gracefully and apparently derived some sexual satisfaction and joy in giving me glimpses of his nude body every now and then. These studied flashes of exhibitionism came when reaching for a cigarette or a light, another portion of sandwich, his drink, or just in taking another more comfortable position on the couch. Although he seemed manly enough in all other respects, there was a bit of the flirtatious girl in him when he would briefly expose himself to me. He would avidly watch my reaction to his nudity. I didn't get this kick of his and besides it didn't bother me and I was hungry as a wolf and my host seemed in a talkative mood for the time being. "You haven't been *turned on* long have you?" he asked me.

"Turned on? What do you mean . . .?"

"GAY! A *swinger*! Oh, hell Wally . . . you know what I mean . . . *turned on* to the fact you like boys, secretly *always* have . . . but all of a sudden you've been *turned on* to the fact that you realize you always *will* . . . and there's no turning back . . . isn't that right?"

"Yes . . . I'm afraid you're right."

"But how did *you* know?" I asked because I really wanted to know what there was that had suddenly given me away.

"Know?" he rallied. "Even *Jean Hayes* knows!"

"What?" I raged unbelievably back at my informer.

"Here," he tossed me that morning's paper turned to the HAYES column. "Read it yourself. . . . It's vague . . . but it's *there*!"

I took the paper dumbly and read the portion that he had underlined purposely for me to read. "What handsome popular playwright thinks he is fooling his friends and the world by play-acting a gay romance with what notorious beautiful diamond covered red-headed wealthy playgirl of cafe society? Everyone knows that when he leaves his girl friend's apartment he strolls home via Third Avenue . . . and last night he didn't even get home!"

"How in the world . . .?" I gasped disbelieving . . .

"She has spies. . . ."

"Are you one of them?" I accused my informer.

"Yes . . ." he answered me calmly.

I started to rage! I stood and jumped on him as he sat waiting for my abuse. I pummeled his face with my fists. He never struck back but seemed satisfied only to scratch my shoulders with his nails and bring blood to the surface. He bit me hard in several places as I continued to beat him. I finally gave up striking him when it dawned on me that a beating was what he wanted.

"What the hell is with you?" I demanded as I stopped trying to kill him.

"I love it!" he breathed passionately as he fell toward my shoulders and started to lick the blood from my shallow wounds. He went at me like a mad dog goes after a bone.

"I'm sorry, daddy, I'm sorry . . ." he kept moaning as he kissed away my blood.

"Wait a minute . . ." I said as I pushed his writhing and jerking body away from mine. "You didn't tell that Hayes woman one thing about me

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did you . . . You just said you did, so that I would maul you up a little . . . right? didn't you?" I demanded.

The moaning and sobbing young man fell face down and sobbed.

I felt compassion for his queerness when I looked down on his pathetic face.

"Help me into the bath . . ." he pleaded. "Help me, and come in the bath with me so I can be with you and help heal your wounds . . ." I was scarcely touched, only a few scratches that had drawn blood, while he was really battered up, and would have been more so if I hadn't recognized his passion and joy in being pummeled to death. I helped him up from the couch.

When we entered the room only the lights on the tropical plants were burning softly. The room took on a severe elegance. The water was still running and was draining with sucking sound at splash rim. We stood at the edge of the water while my host poured some spicy scent into the luke warm pool.

With his hand holding mine, he stepped into the water and pulled me gently after him.

I lay spent and unbelievably relaxed when it was over. The water healed and soothed my exhausted body. I felt sleepy and wanted to sink down into the luxury of its sweet smelling comforting warmth and never come up again, but the other arms that were in the pool with me were gently and firmly pulling me out of my reverie and the soft wonderful water. All at once I was standing with another body close to mine under a soft and then cooler

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shower. I slowly came conscious of where I was . . . in the shower in some mad roman type bath with someone who loved to be beaten and then loved you passionately for hurting him. . . . Once one started on the perverse road of homosexuality, each roadside stop grew more and more perverse — but this thought did not persist for long.

I went, still in a relaxed daze, back into the large living room and fell exhausted on the great couch. My host followed me and offered me a cold drink. We sat in silence for a while. Both to our own thoughts. I was the first to break the silence and bring us back to reality.

"I think you owe me an explanation about some things," I dared open the conversation. "Such as why you have not told me *your* name, although you know mine, and why you blithely told me that you were one of Jean Hayes' spies?"

"Well, they seem to say that confession is good for the soul, and maybe in you. . . . Wally Richards . . . I have found someone to whom I can bare my soul. . . ."

He seemed very sincere in wanting to talk to me about himself. I felt relaxed and at perfect ease with him and in a mood to listen to someone else's problems instead of chasing my own around in a maze-like brain.

"You are really a very brave man or a very trusting or stupid man, Wally," he started. "In the first place how could you ever let yourself be picked up by a guy on the street, then in front of over half a hundred gossiping fags who could find out who you were in a minute if they had wanted

to, slip off to a marijuana joss house with him and spend eighteen or so hours with him doped out of your mind? Then return, in the same clothes to the same bar and sit there asking for *more*?"

"More? What do you mean 'sit there and ask for more?' "

"You were doing the *signal sit*, weren't you?" he demanded.

"What the hell is the *signal sit*?"

"You lucky bastard!" he shook his head in disbelief at me. "First you are lucky that you didn't pick up some rough trade that would not only have blown you to bits, but have *rolled* you for everything you have, then get a run-down on you and blackmailed you for all you're worth!"

"About the *signal sit* . . ." I pursued him.

"Well, you went through all the tricks as if you were an old *pro*," he told me. "Didn't you wonder why all those little queens weren't resting their saucy little butts on those empty bar stools, and why they all drank beer instead of liquor when it's the same price . . .?"

I had been aware of it, at the end there, but I wasn't in an analytical frame of mind at the time. I had been hungry, hung over and dopey from marijuana.

