You don’t answer. You march on, gaze fixed ahead, without for a moment slackening your pace.

“Kim, damnit! Can’t we stop this?”

“Stop what?”

Your voice sounds strained.

“This!” I squeak, out of breath, running along side of you with my bike. “It’s really idiotic, don’t you think? I grew hysterical, from waiting. It was my fault. I’m sorry. Forgive me, Kim.”

“Go fuck yourself!”

“Let’s stop this, please. It’s terrible. You don’t plan on walking all the way to Odense, do you?”

“That’s my business.”

I get on my bike again and ride beside you. I put my hand on your shoulder, for balance. You shake it off.

“Leave me alone!”

“Listen, Kim. This is no reason to quarrel. It was my fault. I’ve already apologised, haven’t I? Now, come back with me. I’ve looked forward so much to being with you today. I bought food and all sorts of things.”

“Sure — akvavit!”

“Not just akvavit,” I say in a vain attempt at sounding cheerful. “Also beer and claret and a whole lot of food.”

“Eat it yourself!”

“You’re not hungry, then?”

“Just leave me alone.”

“Kim, you don’t mean that. For God’s sake, let’s stop. We never quarrel like this.”

We’re almost at the highway. Cars are rushing by in both directions. Weekend traffic. In the mink farm to the right two men in blue overalls and long rubber boots stand in front of a red tractor, staring at us.

I turn the bike to block you with the front wheel. You stop and turn your face away. Even though I can’t see them
very well, it is obvious your eyes are moist. The muscles
in your cheek quiver. Your mouth is tight.

Silence.

At last you turn your head. Our eyes meet.

We look into each other. What do we see? What do we
want? What is it we wish to tell one another?

Neither of us can keep it up any longer. We yield at the
same moment.

We laugh.

“Okay,” you say. “But I decide what we’re going to
do.”

“Of course, Kim.”

“And no more sitting there getting yourself pissed.”

“Of course not, Kim.”

We turn around and slowly walk back towards the
school. You put your heavy briefcase on the luggage
carrier. A little later you place your left hand on my
handle-bar. Together we push the bike up the long, steep
hill. Our hands creep closer. Eventually we reach the top
and stop a moment to catch our breath, your left hand and
my right meet in the middle of the handle-bar, where a
long time ago the bakelite peeled off.

I’m happy again, so happy that I momentarily forget how
deply I have been shaken.

For, in fact, I’d never thought this could happen.

“NOW I’M GOING TO READ you a bedtime story,” I
say and walk over to the bookshelf and retrieve a thin little
volume tucked among the others.

“Yes, go ahead, do it!” you say and wrap your arms
around me and kiss me on the nape of my neck when I sit
down again on the edge of the sofa where you’ve settled
yourself for the night.

“It’s a story by the Roman writer Petronius, who lived
in the time of Nero.”
studies and teach him, and above all I commanded that nobody who wanted to ruin his body be allowed access to the house.' Are you paying attention?"

"I think you offended my ears," you say. "And what does he mean, 'to ruin his body'?"

"What do you think?" I answer. "Now listen. 'Once when we had gone to bed in the dining room, because it was during the holidays and the school had closed early and the late night feasting had made us too lazy to return to our chambers, I noticed, around midnight, that the boy was lying awake. So I mumbled a fervid prayer: 'Venus, my mistress, if I can kiss this boy without his noticing it, tomorrow I will give him a pair of doves.'"

You make a very improper labial sound. I pretend not to hear and continue: "'Hardly had the boy heard how his compliance would be rewarded than he commenced to snore. I approached him and kissed him several times while he pretended to sleep. Content with this beginning, I arose early and chose a pair of doves, which I brought to the waiting boy, and in this way I fulfilled my vow.'"

You have shut your eyes and given yourself over to making some enormous snoring sounds.

"What is this?" I ask.

You grin and open your eyes.

"You don't have to offer me doves," you laugh. "In any case, they'd better be cooked."

"Then you give away your kisses?"

"Of course!"

And I get a free kiss.

"Tell me more about the boy," you say, and lick your lips. "He sounds like a sly little bastard."

"I will," I say, and continue reading aloud: "'When the same opportunity offered itself the next night, I altered my prayer and said, 'If I now can stroke him with a lascivious hand and he not notice it, for his compliance I"
will give him two very pugnacious cockerels.’’ When the boy heard of my wish, he approached me of his own will, and I was certain he was afraid that I would be the one to fall asleep. Soon I luxuriated in contact with his body and stilled my passions without, however, obtaining from him the highest pleasure...’’

