Am I exaggerating? Idealising? I'm an incurable romantic. Typical of me to put such a slant on things. It is I who am transforming this into an idyll, I who will my lonely teacher's den into a warm room welcoming real people, you and me...

Good lord, how silly can one get?

You yawn and stretch. Actually you just look sleepy. I re-fill my glass. I cannot let you depart. I cannot bear the thought of being left alone in this empty house. I need people around me, a place to go to, a bar, two bars, a hundred. And people. People to talk to. You get to your feet slowly, hitch up your trousers, look around.

"I really have to start back home," you tell me.

"No, wait!" I say, too sharply, but that's the way I mean it. "Only a little while. We were just becoming comfortable. It's not all that late."

"We get up early in the morning," you say with a yawn, but sit back down like an obedient student.

"Well, I can stay in bed as long as I want, and I really think out there they'll indulge you and let you sleep past your usual rising time."

"And if I want to get up early?"

"That, obviously, is something else," I say, "but..."

I must invent something to hold you here as long as possible. Clearly I have reached a moment of truth — without daring to say what that truth really is.

What shall I do?

I rise from my chair. You sit and stare at me blankly, face swollen with fatigue but still beautiful, incredibly beautiful. Standing in that corner of half-darkness, I contemplate you. Through the whole of last winter I have contemplated you, observed you secretly month after month. I've never tired of looking at you. Now I see you full-face, just as I saw you in profile that first day, and I know the significance of that initial vision. You are in my
blood. A flame, a fire. I can no longer run away, as I could have then. And why should I have to?

You raise your eyes and for a short, intense second they answer mine. You let your eyes yield. I stagger. I am actually drunk, more drunk than I realise. Suddenly I cannot resist: I reel and stagger the two or three steps over to the sofa...

"Kim," I say.
My voice is hoarse.
"Kim!"

I collapse heavily at your side. You sit completely still. Perhaps paralysed? — I haven’t the foggiest notion; I don’t care. No, that’s not quite true. I am vaguely aware of the damage I am doing, but it doesn’t seem to matter, now that the comfort of my teacher’s den has gone. Now that it is full of unrest, tension, anxiety.

And lechery. And the lechery comes only from my side. It coils in my body. My cock is stiff. I don’t know what I’m doing...

I take your hand.
"Kim," I repeat in a whisper, imploring, begging for something you are utterly unable to give.

Alarm bells sound crazily in my head, warning lights blink on and off before my eyes.

Watch out! Watch out!

What am I doing?

You don’t withdraw your hand. You don’t move away. You do nothing at all. You just sit there completely still while, for a few short, eternally long seconds, I keep your limp hand in mine, a hand far too big for your slender body. It is cool, neutral, utterly without response.

"Oh, Kim," I mumble huskily, "I’m so very, very happy now I’ve got to know you...."

With infinite caution I squeeze your fingers, but your fingers are dead among mine.
"I'm so..." I begin again, but stop short in an awkward attempt to lift my other arm, the left, and lay it around your shoulders, those shoulders covered in light blue behind which I have so often stopped the past winter in class.

"I like you so very, very much," I say, on the verge of tears.

You don't move. You don't respond.

Like a little captured animal you sit there for a moment as if paralysed by a sudden and unexpected danger.

Only your fallow-deer's eye is blazing.

Then suddenly you free yourself and quickly rise. Your body trembles. Your eyes are dark with unrest.

Now I see it. For the first time.

"I have to go."

Your light voice has grown hoarser. You lick your lips and force the words out.

"I have to go now," you repeat.

"No, no," I weep. "Don't go. Not yet."

"You are tired, Mr. Eisenhardt," you say evenly.

"I am not tired, I'm just drunk. Oh, Kim, there's something I have to tell you. Kim, are you listening?"

You have started putting on your things.

I collapse on the sofa. Vacant. Downcast. Alone. I almost had you in my arms. I've inhaled your odour. I might have kissed your cheek, your eye, your blue-grey, fallow-deer's eye. You are so young, so very young! Exactly. Can't I understand what I am dealing with? No, I understand nothing. There is only one thought in my head, only one great, warm, tender feeling in my body. I like you, I need you, I love you.

This is impossible.

You have put on your wind-jacket, your scarf and your cap. Now you move silently toward the door.
"No, Kim, don't go, don’t go!" I whine. "Wait. First I have to tell you something. It’s important. Are you listening?"

"You're just tired, Mr. Eisenhardt," you repeat.