"Well, Mr. Richards, for your information, there is a regular code among faggots in gay bars. They order beer because it lasts longer, and they don't sit down because they are *cruising*. It's sort of like the way they wear flowers in the islands. If you wear a flower over the left ear it means you are *taken* . . . or spoken for. If you wear it over the

right ear, it means you are *available*, or looking, *cruising*, my dear."

I was fascinated with what he was explaining to me and I encouraged him to go on. "If a guy comes in and sits at the bar and orders a highball, such as you did, it means he is *looking* for a piece of trade, or a kick . . . and will pay for it." I remembered that I had left a bill in the boy's refrigerator . . . thank god!

"Also, when you decided to talk to me and buy me a drink, it meant that you wanted to be *with* me. I also made you pay for the food which was unnecessary . . . but part of our silent agreement.

I was thrilled when you picked me, but until now I thought you knew what you were doing. Now if you had sat and ordered a beer and drank from the bottle it would have meant something else," and he explained in detail the varying signals used.

"It's amazing!" I stammered. "Now tell me about the boys standing against the wall?"

"Well, some of them are there to make contact with their fellow *sisters* only." These signals he explained in detail too. Amazing, but the most commonplace drinking gestures each took on a meaning, showed what each little queer wanted with the others, from being paid for his services — a prime objective, to participation in an orgy — the last resort when things look dull.

New knowledge is always fascinating. I wanted my host to tell me more.

"You are the most vulnerable target for blackmail that I have ever known . . ." he shook his head in wonder. "You were saved by some sort of

unwritten law among queens."

"What was it?" I asked. "What did I do . . .?"

"You apparently were picked up by Freddy, the Mr. Big boy," he told me wisely. "Your marijuana pal and sex artist just happens to own half of that bar, and when Freddie has a *trick* meet him in his own bar it means *hands off*, no nonsense and no pansy follow it or they end up with their heads bashed in, barred from the premises and thrown to a part of the street where the pickings aren't so good. Once barred by Fredricka, the Queen of the avenue, a little turncoat faggot has to beware of his hide, and he is only able to cruise for trade above 57th street and below 50th. The area in between is run by Freddy and if you have been barred and caught cruising that ripe rich territory . . . sister, watch out.

"But why was I selected . . . protected?"

"Because Fredricka knows who you are and respects you," he answered me. "That jigaboo queen knows more socialites and celebrities than Jean Hayes! He keeps their secrets and they make it worth his while."

"This being an active homosexual seems to be a full time job . . ." I laughed nervously. "I don't know if I'm ready for it . . . yet, I know I am now . . . and what can I do about it? It leaves so many ends untied, doesn't it. It's a terrible thing to live life through as one being hunted and haunted. . . ."

"That's why it is called the half-world. . . ."

"How did Jean Hayes know I wasn't home last

night?"

"Many ways," he answered wisely. "After all the Queer boys all know that her husband *swings* a little, and he pays them very well for information. Although Hayes doesn't admit it, she knows all about her husband's extra-marital goings-on with the boys, and she hates us. Once Jean has an inkling someone of importance, such as you, might trip the light fantastic . . . you're a dead pigeon."

"O. K." I said with finality on the subject of *me*.

"Now, how about *you*? Who are you and why did you pick *me*. I'm not young and pretty."

"True confession time?" he laughed sardonically.

"My name is Henry Williamson the third. I'm the youngest Williamson of Williamson, Williamson and Williamson. How's that for openers?" he laughed.

I knew of the firm of which he spoke. One of the most respected law firms in New York City.

"Are you duly impressed?" he went on. "We don't usually defend faggots who get into trouble, but if you ever do need a lawyer call my father . . . he's also one of the *boys* . . . you can always find him at the wrinkle bar. I understand he pays well for what he gets!"

"Do you mean to tell me that your own father is gay?"

"As a three dollar bill . . ." Henry Williamson the third answered me bitterly as he picked up the leather riding crop from the floor and began to flag it hard against his thigh. "I ran into him at a gay party when I was in college. He damn near picked *me* up in the darkened room he was

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so drunk. Since then I have gone my way, and he has gone his. I moved out of our house as soon as I graduated from college, and moved into this place. My mother doesn't know. I see my father only during business hours, as little as possible, and on family gatherings and holidays. We have never discussed it between us, but he suffers with the knowledge that I know what he is and always has been . . . and most of all that I *hate* him!" He slashed wildly at his leg with the whip again. "That's why I like older men like you, Mr. Richards. I want to hurt you and I go *mad* when you hurt me!" He was up and pacing the room like a caged animal.

"It's not a very pretty picture, is it?" he stormed at me as if it were all my fault. I could see that he was terribly upset and was showing signs of madness. All I wanted to do was to get out, and away from this twisted young man.

"You see this riding crop . . ." he held it up to my face and shook it at me. "If I hadn't been able to anger you to the point of violence with my Jean Hayes lie I told you, I would have insisted that you beat my body until I fell bleeding at your feet with desire for you! I would have to fight you enough to see blood from your body . . . isn't that mad? Sick . . . crazy? But that is the only way I can be aroused sexually. . . . My father made me this way! I both adore and abhor my father, and some how, some way I associate pain and passion with him in this erotic way. Then I want to carry the one who has beaten me, and the one I have attacked, away to the bath and heal their wounds

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and to drain them of all their passions and hatred for me. Only then do I reach my climax . . . have my release."

Henry was shaken and weary after this outburst. I mixed him a drink and sat it alongside him as I went to the bathroom to dress. I was saddened and weary too of this gay world which had exposed itself to me.

Homosexuality is a monster that must be fed constantly. Its appetite is ravenous and is never satisfied. A homosexual is in constant search for a completion of himself which he can never find. Man was made to procreate the species and this is the one thing that they cannot do, and is the reason for the deviate's great promiscuity, and constant prowling for new conquests in love affairs and search for sexual and emotional expression. When a man accepts the life of a homosexual and enters into the life of the half-world, he has entered a life which dooms him to a life of fear, guilt, and social limitations.