‘‘What’s that?’’ you ask.

‘‘Quiet!’’ I answer, and continue: ‘‘‘When dawn came I pleased him with what I had promised him...’’

‘‘Well,’’ you mumble, ‘‘now I understand.’’

‘‘When on the third night I again had the freedom to do as I pleased, I whispered into his ear while he pretended to sleep, ‘‘Ye immortal gods, if I, while he slumbers, can steal a complete and blissful fuck from him, I will, for this blessing, give him tomorrow the best Macedonian horse — but only on condition that he not notice it.’’ Never had the youth rested in deeper sleep. First I filled my hands with his tender breast, then I kissed him passionately, and at last I gathered all my craving in a lascivious embrace. In the morning he was sitting in his room waiting for the usual gift. But I now realised it is far easier to buy doves and cockerels than a horse, and, moreover, I was afraid that so great a gift would awaken suspicions. So I walked about the city for some hours and returned home. I was content to kiss the boy, but he looked at me courteously and asked, with his arms around my neck, ‘‘Sir, where is the horse?’’ ‘‘The difficulty of finding a proper steed compels me to delay my gift, but in a few days I shall fulfil my promise.’’ The boy understood well what this would mean, and his expression betrayed his secret dis-pleasure.’’

‘‘That I can bloody well understand,’’ you mumble. ‘‘What an old cheat!’’

‘‘Although I knew this dishonesty had closed to me access to that favour I had just obtained, I ventured yet a

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new attempt. When, after the lapse of a few days, chance brought us both into the same circumstance, I began, as soon as I heard the father snoring, to beg the boy to be good friends with me. That is to say, let me gratify myself with him and do whatever else my swelling lust suggested, but he was obviously angry and said, "Go to sleep, now, or I'll tell my father.""

"Good for him!" you grin.

I place the hand that isn't holding the book on a certain spot on top of the quilt in order to make you quiet, and thus I continue: "Yet nothing is so difficult that perseverance won't ultimately bring victory. When he said, "I will wake my father," I crept over to his side and forced my pleasure, and he didn't put up much resistance. He wasn't angry at my boldness, but he was sorry I had tricked him, for he was made ridiculous before his school friends to whom he had boasted of my lavish gift. "But you shall see I'm not like you. If you want to do it again, just go ahead!" So he forgot his grudge and looked kindly upon me once more, and after I had enjoyed again his favour I fell asleep. But he, who was a fully ripe youth and just at that age when one desires the lusts of the flesh..."

"What was that?" you interrupt. "A fully ripe youth — and what else?"

"And just at that age when one desires the lusts of the flesh," I repeat.

You sigh deeply and sink back on the pillows.

"Go on," you mumble. "It sounds fascinating."

"Well," I say, and repeat once more, "But he, who was a fully ripe youth and just at that age when one desires the lusts of the flesh, was not content with only the one repetition. He soon awakened me, drowsy as I was, and said, "Let's do it again!" Now my gift was, to him, no trouble at all. Sweating and breathless, I hugged him and did with him everything he wanted, and, exhausted with
pleasure, I fell back to sleep. Hardly had an hour passed before he began to pinch me in the hand and said, "Let's do it again!" And after I had been disturbed this way time after time, I gave him his own words back: "Go to sleep, now, or I'll tell your father!" "

You gape at me. Then you burst out in a howl of laughter.

"That was a good bedtime story!" You laugh until the tears trickle from your evening-clear eyes.

I close the book and move my hand from the quilt. You grasp it, pinch it and hold it fast in place.

"Notice," you say. And I notice what I have noticed all along.

"Now come in with me," you whisper. "Take off all those lousy clothes and come on under my quilt. Remember, I am a fully ripe youth and just at that age when one desires the lusts of the flesh..."

"And you won't tell a soul?"

"Not if I get a fiery horse."

"You can be a saddle-horse yourself."

"Okay, then ride me!" you say.

COMMENCEMENT DAY — my last. Your principal is in my house.

He sits in my easy chair and smokes one of my cigarettes and drinks one of my beers, after first having refused my sherry.

Your principal sits in front of me and looks at me.

He contemplates me.

There has always been a certain understanding between your principal and me. I actually like the man quite well. I think I would think well of him even if he wasn't what he is —

Your principal!
He’s not a bureaucrat. He’s a moralist, and certainly not a puritan. On the contrary, he’s a somewhat flighty gentleman who, via a teaching job, ended up in one of Child Welfare’s more progressive enclaves.

