I am a nostalgic, a sentimentalist. I enjoy weeping as I remember all of this. And I’m convinced that the need for tears is genuine. There are things that are worth defending. Worth remembering. Worth treasuring. Worth sharing with others.

As Polly Grimwade, my wise American friend, told me in Ireland, “Oh, Jens, you melancholy Dane, you are, too, quite able to love!”

Yes, I can love. And I will love. I loved you for twelve years and I love you still. But is it the boy you were whom I love? Or the man you became? Or is it really something entirely different?

Tell me, you wise people who read this book, can one be in love with his own affection? And if that is so, can one be satisfied?

“TOO LESS MONEY” I read in the panicky telegram you send me a couple of days after I reach Budapest — and three days before you yourself are due to arrive.

And I’m supposed to have taught you English!

It’s too late to do anything about it now. I can only wait. You must solve your own money problems, my boy. But you make me damned nervous.

I begin to realise what it means to take responsibility. Oh, but we’re cunning, you and I. Officially we have nothing to do with one another. You’re neither my pupil nor my protégé any longer. I’ve abdicated my old rôle as your teacher.

I’m a free-lance writer now.

And, strangely enough, now that we’re officially unconnected, we become closer than ever before.

I wait for you, my beloved.

I wait in my friends’ house in Budapest, listening to all the noises which rise within it as from a dark cave. My
home and country — and, in a couple of days, your headquarters at the Akadémia Utca, in Pest, on the left bank of the Danube.

I arrive late at night. I awaken the hazmester, the porter who after 11 p.m. is charged with letting people in. He comes to the door in his dressing gown. I give him ten forint — too much, but hazmesters in Budapest must be treated with caution. This one, with his large, nasty Alsatian, is always finding pretexts to prowl around grumbling about control and the police.

“Nem ertem,” (I don’t understand) I say and smile cautiously.

“Kontrolle,” he says, “viele Kontrolle!”

“Yes, yes,” I say.


“Nem,” I say.


“Nem,” I say again.


He shakes his head.

So do I.

We stand there together shaking our heads.

“Ich komme,” he says, and leaves me. I smile. And now I’m alone and restless in my friends’ odd apartment: they’re in Scandinavia so I can do what I want.

I open the inner shutters onto the street, but the sun never reaches this far down and in. I spy in my friends’ closets and drawers, but I soon grow tired of that. I absent-mindedly browse in some of their books, but I can’t concentrate. I wander restlessly about this old cave of a Hungarian writer’s den — an old office fixed over into a flat, with doors thickly padded in leather tacked in place by brass studs. The doorknobs are also of brass.
A place in Budapest: by inviting myself I’ve saved money. In the sitting room there’s a sofa that converts into a bed with more than enough room for two.

Our first double bed.

O Joy!

Then I flee to the city and walk around waiting for you, registering all its colours, sounds, smells. I buy a note-pad. I jot down impressions of everything.

I walk through streets, through parks, across plazas. I walk in circles. I pass the Palace Hotel, my old lodging. I cross the Dza Plain — Stalin Plain in my day, but now only the plinth is left after the statue was hauled away. I go into Vadam Park, the local Tivoli, Benczur Utca, my old place of work...

I walk and walk, and think about how I will show you everything!

I stroll about in Buda among the old houses. I think, here there had once been war. I cautiously cross the bridges over the Danube, longing for you to comfort me in my increasing fear of heights. And I walk under the old royal palace, Vár Castle, now almost completely transformed into the new Temple of Culture. I move along the quay, registering the lovers on the steps, riverboats gliding past. The Danube is yellow and brown and black. I’ve never seen it blue...

I walk everywhere: in Buda’s gardens, on Pest’s stones, amid Csepel’s steel, with its machines and fire — the old places. Yes, here I once stood, and there, too. The university quarter. The square in front of Parliament. Stadium. And Géllert Castle, the Isle of Margit, the baths. I prefer Lukács...

And know you would like it.

I walk all over the city. The days are long; the nights hurt. Why do I always go to pieces around midnight? Rain falls on nocturnal Budapest. I’m infiltrating myself into the
town, or so I believe. I want to penetrate farther, deeper. I walk along the river. And I register the lovers, the other lovers, scurrying off in the gentle rain, seeking cover in stacked lumber, logs, sheds, under canvas. Those other lovers become shadows, invisible, inaudible: fluttering wings among the stones. I turn up my face toward the sky and drink. The rain is silver in the light of the street lamps...

Oh, this town of night!
I die of yearning.