A homosexual lives a life and a half. He must live the life of a normal person, without exposure of what he really is, in order to hold a position in the world that will clothe and feed his being, plus the rigors and agony that his homosexual life demands of him to satisfy his inner self that must be kept in darkest secret from a cruel and critical society that will not understand, accept or condone that a third sex, the homosexual, exists in this fast paced and harried world of today. Even statistics show that a homosexual's life span is shorter than that of a heterosexual, which may be of some com-

compensation for the life-and-a-half they are forced to live.

To a man who has played around the fringes of an area so sensitive as homosexuality, as I did for years, fooling myself that I was bi-sexual, and that I could take it or leave it; selling myself on the idea that I would never cross over the border line into active homosexual practices, or be driven by my mental and physical perversion into a world where I would have to be constantly on my guard, wearing a mask of serene masculine normality to the everyday world to hide the monster that was growing inside me. The monster . . . homosexuality, now free and unleashed within me.

My realization, at middle age, that I was hopelessly ensnared by the release and expression of my homosexuality, came as a fearful and sickening thing to me. By my acceptance of the fact that I was now ordained to live in the *gay* world I found it was not only a sad and lonely one, but the new and delicate problems that arose in my *just* everyday living seemed unsurmountable.

I was living life on a tightrope. It seems to me that I have had to weigh and measure every word . . . every movement, activity and event, since the night of the Ball . . . the *lost blue* day with the boy, Freddie . . . reigning Queen of Third Avenue, and a power in the glory of the gay world: my picking up of Henry Williamson by the *signal-sit* method, and my introduction to sex in its masochistic twist. There was Dorothy to handle with kid gloves. Even though she had put the Hayes' slur on me down to just evil bitchery . . . I felt

myself guilt ridden and overly cautious of my remarks and actions in her company. Dorothy had telephoned me the afternoon the paper was out and had received no answer. How could she? I was lying in the arms of a lover in a marijuana den over a gay bar on Third Avenue, and that night I was having my superficial wounds licked in a quasi-Roman bath by one of society's elite and acceptable men about town!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

When I finally returned to my apartment, I was conscious for the first time of my guilt feelings for my behavior of the last twenty-four hours. I felt sure that the doorman who opened my cab door for me, and greeted me as pleasantly as always, *knew* of my transgressions. I imagined that the elevator boy had read the Jean Hayes column and was standing just a little too erect and close to the wall, as if protecting himself from me in case I decided to make a wild passionate pass at him on the way up to my apartment.

My apartment even seemed to mock me when I entered it. Everything about the place was in *order*. I felt out of place in the room's quiet normalcy. I felt dirty and soiled in comparison to the neatness of the place. It was as if the whole apartment were mocking me and telling me that here in these rooms I would be *safe* . . . these walls of normalcy would protect me and keep my secret.

I remember that I went into my dressing room and tore off my clothes with a fury that made me want to burn them. I showered again, although already watersoaked after my experience with Henry Williamson the third! I scrubbed myself almost raw with a stiff brush, I scrubbed with the hopeless thought that I could remove the past hours of depravity and degeneracy from my body as well as from my memory. But the sickening

sweet smell of homosexuality and its pleasures and madness, still hung heavy in the air that I breathed.

I retired to bed with every nerve alive. I finally took some sleeping pills and they put me in a nightmarish sleep until the telephone rang and aroused me from some far off place where I was suffering some torture in my sleep.

"Hello? This is Hank Williamson. . . ."

"HANK? Who . . .?" the voice on the other end of the telephone was full of life and vitality.

"Henry Williamson!" he laughed "Last night's madman with the whip. . . ."

"Oh . . ." was all I could answer. How could this young man be so flippant, brash and *honest* . . .

"I know what you are probably thinking about *me* at this moment," he went on seriously. "But, I want to show you the other side of me which is quite pleasant and not so *frightening*. Please join me for lunch and I promise not to embarrass you by dropping a pin or breaking my wrist. . . ."

"Why, I don't know . . . Hank," I hesitated weakly.

"Well I insist," he broke in with finality. "This is no day for you to be alone and wallow in self incrimination. Believe me . . . I *know*, and besides I owe it to you after last night's lavish spread which I picked your pockets for . . ."

"Really," I pleaded. "I had better get myself to work . . . I don't know, I feel terrible. . . ."

"Good! We'll have a good strong pick-up and face life straight in the face," his voice lowered a note, "Wally, I know what I'm doing. Come out and face it with me. I promise you that you will

not be embarrassed . . . but you might even begin to believe that you can *live* with yourself . . . after you've seen the *others* in bright daylight."

"What do you mean . . . the *others*. . . ?"

"You'll see," he said quietly. "And you won't feel so all alone in the big bad world. It's twelve-thirty now. Meet me at one-thirty at 'Bill's Brass Door.' Do you know where it is?"

"I've heard of it . . ." I answered. "Fifty-third street?"

"Right! Just off the avenue a few doors. . . ."

"I'll be there . . . one-thirty. . . ."

"I have a table reserved but I'll be waiting for you at the bar . . . s'long, Wally. I'm glad you are coming, it will square things up for you a little . . . I hope."

I put the receiver back in its cradle and lighted a cigarette . . . and smashed it out after the first drag. My mouth was dry and already tasted enough of smoke and liquor. I felt damp and feverish. . . . I noticed that my hand was shaking. I was glad my new found friend, weird and sick as he may be, had called. I needed companionship that day, and I wasn't ready to face Dorothy, although I knew I would have to. I needed that drink that Hank had suggested and offered. Somehow, my calling him HANK to myself, took off the stigma of his wild ravings and behavior of the night before. Things I had heard about the popular and socially prominent *Hank Williamson* came slowly to my mind. Somehow, I had never before associated the man I had met in the Third Avenue bar and participated with in an act of highly imaginative

perversion, as THE Hank Williamson of the society columns and still considered one of the most eligible bachelors in New York. I crawled out of bed and made my way to the shower *again* (I was beginning to feel like a frogman; I was in the water so much in the last hours). I felt a bit better about meeting last night's *pick-up* now that I knew who he *really* was.