But he is my potential enemy.

I’m perfectly aware of that. And I feel he sees through me. I feel he knows far more about me than our own nice, unsuspicious principal who, above all things, would rely on his co-worker and, indeed, has no reason at all to do otherwise — except in my case. Our principal always thinks the best of people. Your principal always believes the worst.

And, in his work, he certainly has reason to.

There’s still a half-hour before the ceremony itself begins and the last big coffee-table party in the municipal gym, so your principal and I have time for a good chat.

We talk about everything except school: books, travel, quite harmless subjects.

My coming trip to Hungary, for example.

But I feel he has an errand.

You aren’t mentioned.

He puts out his cigarette, empties the beer and gets up from my easy chair. He thanks me for the drink. He goes to the door, puts his hand on the doorknob. I have risen.

He says:

“Kim needs to concentrate very hard on his work. He really has a lot to catch up on. We have been glad for your interest in him. We appreciate it. But now he must have peace in order to apply himself to his schooling.”

He gives me a friendly smile and nods farewell.

“Goodbye,” I mumble and see his back disappear down the steps. I sit down heavily.

And then for the first time I realise what it is the man has said.
LAST EVENING AT SCHOOL...

I’m alone in my house. The students have departed, the teachers — my former colleagues — too. Only in our principal’s residence and in our kitchen girls’ windows is there light.

And you are in Copenhagen with your family.

We will see each other again in about ten days...

In Budapest.

I am sitting in my house, as empty as it. But empty? I’m half-loaded — my throat, far down in my throat, sticky with sherry. A beer might help. I go to the cupboard in the kitchenette and squat. No more beer. Of course, your principal got the very last one.

And, I think ruefully, the last word!

So I console myself with my sweet sherry.

I sit in my easy chair which is not mine at all but belongs to our principal’s family and so will remain where it is. I look through the large window. The hill outside stands black against the sky. The willow-trees to the south are blue; between them gleams, as always, the strip of water that isn’t the fjord but is locally called the cove. The fjord lies on the other side, to the north-west. From the stone wall along the road the fields slope toward it, stretch out and became flat just before the sea dike. The sea was once there. Behind the sea dike is the shore, green at the farthest end and black on the edge with seaweed and speckled with bright, shining shells. That’s by day. But now, in evening, it cannot be seen from our school and from my house. The beach is hidden in mist. Water and sky flow into one. The trees and poles wave. Only the lighthouse beam out by The Gap presses through the mist: sharp, regular, from the rust-red western horizon.

The doors in my house stand open: the door from the sitting-room to the little entry with the kitchenette, the door from the entry to the terrace. The day has been warm.
The night is mild and friendly. In the straw mats over the terrace insects swarm. They burst against the window-pane. They seek the light, fall exhausted to the ground or find their way through the doors and circle the lamp over my writing table. I’m always irritated by them, chase them. Tonight I let them fly as they wish, die as they will, the moths, the carpet moths, the beetles, the spiders, the summer’s scaly nocturnal creatures on pallid wings.

In front of the house grow stinging nettles, dandelions, hemlocks, bindweeds, bedstraws. On the other side of the house red currant bushes and pink wild roses, too. Out in the corn field behind the elder bush and the slender cherry trees lies a pile of old brushwood: birds and mice rustle among its boughs.

A cat streaks past.

I pick a thumbtack out of the wall from the spot where my map of Hungary hung all winter with its red boundaries around the country of light green. Now it lies in my suitcase. I go out on the terrace and come in again. I sit down by my former work table and rise again. My typewriter is on the floor beside my suitcase. I sit in the chair and get up again. I pour a glass of sherry, drink up and pour again. It’s the co-op’s sherry, naturally, the one with the yellow label, the cheap, the miserable, sweet paste on the tongue. “But we only have the yellow,” claimed the clever but taciturn girl in the blue smock. Yes, she is still there...

And the night is so tranquil.
Too friendly, and damned still.

Music!

But I have sold my radio. I have sold my gramophone. Our Home Economics teacher got both apparatus and records far too cheaply.

Books!
But I packed my books, my manuscripts, my odds and ends. Everything I own I packed in large chests and sent on to my parents, who have no use for any of it.

But my father will be able to spend many days building bookcases.

I go out of the house and let the doors stay open. There’s no need to lock them tonight. My house is naked walls, empty shelves, cabinets, drawers. My house is open doors, open windows. What remains back there — a table, a bed, a chair — is not mine. My house has been emptied and is no longer mine. Over the bed only a pale square remains of Picasso’s brown gentle naked boy with the horse.