Before you — before love — I used to hunt in this city with eyes open, nostrils sensing: odour of iron, soot, sperm, blood, the rotten stench of the market halls, leaves in mulch. I brush against it. But can I recognise it now? Dirt. Something isn’t there, something’s hidden, something has gone forever. I cannot hate or love it. I cannot roll in it. Maybe it’s also lost its significance...

Come! Hurry! Take my hand!

I walk beside the Parliament building. The sentries on the balustrade glide into the wall. The red stars shine. Everything in its proper place. A gigantic square, statues, flowers, trees, now a streetcar stop. Now no people...

But then?
Who fired the first shot?
Does it matter, now?

Who hanged whom on the trees of the boulevard? Whom did we talk about when we talked?


The people in Budapest...

In this book I have only marginally touched on what we call politics. But I know that the world, the whole world, perhaps especially the political world, is with us in our story. That the concrete truth is with us wherever we travel, you and I. That the outer world is in us when we love, when we quarrel, when we talk, when we laugh,
when we kiss each other, when we sleep close together, when we awake to new days, new possibilities; always, always, it is in us and exactly on account of my love for you and your love for me, the world as we see and know it becomes total and far more transparent and amenable to change than before.

The waiter in the night restaurant remembers me: “How are you, sir?” He ran away in 1956, hence the English. Sometimes the beer is called Delibab (mirage). I sit squeezed at a corner table. Music. Hungary’s authentic violins? Not at all. Accordion, piano. It’s schrammelmuzik. The policeman at the door is waiting for his fight. “Too much drink” says the waiter. I make a note. I write down everything. I fill my note-pad. I’m a leech. I suck blood, need blood, Magyars’, proletarians’ blood; I need them and their blood, to go in between their bodies, thighs, arses, licking sweat from warm muscles, sucking blood from red arteries — I, the Danish leech...

But tomorrow you will come!

And soon the restaurant will close. I will get up and go. The waiter will say, in English, “Good night, sir.” The fountain in the square will be turned off. But dawn will come...

You will come.

And when you come, my beloved, we will eat gulyás, drink wine and pálinka, eat our way through soup cooked with chicken, with fat carp; we will pile the bones on the table, the chickens’ the crabs’, grab toothpicks and clean our teeth before the next course: pörkölt which we will mistake for gulyás, páprikás with thick sour cream, pigs in abundance, sheep in flocks, fish in shoals, mountains of pancakes, large and round and baked in seething grease, wine on the table, water in the siphon, stewed fruit and cakes, fruits from the garden and water-melons in large red slices...
We will go to the country among flowers and grain. The villages: we’ll visit them: dust and sun and grain and yellow churches, caves, stones and people who greet us, and a lonely Hungarian cow. We’ll lift our feet among ducks, geese and children and those insane turkey-chicks with tail-feathers that bristle. We will hear pigeons coo, cocks crow. And flies will be everywhere — in the toilets, on us, in the kitchen tureens.

We will visit the apricot growers in the orchards, melon farmers in the fields. We will put to them our foolish questions about apricots, socialism and melons. And the boys and the girls will hand us the sweetest, the reddest, because we’re called Kim and Jens and have come all the way from Denmark.

But first, my beloved, I will take an early morning trolley to the Keleti train station, and the trolley will smell foul and it will rain. A man with a note-pad in his pocket and high hopes in his heart will hop off the tram and spring over a puddle and run, and I will laugh because he’s ridiculous. And it will be morning, I will have a headache, a stomach ache, that’s the price of the night before, it will be morning and a cognac always helps, and there I will stand on the platform when the train comes in...

“Kim, Kim!”

I see you first. You hang out the window squinting. Now you see me and spread out both of your arms.

Beckoning. Yelling
Smiling hugely.
Laughing.
Yes, you’ve arrived. We’ve arrived.
Finally.

“Well, what did you tell them at home?” I ask, somewhat anxiously from old habit, having settled into the
expensive hotel room we’ve been forced to pay for in advance in order to get you into the country.

“I told them I was going on a trip to Germany with a friend,” you answer.
“You’re sure they didn’t suspect anything?”
“Absolutely.”
“And what about your principal? Didn’t he say anything?”
You grin. “Well, he did warn me about you.”
“What!” I exclaim, scared.
“He advised me not to become too attached to someone like you.”
“What do you mean?”
“Well, I don’t think he was referring to that,” you answer. “He just said that as author and artist you had to go your own way and it would be dangerous for me to think I could follow you if I wanted to get a decent education.”

I take a deep breath of relief.
“That was all?”
“What were you thinking?”
“The worst,” I sigh, but catch myself.