After my shower and shave I pulled myself together enough to fix myself a mild Scotch and water and fortified myself with it and dialed Dorothy's number. She was not to be disturbed, her maid informed me. I was thankful for that and I asked the maid to inquire of her mistress, if she would be free for dinner that evening, and that I was going out for lunch and would call her later. This done, I felt some of my spirit . . . or the Scotch's . . . start to revive. I tried not to put any importance on the fact that I was taking a drink before breakfast . . . a practice and habit I had not previously acquired. I didn't let it upset me, although I secretly wondered if this could become an every morning *thing* I would resort to, to calm my nerves and my conscience. I knew too, that the rate of alcoholics was very high among homosexuals, and I could faintly see the reason why they would turn to drink to dim the hopelessness of their lives, for if they were not *loved* tenderly by someone . . . what did the future hold for them?

As I dressed my mind whirled back to my love image of Gerry Ford. I realized with a cold fear that I had been pushing him to the back of my

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mind for the last twenty-four hours or more . . . but in my first relaxed moment his likeness reappeared in my mind's eye . . . what to do about the young man who had so impressed himself on me and started me on this hazy path of unreality and unhappiness? I finished dressing and had another short drink, and rushed to meet Hank at the restaurant . . . where my mind would be taken up with new and other diversions than that of thinking about Gerry Ford.

"Bill's Brass Door" was not what I had expected from what I knew of it. The "Brass Door" was a highly publicized spot where personalities of the theatre, advertising and publishing world hung out. How I had missed it before I could not imagine, but then, every lunch I had in a business way had been steered to very quiet and out of the way places, and I could understand *why* when I entered the dark wood paneled bar of the well known restaurant. Immediately I was stunned by the noise and the crowd that pushed its way almost to the entrance. I checked my hat and as my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness of the tavern like atmosphere, I saw that the bar was filled to capacity with men, and overflowing four and five deep to the small tables next to the wall where more men, young and old, were crowded in twosomes close together. No . . . this was not a place one would go for a serious business lunch. This was a sort of elegant clubroom for the expense account set.

I eased my way through myriads of martini and scotch drinking well dressed and richly dressed

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men until I spotted Hank sitting at the bar and peering over the masses at me. He stood up and shook my hand as I came up to him.

"I didn't dare lose this place or I would have been mauled by the grey flannel set . . ." he laughed. Hank signaled the bartender and a Scotch on the rocks was placed beside his drink for me.

"Thank you, Hank," I toasted him with my glass. I sipped and looked around the roomfull of men who seemed to be enjoying themselves. Under my breath I said, jokingly I hoped, "Are you doing a 'signal-sit,' Hank?"

"Not here . . ." he laughed. "This is what I wanted you to see. This is the *select* and *elegant* men of the gay world gathered together in dignity and camaraderie. Here, in these expensive confines, no one dares to accuse them of being *queer*. They are just here with their amours, lovers and *clients*, because the food is good, and also their credit. They all have expense accounts, and for most of them *this* is the high point of the day . . . their camping grounds for making dates for tonight, or having a little flirtation before catching the six-fifteen to Connecticut where the innocent little wife will be waiting for him in a station wagon full of kids, while she smiles through her guilt about her afternoon spent with the handsome young golf-pro at the country club, and never suspects that hubby has been playing kneesies with a handsome young junior executive, or office boy, from some agency down the street." Hank laughed gaily. He was having a good time showing me the 'facts of life' as he called them.

We finished our drinks at the bar and Hank waved to the headwaiter and we were escorted to our table in the crowded diningroom. We were seated against the wall at a white linen covered table for two. Drinks arrived immediately. I was at ease with *this* Hank of the *daytime* set. He was well dressed, perfectly mannered, and casually very masculine in his actions and attitude. No one could point at him . . . but then, no one in this genteel atmosphere of men, with a few elegantly dressed business women placed as props around the room, could . . . or dared to point a finger . . . "Closet Queens," Hank called them under his breath. I was amazed and fascinated with the clientele of the room. I noticed and nodded to several men I knew in the theatrical business. I wondered if they, with their male companions as lunch guests, were as surprised to see me with my male escort, as I was them.

"Everything is so casual," I commented quietly. "Are all these men *gay* . . . ?"

"I'd say that eight out of nine are, Wally," he assured me. "The *square* men that fall into here, think it is real *Men's Club*, and they like the atmosphere and come often. The women are in the business some way or other, advertising, fashion or what have you. They either like it because they know they won't be bothered . . . or they stumbled in and dumbly case the joint for a man. Of course they never get the *message* that they are in a regal hotbed of Homos, but they take their good manners and brief glances in their direction as possible flirtations. Hank paused and with his hand

that held his cigarette he briefly waved his hand to encompass the whole room, "You must admit, Wally," he said. "You have never seen a finer looking gathering of men . . . young or old." Hank coughed nervously and whispered to me from behind his napkin he had raised to his lips, "Even my father is over there looking dignified, pompous, and *square*."

I looked straight ahead of me. I was too embarrassed to glance in the direction Hank had indicated with his hand. I felt sorry for Hank. I remained silent and concentrated on my drink.

"Don't let it embarrass you, Wally," he said quietly. "We run into each other frequently. He brazens it through with flying colors. The old man will probably stop at our table with a few casual remarks of recognition . . . and bully his way out of what would otherwise be 'touchy' situation."

I was beginning to feel my drinks and I was glad when the waiter came to take our order. Hank suggested the London Broil, which was alright with me, but he also ordered another drink for both of us the same time.

"I may get up and do a dance, Hank. . . ." I told him lightly. "I'm beginning to feel like it is cocktail time all over the world. . . . I'm not used to this much to drink without some food in me. . . ."