I cut across the old kitchen garden, now a building site: workmen’s sheds, boards, mixer, iron. The basement of the new school building has just been completed. I follow the rutted truck tracks in the clay to the asphalt road. The street lamps are extinguished. It’s past midnight. I stop by our old school building, open the glass door: the closer is broken and it slams harshly, echoing in the corridor and on the stairs. I walk into the classroom, don’t turn on the light but remain standing for a moment to accustom myself to the darkness.

My place of work...

I know the way to the lectern. For five years I have crossed to it. For five years I’ve stood with my back to the blackboard afraid that those old education pioneers with their chin-beards and mutton-chops would tumble down on my head. Year after year for five years, hour after hour, short hour, long hour, good hour, bad hour, while the second hand on my watch went round and round...

And I?

What have I stood here and said? What have I imagined you students to be?

You have gone. Names, faces. I will forget you. You will remember me for a time. The parish clerk on his dais
is not forgotten immediately. You will remember some words, some lacunae, which is better. Once I got you to laugh. Once I picked my nose. Once I... oh, shut up!

That’s over, all over, my guest performance.

Parting. Hand-sweat. You are gone: students, teachers. Years. Stillness. Emptiness. My steps in the school building. The floors are a mess with exercise books, crayons, sewing needles, lost property, junk, dead things. Go on, I have to go on: one-two-one-two, stretch your feet, forward, on with dauntless heart! But I can’t march to that rhythm. It’s not my melody. It never was my melody. Nor, really, was it ever yours. We prefer Carl Nielsen and Miles Davis...

I open the piano, strike a chord, play some notes. Morning song, evening song. An echo: the familiar songs that we heard a hundreds times before in the Danish...

No!
The rhythm is impossible.

I let the piano lid fall. I turn towards the class. Did somebody laugh?

There are only the chairs on the desks. Black chair legs against the dimmest light of the night summer sky outside of the window panes.

I must find another melody, another rhythm. It’s high time. It’s the last chance. The chairs on the desk. The icy chill. And the voice in the darkness:

"Sir, you must go!"

I go.

I go across the gravel school-yard and farther, by the road past the cabinet-maker’s workshop, the lilac hedge, the sewer ditch, the new houses, the churchyard wall, the chestnut tree whose flowering time is over. The church lies to the right, whitewashed, heavy; and to the left but a little further down by the hill, we have our co-op store, dark in the bend of the road, only one gable window lit.
Music. Elvis? Tommy? Those new Beatles? She lives up there, the girl of the blue smock and nimble hands, clever, taciturn. I stop by the gas pump. Inside the co-op burns a little red lamp: the deep freeze — a new acquisition. Deep-frozen welfare for the parish. In the windows retail glass, the ordinary ones a krone apiece, soap powders, plastic pails, sun-glasses, dust, summer drinks, summer sandals, summer frills. An advertising poster: everything for the holiday! And dust. In the window pane myself. I turn my back on it. My co-op account has been settled, my dividend paid out.

A man comes wheeling his bicycle up the long, steep hill.

I go in the opposite direction, faster so we will pass quickly. We greet each other, a night-mumbling — might just as well have said arsehole.

Now, what is his name, that man?

I continue down through the town, past the close-lying farms with low coach-sheds, limed white and yellow squares between the half-timbering, past the gardens that smell sweetly, past the open windows in the rooms where the farm folks sleep behind bright, light curtains, past the place where you lived last autumn and where I often paused so as to look secretly at you as you sat by the window under the lamp and read. I know these people, their faces, hands, voices, their children, cars, stables, sitting rooms. What do they say to each other? Something is said, that I know. And maybe it’s important. Perhaps what is said behind those curtains has immense meaning. But I go on. Past the parish council’s old house, past the water works, past the municipal school, past the monument, past the playing field with the beautiful poplar hedge. Here the village street flows into a wider road. The signposts in the grassy triangle point toward the east and the north.

I turn back.

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I go back slowly. I remember the man’s name and what was said about him, remember things about all those people sleeping in the farms. But now all that is meaningless to me: it’s too late. It’s a lovely night, very friendly, very bright and Danish and exuberant in this parish smelling of pig shit and pale, nearly withered lilacs. But the night lacks people. They have concealed themselves from me — or I have concealed myself from them. A man came wheeling his bike up the hill. He mumbled something, that was all. But what do I know about him? What does he know about me? Do I care to know anything about him? Do I care whether he knows anything about me?