Why summon up the devil — or for that matter your principal — from hundreds of kilometres away?
Instead I laugh and say, “In any case, here you are sitting in the Béke Hotel in Budapest. Do you know what Béke means?”

“Nope. And I’m not sitting, I’m dancing — look!”
“What’s that supposed to be?”
“The czárdás,” you shout and hop like a madman around the swank hotel room.

“Béke means peace,” I explain. “But I suppose peace for me is over, now.”

“Yes, it’s all over because I am so glad, so glad, so glad to be with my Jens in Budapest!” you howl.
"Stop! You're off key!"
"In Budapest there'll be no rest...!"

And you dance, or whatever one might call it, in front of me and throw your arms around me and give me a kiss.
"Tomorrow you'll move over with me to the Akadémia Utca. And then we'll have two whole weeks together."
"Does that mean I've got to sleep alone tonight?" you ask, looking extremely offended.
"We'll find a way, Kim," I answer, then add, "Come. I'll show you the town."
"Yes," you say eagerly, and give me another kiss, this one on the nose. "Let's go out on the town and have shit-fun!"

And we do go out on the town, you and I. We go out on the town, out in the world, Kim, my beloved, to have shit-fun — but also, and most importantly, to see if our love can endure...

Even in exile.
If you enjoyed this book:

SINGULARITIES, BOOK ONE

by Robert Campbell

A collection of short stories which Gore Vidal calls "Interesting enough to be banned in Texas!"

Robert Campbell, whose name will be familiar to readers of the Panthology and Acolyte Reader volumes, had a most varied talent. He could the adopt voice of a redneck preacher, a small-town embittered cynic, a naive Caribbean Island boy, a middle class Midwestern American teenager. He was as at ease writing about East Africa as about his own American Middle South.

In Singularities you will meet two boys struggling with their gay consciousness, observe the formalised dance of courtship and power politics at a Southern military school, get to know two American black boys, one in East Africa, one in Texas, and a 14-year-old psychopath as beautiful as he is deadly.

Perhaps Campbell's most amusing achievement is Ruth van Miller, a wonderfully liberal bleeding hearts columnist who actually gives the kind of good, sensible advice to sexually troubled teenagers they hunger for but which cuts completely cross-grain to the modern purveyors of the Freudeo-Christian sex ethic. The letters she receives and the way she deals with them make up a sort of footnote that runs throughout this original and entertaining book.

Robert Campbell died in a plane crash in June 1989. The Acolyte Press hopes to bring out another volume of his stories soon.
ST. MATTHEWS PASSION

by Jared Bunda

Bobby is a neglected 14-your-old, packed off to boarding schools by his improvident mother — and just as quickly returned when the bills aren’t paid. Anthony is a scion of the English aristocracy. They end up as roommates in St. Matthews, and at that distinguished old British public school, they fall in love.

This is the tale of that love, of Bobby’s struggles, as an American lad, to find acceptance with his English classmates, of “candy striping” and other brutal games played by the older boys on the younger. Jared Bunda writes about boys are they really are, how they talk, how they deal with the great storms of happiness, sadness, anger, love and lust which sweep through their growing bodies and minds.

But behind all the exuberant rough talk and play, this is an intensely romantic tale. “At school, friendship is a passion,” wrote Benjamin Disraeli. “What earthquakes of the heart and whirlwinds of the soul are combined in that simple phrase, a schoolboy’s friendship!” Jared Bunda, with remarkable delicacy and sensitivity, explores these passions in all their glory and grief, their sensuality, their sexuality, in one of the most moving, warmhearted books about love between boys to appear in the last decade.
DANCE OF THE WARRIORS

by Kevin Esser

The middle of the 21st Century. Medieval Christian militarism has reduced America to a dispirited province of failing crops and decaying cities. Gays and boy-lovers are packed off to the Camps in Utah, never to return. The only rebels are 'vags', young male members of a warrior cult living in such wastelands as the abandoned reaches of North Chicago.

This is the ultimately uplifting odyssey of two boys, 13-year-old Teddy and his great Chicano friend Cisco, who must fight their way through epic battles toward freedom.

"Kevin Esser's Dance of the Warriors is totally hot. It kicks ass, and should be treasured as one of the very few members of that gorgeous hybrid set of radical porno queer SF novels, an exclusive genre presided over by Uncle Bill Burroughs and including Sam Delaney and myself... and that's about it. All right! VAG POWER!" — Hakim Bey, author of Crowstone

"I suspect this book will become the man-boy love statement and a sort of rallying cry to the masses. I've certainly been feeling the urge to scrawl 'VAG POWER' on every wall I see." — Camilla
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