"I'm glad you are tiddly . . . it's good for you in time of crisis. Aren't you glad you came out and took a look in the world around you in daylight? Aren't you relieved to see that you are *not* alone, and that there is a decent sort of way to

meet your problem . . . out in the open, with others of your kind?" He paused then added sadly. "I don't mean my kind of sickness, Wally." He hesitated again and I turned and looked at him. I could see the sincerity written over his face.

"Forgive me for last night, Wally," he stated simply. "It was madness on my part to subject you to what I did. I like you, and I want you for a friend . . . I promise it will never happen again . . . never."

"Let's forget it ever happened," I tried to console him. Then I added, most sincerely, and surprised at myself for saying it . . . but I knew I meant it. "I want us to be friends, Hank. I suddenly understand you and like you very much."

A look of such gratitude and relief came into his face that I felt as if I had given a little boy a helping hand at a time of great need. We were both happy and relaxed in our newly formed friendship.

Drinks and lunch arrived and we fell into a conversation together that was easy and natural. We discussed the theatre, politics, Hollywood and mutual friends whom we had discovered that we both knew. Hank knew Dorothy slightly and he asked me how I was going to handle that situation. I told him that I hoped that I could continue my relationship with Dorothy just as it had always been. Hank shook his head sadly, "I'm afraid Dorothy is too sensitive and too wise for that," he said knowingly. "Soon you will give yourself away with her, and she will suddenly *know*. Will she *understand* you or hate you, Wally? How much

do you mean to her . . . do you know?"

"I don't know, Hank . . . I really don't know. Dorothy may have deeper feelings for me than I realize, but up until the night before last I thought we had always been just pals together, but then, something happened between us . . . an awful thing really," I stopped talking for a moment as I thought of how I had fooled Dorothy with my fake passion for her, when I was actually consumed with desire for a boy I had met, but fleetingly, only a few hours before. Hank waited for me to continue. "Something happened, Hank, that led her to believe she was everything I wanted in a woman . . . it was a cruel thing to do to her when I couldn't have cared less about her for the moment, and was thinking only of a boy I had just met . . . It was freakish, but I think she may now really *care* for me. . . ."

Hank had no answer for me. We both ate our lunch for a while, in silence.

I had noticed the waiters bringing telephones to the tables.

"I must call Dorothy . . . Do you think it is alright to call from *here*?" I asked Hank, doubtfully.

"Perfectly safe, my friend," he beamed slyly. "You are having lunch with your *new* lawyer and East Coast representative, Henry Williamson, the third."

I looked at him in amazement. Was this a form of blackmail . . . or was he a wizard. I had been advised by my west coast legal representative to make a choice of some good firm to handle my

eastern affairs. They had suggested several New York law firms, and it suddenly dawned on me that the firm of all these Williamson's had been among those listed. I looked at Hank and laughed heartily. "You scoundrel . . .!" I accused him affectionately. "That was no 'pick-up' I made . . . you had the whole thing planned out in advance. You were out gunning for me all the time."

"Well, maybe so, in a way," he confessed, "but it was accidental that you turned up in that dingy bar. I hadn't planned it that way, and besides being tight and yearning for some activity, I decided to throw caution to the winds and see if I could make the scene with you . . . and also, I could see that you were like a lamb going to its slaughter with that bunch of rough trade and male whores ready to spring on you . . ." he laughed to himself. "In spite of what happened with us I think I might have also done you a favor, buddy . . ."

So, the firm of Williamson, Williamson and Williamson became my legal representatives, and I've never had finer representation . . . or a more devoted and sincere friend than Hank.

I decided to call Dorothy immediately from the table. I flagged down a waiter and ordered a phone. I was relieved that I was able to call her and tell her truthfully that I was having lunch with my new lawyer. Dorothy was *just* awake when I reached her. She approved of my choice of lawyers and told me to tell Hank not to 'take up all my time . . .' I was beginning to read a double meaning into everything that was said. We made our date

for dinner that evening and I promised to pick her up, *if . . .* she didn't arrive at my apartment first . . . as usual. We laughed and when I was just saying goodbye to her, Hank's father stopped by the table with Gerry Ford following behind him. I looked up into Gerry's face and I felt myself drain of color. I was never so taken back by anything in my life. There he stood in all his youth and beauty, alive and real, right in front of our table.

"Goodbye, Dorothy . . ." I managed to mumble, and hung up the telephone receiver.

"Wally, this is my father, and head of the firm which now takes every legal breath with you from now on," Hank introduced us informally.

"How do you do, Mr. Richards," the elderly, whitehaired and handsome Mr. Williamson the second, said pleasantly as we shook hands. "It's a pleasure to meet you, and I'm proud to have you with us. You are one of our most exciting young writers of today. I have enjoyed your work very much."

In my surprise state of mind at coming face to face with Gerry Ford so unexpectedly, I hardly heard the elderly Williamson at all. I did manage to thank him for his compliments and heard him introduce Gerry Ford.

"Mr. Ford, you know my son, I believe," they did. "And this is Mr. Richards, a fine writer as you know and a new client of ours. . . ."

Gerry extended his strong tanned hand toward mine and we shook hands. The physical contact with him was as if someone had knocked the breath

out of me. I sat down next to Hank quickly. Gerry, I thought, held my hand unnecessarily tight, and longer than the meeting, by chance, merited or deserved. I wondered if Hank and his father had noticed my sudden frustration.

"Yes, we've met . . ." I heard Gerry saying pleasantly. I saw Hank glance at me with a look of surprise on my face. "I gave your apartment a ring last night . . . but you weren't answering . . ." Gerry added meaningfully. I felt smothered with the thought of what he must have been referring to . . . the Hayes bit. . . . There was nothing I could say . . . I knew he had not called me. He was just being agonizing because he knew that he upset me emotionally. Was he, after all, as cruel as I had imagined him to be? Hadn't I seen with my own eyes how he had ditched old Syd Thompson for a younger man? Dismiss him forever from your thoughts, I told myself, but instead I heard myself saying, "You must call me again . . . I'm sorry I was out. . . ."