And so I arrive home. No, I arrive back at the house that is no longer mine.

I take leave of it...

And turn towards you.

KIM, I LOVE YOU.

Still as much as I did then.

And now, twenty years later, I have tried to write my way back to that moment when you suddenly walked into my life.

I was twenty-eight. You were fourteen. And, to make matters worse, I was your teacher and you were my pupil.

It ought to have ended in catastrophe.

Instead it became the beginning of a relationship which endured twelve years.

That’s longer than many marriages.

Of course, we needed each other. But no such statement really gets to the root of what happened between us. I don’t mean anything mystical by that. Luck was with us, it’s clear. But there was also my — no our joint — will to love, and your — no our joint — need for affection and security.
If I believed in the stars I would have spoken about propitious constellations. But I don’t believe celestial bodies influence human relationships.

What do you do, by the way, with an Aquarius and a Crab?

I met you on the path and fell in love...

What have I just written? It’s a lie from beginning to end. In any case, a crude exaggeration.

Forgive me, I am an incorrigible romantic!

Over the years I have crafted this image of you as the boy who came walking to meet me to enter my life. It is this image that dominates my memory. Probably it is distorted. Yes, a lot can be said for its being the product of my imagination. A fiction, if not a lie. But the past becomes what we make it.

And so does love.

I like to think I fell in love with you at first sight.

And from this eternal moment, the one image swiftly replaces the other. You were so graceful, so nimble. I found it difficult to hold on to you. You slipped from me. Only sleeping were you more or less at rest. And while I looked at you...

No, while now, after all these many years, I sit here and write my way back to that time, my memory is filled with other and much later images of you. They blend, they press forward. They’re not to be shut out. Some are clear and sharply outlined, others hazy, grainy, shadowy. Still others are the images of dream.

Do I dare believe in them?

Does it matter?

When I think of you today I see a little fellow of fourteen walking towards me on the garden path along the end of the student building with a quilt under one arm and a cardboard box wrapped with string under the other,
Copenhagen-bold and impudent, insecure, troubled, nervous, and very, very sweet...

When I think of you today I see a tall, serious university alumnus of thirty-four with a black briefcase standing on the seat beside you in a cheap little red Citroen, polite and reserved, and very, very nice...
The first Kim I think I know quite well.
The other?
You are for me first and foremost what we call love in concrete form.
You are past and the past’s images.
I see:
You in your light blue sweater in the “B” English class, third desk, second row. I can barely restrain myself from touching your shoulder.
You on the sofa beside me in my house when we read German and English. And we do read German and English — between times. (Later you will say, “That was when you always sat there and pawed me...”) We go into the bedroom. I embrace you, feel you. You still have the pipe in your mouth. It drives me crazy. I want to kiss you. (Later you will say, “We’d always stand there like a couple of horny dogs...”) I lick a drop of sweat off your upper lip. I kiss your sticky fingers. And then we go out and made tea and prepare some cheese sandwiches.

Now, over the radio, I hear Menuhin’s recording of Carl Nielsen’s violin concerto, and remember (in the second movement, when there came from you those awful sounds) you sleeping in my easy-chair late one Saturday night — I thought you were listening with closed eyes — and your waking up with that self-conscious, courteous smile (my heart cries a little), and our Home Economics teacher and I, like indulgent grown-ups, laugh to each other across the student — good lord — while all the while I know it’s you I love.
Why do I suddenly remember your light brown velvet jacket, the one you were so proud of, for now you also go about in velvet, your white frizzy shirt, the pearl-grey tie I loaned you, your new hair style, the bangs, that suited you so well?

Why do I continue to remember these things?

Why do I remember your sweat, your warm skin, your front tooth with the chip in it, your toes that with the years grow long, ugly and crooked?

Do you ever remember me, I wonder, from that time?

You are the blue-boy at Kullen. You’re dressed all in blue and are fantastically sweet and frisky as you leap about like a gazelle among the rocks...

(But this image and those that follow don’t really belong in this first book about you and me. They belong to the time after we leave the school. They belong to the next book. Still, they crowd in here pulled by the earlier ones!)

At Kullen I kiss you on your cheek. It is cold from the wind and tastes deliciously salty from the autumn sea mist. And you are all blue, far in front of me between the tree trunks, The Blue Boy, not Gainsborough’s little blue silken darling, not that at all. My boy is blue, hard, gentle, clothed in homespun, denim or something like that — blue, dark blue, and with a blue cap on your head like chauffeurs wear, and we sit down way out on the rock-bound shore and look over the Kattegat and quote to each other Gelsted’s poem we both like so much — that is to say, I begin it and you finish, for I have never been able to remember more than the first lines of anything.