"I will . . ." he answered smoothly, looking me straight in the eye. ". . . later . . ." he let hold of my hand and it dropped to the table.

"Well," spoke Hank's gay and attractive father, "I believe my son has already attached himself to you as his personal client . . . which is fine. When certain papers are signed I will contact your legal advisors in California. Goodbye, gentlemen. . . ." He gave his friend a look of approval as he left our table. Gerry followed him without glancing back at either of us. I was shaken from the quick turn of events and Hank, noticing it, ordered 'stingers'

and coffee for us.

"I don't believe it was my father who upset you, was it, Wally . . . ?" Hank asked gently.

"No . . . it's that boy . . ." I confessed. It was good to tell someone of my preoccupation with his mental image. I told Hank of our brief meeting and how the young man had upset me, and that I was unable to get him completely out of my mind, even though I had gone to bed with both Fredricka and with Hank and, alas, poor Dorothy . . . I couldn't erase Gerry from my mind . . . I was half crazed with thoughts of him.

"Even seeing him with other men, that young man at P.J.'s the night before last, when he should have been taking care of old drunken Syd Thompson, and now today with your father, here . . . I still desire him even though I know he is no good. . . ."

I know how these things can be," Hank said understandingly. "Unrequited and imaginary love can be plain hell . . . I know, but about one thing you are wrong. Mr. Ford is *not* one of my dear old father's tricks." I looked at him briefly to see if my new friend, and lawyer was telling me the truth . . . or had just started to protect me, professionally. I could see he was being honest. "We handle Syd Thompson," Hank continued. "And as far as I know, *that* was a real business lunch with the old man and Gerry Ford."

"I wonder," I said, almost to myself. "I wonder what that young man is all about . . ."

"Well, Wally," Hank tried to reassure me, "As far as I know, Gerry Ford shoots straight with

everybody . . . including Syd Thompson. In spite of what you are thinking, Gerry Ford is no cheat, and if he does play on the side . . . nobody in the business knows of it. A cup of coffee, a drink with a friend now and then . . . so what? After all Gerry Ford wasn't born *just* when Syd *met* him . . . or *you* discovered him! He's bound to have a life other than the one we know of at the present time . . . Haven't YOU?"

"Yes, but . . ." I started to protest, but Hank would not let me interrupt him.

"Look, fella! our firm represents the man THOMPSON! . . . Mr. Ford, also represents Thompson, and damn well too . . . I've made a play for the boy myself and he has passed off my advances as if he had no idea of what *I* was all about! I suggest that you go home and prepare yourself for his call, my friend . . . because that boy has eyes for you."

CHAPTER TWELVE

As I lolled lazily in the bed that Gerry had just left, and listened to him moving about the apartment, I recalled that it was just a little over three years ago that I had left Henry at the 'Brass Door,' and had come back to this apartment to wait for Gerry Ford's telephone call.

How long ago that seemed to me now, now that I had shared my life with him in near perfect harmony and love for all this time.

I wonder why, on this particular morning, I should let my mind wander back into past events like a person who is drowning and whose whole life flashes in three minutes? Kaleidoscopic, with ever changing patterns and colors, my introduction, and adoption of my life in the homosexual world had been pictured clearly and in detail on the movie screen of my mind.

I remember how *sure* Henry Williamson was convinced that Gerry would call me. I could feel, anew, the doubts I had nourished that he would not. I could still hear him say to me, as he left our table with Henry's father, 'I will . . .' then adding subtly, 'later. . .'

I could see myself as I was that afternoon three years ago. I had returned to this apartment wrapped in cloak of emotional fear and apprehension. I was praying that he would call, and in a strange way, hoping that he wouldn't. Just seeing

him at lunch, briefly, had unnerved me enough.

What would he be calling me about, I worried. We had nothing to say to one another. We had actually never had a conversation. There was only this great and frightening communication between us that I didn't understand, and felt helpless to cope with it in his presence, or away from him.

I entered my apartment as if it were a chamber of unknown horrors. I paced the rooms restlessly as if I were not expecting anything to happen. I ignored my telephone which seemed to stare at me from its place on my desk. It looked to me like a mad thing that was about ready to scream at me. It rang!

In spite of myself, and the calm I had been selling myself on how to answer the phone if it did ring, I dashed to the instrument and answered it before it could ring a second time. My heart was pounding so loudly that I was sure that it could be heard over the phone. (Telltale heart . . . was all I could think of.)

"Hello . . .?" I answered. I knew I sounded as if I had been running.

"This is Gerry Ford . . ."

"Yes, I know. Nice of you to call."

"I'm close by . . ."

"Would you like to stop up for a drink . . .?"

"Yes. I only have a short time . . ."

"I'll be expecting you . . ." I gave him the apartment number and hung up.

What a stunted and staccato conversation that had been. In a state of numbness I went to the kitchen and removed ice cubes from the refrigerator

and filled the ice bucket. I had no more than finished this little chore it seemed, when the apartment doorbell rang.

I opened the door and there he stood. He gave me a slow smile, which I already seemed to know, and I stepped back into the room to let him enter.

The apartment; I suddenly felt, with him in it, suddenly seemed to become an alive and attractive place to me. Until Gerry had entered it, it had just been a series of rooms in which some furniture had been placed, but, with Gerry actually in the livingroom in person, and not just a figment of my imagination that haunted me ever since I had seen him, I felt happy and relaxed. All tension had gone from me just by his very nearness.

Gerry seemed tense and strangely ill at ease. This puzzled me, as he had always been the one who seemed to have the situation in hand, the whip hand, and had been so flippant and disarming in our brief meetings.

Seeing him on my own territory gave me a sense of power and relaxation. I suddenly felt like myself again, I was on my own home ground now and I felt like playing the gracious host to my attractive guest. I decided that now I could show the young man that he could no longer upset me, and that his being here for a drink was merely a pleasant and casual interlude in my busy day . . . nothing more.

"Drink?" I offered, as I switched on the record-stacked Hi-Fi.

"Yes, thank you. Scotch on the rocks, please."

The strains of soft music filled the room gently.

"Please sit down."

"No thank you. I'll stand," he answered stiffly.

That's odd, I thought as I mixed the drinks. Gerry was standing at the great glass doors and looking out over the east river.

I walked over to him and handed him his drink, "Nice view, isn't it?" I broke the silence between us. "The Sunshine Biscuit sign and the fifty-ninth street bridge seem to never tire of looking at me."

Gerry put his drink down on a table and turned to me and without speaking he pulled me into his arms and kissed me passionately, then released me roughly.

"I'm sorry . . . but I had to know," he said roughly. "There is something about you that tears me to bits everytime I think of you, and I think of you too much."

"I feel the same thing, Gerry," I said honestly. "It's frightening, isn't it?"

"More than that," he weighed his words carefully. "Is it a good thing? It's so powerful, magnetic. I feel helpless, and that is not good. I've always wanted to be master of myself . . . and I always have been, up until I met you." He turned and walked toward the door, "Goodbye. I shouldn't be here, and I must not see you again . . . I'm sorry. ." He opened the door and left the apartment.

"Gerry!" I called to him desperately. "Gerry don't leave! Don't leave me now that I know . . ." But he had left as quickly as he had come, and I knew there was no point in following him in the strange mood he was in. I was shaken and sickened by our strange meeting, and the emotional impact of it. I was left in a daze, confused, but strangely

thrilled and happy. Somehow I knew that Gerry Ford had entered my life, and whatever it was that was holding him back from loving me now, would somehow work itself out. Our love was meant to be, and I was raised to delirious heights of passionate and overwhelming gratitude that my love had been returned. In my exultation I felt I had been part of a miracle.

In my happiness I called Dorothy immediately. I loved her, I loved the world. My high spirits were catching and Dorothy said she had never heard me sound so young and gay. Gay? She didn't *know* how gay I felt. Although I didn't know how, when or where, Gerry would come to me. I felt happiness in my deep belief that he would. Whatever this power was that exercised itself between us, I knew it was stronger than any man-made force, and knowing that our love was meant to be, nothing could destroy it, or keep it from us.

I was like a man suddenly reprieved from a death sentence that night. I wanted to live life to the hilt, and if I couldn't have Gerry in my arms that night, I would give my overabundance of love to Dorothy.

Strange, how complete and satisfying my sex life was with Dorothy now that all doubt of Gerry's love and passion for me had been removed.

I didn't hear from Gerry Ford for almost a month. I knew that he had some problem to work out, but everytime the telephone rang I hoped that the voice on the wire would be his . . . although I knew that I wouldn't hear from him until he was free from whatever it was that kept him from me.

I was seeing more and more of Henry William-

son. Hank had turned out to be a brilliant advisor for me and I learned, through experience, to respect his judgement and go along with his way of thinking almost completely. After Gerry had paid me that strange visit I decided to confide in Hank.

Hank seemed to be waiting for me to bring up the subject of Gerry. He was ready and anxious to talk about the boy.

"I've been wanting to talk with you about Gerry," he said sincerely. "Gerry has a problem, and I know what it is." he paused for a moment. "His problem is Syd Thompson."

"I don't understand . . ."

"Well, Wally. Gerry is a sincere and devoted person. Syd is on his way *down*. He's beaten, he's old and as quiet as it's kept, he is a hopeless alcoholic. Few people know this about Syd, and it's through Gerry's efforts and loyalty to Syd that he can still hold his head up, for brief periods, in public."

"I had no idea, Hank . . ."

"Gerry knows how much Syd has done for him and what a genius Syd is. Gerry knows better than anyone the break he has had in having Syd Thompson for a *patron*. True, Gerry was Syd's lover at first, but age and alcohol have long since taken their toll. All Syd's lovemaking is in his sodden mind. He has given Gerry a terrible time for the past several years. He has been brutal and almost insanely jealous of the boy . . . and for no reason. If it hadn't been for Gerry Ford taking hold of what is left of the Thompson enterprises and properties, Old Syd would have been just another has been

with his back to the wall by now. Gerry has saved him from poverty, public exposure for being the most degenerate of degenerates. Syd Thompson when he is drunk, or on the needle . . ."

"Needle . . .?"

"Yes, Wally. Syd is hopelessly hooked and he has a hundred dollar a day habit."

I felt devastated for both Syd, the genius, and for Gerry, who had quietly suffered through all of this morbidity out of love and loyalty to a man who had given him his chance.

"Poor Syd," I shuddered. "And poor Gerry, too . . ."

"The boy's got broad shoulders," Hank went on. "I know all this because the firm has worked hand in hand with Gerry; who could have walked out with everything and no one would have been the wiser, because Gerry wanted to be sure that old Syd would be solvent and financially secure before he committed him to a private asylum, for care . . . and probably forever . . ."

I felt sick. "What a horrible ending to a brilliant career . . . what destruction of one of the theatre's all time greats." All of a sudden I saw what had happened to the magic touch of Syd Thompson . . . he had slowly let his unhappiness in his lot of life take over.

"He hated his homosexuality," Hank seemed to have read my mind. "Syd was a creator of life, wisdom and beauty in the theatre. The knowledge that he could never create a life, to father a child, actually killed him. Gerry was his son, he wanted to give him everything of himself and his vast

knowledge of life and the theatre," Hank paused and caught my eye. "He even wanted to give him his *name*. Yes, Syd wanted to adopt the boy. He had made all the plans and provisions to carry it through, but Gerry refused to let him go ahead with it. Gerry seemed to believe that if he became Syd's adopted son, it would put a blight on their relationship. His love and respect for Syd Thompson will go on before him to the old man's grave. I have never known such devotion . . ."