Sun over sea! And the sun song
rings and celebrates
far over fields and houses
and church steeples.
The sun god steers his team
over the crowds of people
sets life on fire
on the mountain shelves.

Does a secret shudder
run over rock and sea?
The days were never so bright
and today’s a good day to die.

(But it wasn’t in Sweden, or in Kullen in Skania: it would only be six years later, in Greece, that we would first really understand that poem.)

And one more thing:
When we have eaten sardines and korvar and pâté de foie gras and drunk Swedish beer (ugh), you lie down on the bed... I remember it as a bunk bed, but that just cannot be true — I must be confusing it with some other, one of the many, many beds on our long journey through the world... and you say, “Now, you have to incite me!” And we laugh over this perfectly silly word, incite... invite... polite. We tell each other to be quiet, because of her, Mrs. Andersson on the other side of the wall, who calls me “the author” with every other breath and who is servile and rough under her matronly hair-do. And I incite you, and it is good and beautiful. But you are still a bit passive. You are still not properly incited, still not awake and wild (that first happens in Norway the summer you turn eighteen). And I have told Mrs. Andersson you’re my cousin, my kusin, — what the devil shall I do with a boy of seventeen? My kusin! Or did I say nephew? It is screamingly funny and we laugh a lot, but, still, all the time we’re a bit afraid: only occasionally do we achieve real tranquillity.
You go down the gangway of the Oslo boat that summer you turn eighteen and we burn all our letters in the electric stove in the cabin in Hemsedal. You cross the beach under our house high on the rock in the middle of the village of Kokari on Samos in Greece, and I follow you with my eyes and love you simply because you’re just what you are. You sleep in a bed in the Utca Académie in Budapest on the left bank of the Danube, and I watch you and think, how long can this good luck last? Kim, my Kim, I see you everywhere. White with suppressed rage in a hotel room in Taragona, drunk and on roller-skates in the Cathedral in Rijeka, with your arse up in the air on the beach by Langør one summer day on Samsø. Resurrected in Munich, more beautiful than ever before, after I believed you were dead for a couple of months. Yes, I see you everywhere. In Ohrid in Macedonia in those fine long days when we swim every morning out to sea towards the sun and the mountains of Albania. I see you and hear you in Copenhagen. In Athens. In Svendborg. In Hamburg. In Aarhus. In Barcelona. In Odense. In Sarajevo. On the telephone. In your letters. In your body. In your skin. In your fallow-deer’s eyes. You in my heart. You in the dark, in the bed, in the sun, in the clouds, in our heaven. You who want to try everything! I wait for you. I am possessed by you. I need you. You with all your virtues and vices. I see your faults, and I love you for them. We turn our backs on the world we know all too well and try to create another and better one on our own terms. And at last... no, I will not think about at last. Not yet. Our trip has really hardly begun. We will still be together for a long time yet, you and I. It is too early to answer questions and come to conclusions.

So, rather:

You, my beloved, in a profusion of flowers of white-clad cadets and young girls. It is the Great Sexual Confusion:

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the girls look at you, you look at the cadets, the cadets look at the girls, and I — I look at all of you — the observers, the eavesdroppers, the spies.

Kim, Kim, Kim...

How shall I write about our relationship without vomiting great clots of sentimental verbiage that don’t tell anyone anything?

I hesitate...

When I try to describe you clichés leap from the keys. To everyone but the lover the image of the beloved is banal, trivial, flat.

I must sneak up on our love in the hope of being able to pounce upon it unawares.

Yes, I write about ‘love’. What can you do with such a trite word? But I know of no other that can better describe the relationship between you and me.

Love!

I have — no, we — have just as much right to this word as anyone else, even if, in the legal sense, ours is an educator’s criminal contact with an under-age student.

And it’s true, I made use of every trick, every connivance, to protect and preserve what was growing between us. I became strong, damned strong. I found strength within me I hadn’t guessed even existed. No one would touch my love for you. No one would maul our feelings.

Absolutely no one.

But at the same time I am mortally afraid. I tremble with anxiety at every confrontation with the world around us. Externally ice-cold, internally trembling. The price for this I am permitted to pay later, but it’s really only a continuation, an extension of the Janus state of my childhood and youth, this unbearable and absurd masquerade in which I have to play the fool’s double rôle, always expecting and fearing the fatal cue:

Now we’ve got him!