I began to see why Gerry could not accept my love, or give his to me. I admired and loved him all the more for his devotion to the sick old man, and his determination to keep Syd from being a public disgrace or his name dishonored.

"Syd will be put away in less than two weeks," Hank told me sadly. "He will not live very long."

"What will happen to Gerry?"

"Gerry is Syd's sole heir. He will inherit everything that's left. There will be no money, cash that is, but he will be in possession of all Syd's writings, plays and screenrights. Someday they may be worth something . . ."

"I see . . ." I answered sadly. We were both silent for a time.

"Wally," Hanks said solemnly. "Gerry gave me a message for you this afternoon."

I remained silent and waited.

"After Syd is hospitalized Gerry is going away somewhere. He wouldn't tell me where. He has been through hell and he wants to be alone. He told me to tell you that when he feels he can come back, and if you still want him . . . he is coming

back to you . . ."

My heart skipped a beat. I waited a moment before I said, "Tell Gerry I understand and that I'll be waiting for him . . . I understand, and I'll be waiting . . ."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The time of waiting for Gerry to come home to me seemed unending, but actually it was only a few weeks. Syd passed away suddenly and quietly in the hospital and the world never knew that he was his own executioner. I waited to hear from Gerry or to have him just appear at the apartment door in his casual way . . . and he did.

I could see that Gerry had lost weight and was saddened deeply. He walked into the apartment one evening two weeks after Syd had passed away and walked right into my arms. He held me tightly and his body wracked with sobs. Neither of us had anything to say. I showed him Billy's room and turned down one of the twin beds for him, provided a robe and toothbrush and left him to himself.

For two days he did not leave his room. The housekeeper, "our" Mrs. Mulligan, tried to tempt him with food. I attempted to carry on with my work and my social life. I knew that he would want it that way.

I told Dorothy that Gerry was at my place and that he was mourning Syd's death, and that he had come to me on his own. Dorothy was cooperative, helpful and tried to understand something which was strange and foreign to her. We continued to sleep together and be lovers.

During this *waiting period* I found making love to Dorothy very pleasant. *Pleasant!* That's a

strange way to describe, or think of an act that should be of passion, isn't it? But truly, that is the only way I can describe it. *Pleasant.* I was relaxed and enjoyed myself with her. I was at ease with her, I enjoyed her beauty and her companionship . . . it was all easy because I was waiting for the time when Gerry would come out of his depression and start to live a new life *with me.*

One morning I was having coffee at my desk in the den and was going through stacks of papers looking for a contract that had been mailed directly to me instead of to Hank. I had managed to spill some of the coffee all over the desk and the papers, and the place was a mess. Gerry walked into the room as though he was accustomed to doing so every day. He looked around the mess I had made of the place and with a pleasant tone of voice he said, "I think it's about time I took over . . . don't you?"

I explained what I was looking for and he asked me to finish my coffee on the terrace and he would join me there later. He was matter of fact and rather stern. I could see that he was still under a strain. I noticed that he was dressed in a business suit and a coat and tie. I felt like a sloppy version of a movie writer in my crumpled robe and unshaven face. I played along with his wishes, and without asking him how he felt, or any chit chat at all, I removed myself and my coffee from the room.

From that morning on, and without a word about it, Gerry was my second hand. In a matter of a few hours he had everything catalogued and in its place. He knew more about what I was *supposed*

to be doing in one week than I had known in a year. Appointments were made and kept under his guidance. He had a knack of arranging my working day so that it seemed tireless. For a month he slept in Billy's room and we never let down the barrier. As far as our relationship was concerned, and it was true, Gerry and I were friends, not lovers. I was the boss and he was my employee.

Strange that there should be no tension between us with this arrangement. I must confess that I had some very frustrated hours when I longed for his love, but I knew that I would have to let Gerry come to me, when he was free of the ties that bound him to the past, and he needed and wanted my love, and he could give himself to me without guilt or remorse.

Faye began joining Dorothy and Gerry and me more and more frequently. Dorothy had told me that Faye was getting *too* attached to Gerry. I had wondered what she meant, exactly. Then, the night Faye proclaimed her love for Gerry, and Gerry looked directly at me and said, 'I'm in love with Wally,' the atmosphere cleared.

Only the night before, Dorothy had informed me that she knew I didn't care for her as a woman. The whole situation was nerve-making and embarrassing, but somehow, with ultra-sophistication, we managed to get through it together without too many bones broken.

Little did Dorothy or Faye know that they had forced an issue to a head. In spite of what the girls thought, Gerry and I had never been together. In all this time there had only been one kiss between

us. That night Gerry came to me in all his youth and beauty. I held him reverently and with all the love in my heart I have ever felt for anyone in this world.

This morning, I realize that I have had three years of happiness. More happiness, lost than I ever believed possible. But I sense a feeling of doom and disaster pending about me. How will this end? In a few minutes I will join Gerry for breakfast on the terrace. I will be happy to be with him. I live from day to day with his love as I know how fleeting my love span in the homosexual sense can be.

I am three years older than I was when I met Gerry. He is three years older too, but wise and clever and able to step out into the theatrical world on his own. Gerry doesn't need me. He is independent of me. I am beginning to realize that he only stays with me because he loves me, perhaps out of sense of loyalty.

I am beginning to fear that devil, *age* . . . I am beginning to wonder if I can hold this young handsome man. I have started to worry when he is away from the apartment too long on an errand. I accuse him of being bored with me, when he has said nothing to make me think so. My own guilt is rising slowly. I fear for what my son will think of me if he ever finds out. I worry that Billy might hate me and turn into something sick like Henry. I am fighting my own happiness when I let my imagination run on like this . . . I'm afraid that this wonderful thing that has happened to me will not last.

I'm in love, as no one has ever loved, but I live

in fear that it cannot last. No love can burn as such
a fierce intensity of desire and not burn itself out.
Is my passion for my lover unnatural and more in-
tense than heterosexual love, and if so, will it die a
short death and me with it? It's a sad Gay world . . .

THE END



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