"Tired? Just tired? Yes, maybe that too. Maybe you’re right..."

"I have to go now."

But you stand at the door. Your voice is so light and calm. So soft. As if you wanted to console me. Then, you aren’t afraid? No, you can’t be. You are still there, my Kim. You haven’t fled from me in terror.

The heavens, after all, haven’t collapsed about our ears.

Suddenly I see everything in crystal clarity. The room. The candles. The bottles. The curtains drawn. A record turning on the player. The ashtrays. The orange peels. The chocolate candy wrappers. And you, the boy who is waiting with his hand on the door-knob, loyally waiting while I, the grown-up, your teacher, can get himself together and become his old self again.

Myself?

You are right. What I tried to do in a fit of desire was juvenile, crass. No one could in decency behave that way. It was horrid, it was loathsome, it was impermissible.

And yet, have I really done anything more than tell you I liked you?

Have I?

You open the door. I slowly rise and follow you out. Suddenly we both stiffen. Light is coming from under my neighbour the schoolmistress’s door. Inside a radio is playing. She must have come back without our hearing her. You understand immediately. We do not need to communicate by any word or sign. We both sense the danger and tip-toe past the door and out into the yard where you have leaned your bike against the house.
In the dim outside light I try to catch your eye, but your eyes are dark and they refuse to engage. You swing up onto the bike. I grasp the handlebars.

"Kim," I whisper as quietly as I can, "you'll have to forgive me. I'm sorry. You're right. I've had too much to drink. We've talked too much. Forgive me, Kim."

But you are far, far away.

"You're not mad at me, are you?"

You shake your head. From far, far away.

"But then..." Suddenly I am terrified. "Then I'll ask you to forget about all of this. Keep it between the two of us. Will you promise me that?"

How deep can one sink? How completely can I disgrace myself?

You move in the saddle, eager to be off. I have to release you...

But bless me, bless me, my angel; I will not let you go into the darkness before you bless me!

What can you say? Too much has already been said. Here I'm stomping around in this impossible situation with my over-grown grown-up feet! All you can say is nothing. With a timid little goodbye, you disappear into the night.

WAVES OF ANGUISH

There's never been anything the matter with my imagination, especially when it's turned loose on the possibility of disaster.

I awake with a start.

What have I done?

In this early morning the whole horror hits me at once. The vision of a little animal trembling between my hands hounds me out of the darkness and into day.

This isn't just a monster from the unconscious. It's no nightmare. Suddenly I'm aware of real danger.

Good God, how could I have been so stupid?
I drag myself out of bed and look with loathing at my face in the mirror. As soon as you’d left I’d poured that hideous sweet sherry into me, neck of the bottle plugged into my mouth. Now the anvils are clanging in my head. My eyes smart. My tongue is coated. My throat is clogged with phlegm. I’m sick with paralysing nausea and disgust with everything, especially myself.


Ugh!

I hurl myself back to bed and abandon myself to a storm of morning sex which doesn’t help at all. The release gives way only to disgust. I feel dirty and sticky and full of fear. Yes, I’m frightened.

The last thing I wanted was to behave toward you like a filthy molester. I wouldn’t dream of seducing you. Liar! I have dreamed of seducing you, but I wouldn’t actually do it. Isn’t that closer to the truth? It’s one thing to dream and yearn, another thing to act like a complete idiot. And drunk, too. What an admirable man I am! Aren’t my inhibitions able to do their job? Shouldn’t my deep love prevent me from thinking of you as some pretty little piece it’s all right to paw? I sincerely, truly like you. And above all I don’t want to hurt you.

Hurt you?

Yes, that’s the way it appears to me now, so cowed am I. The horrible image I have of myself is of a horny satyr attacking and trying to rape an innocent little boy.

What if you tell someone? But what can you tell? That I held your hand and said I liked you? That proves absolutely nothing. No, but it wouldn’t take much to compromise me publicly. Once awakened, suspicion would never be lulled back to sleep. And no one would come to me and tell me what was happening. I can see exactly how it would go: in all innocence you let a couple of words slip to our gym teacher, our gym teacher talks to our
principal, our principal talks to your principal in Child-Care, your principal calls in the police...

Stop it!

Nothing happened. No, but maybe I’ve frightened you. Maybe at this very moment you are so tormented with fear that you must unburden yourself, confide in someone. No, no, damnit, why would you have to say anything at all? You aren’t just an ordinary stupid brat. You are a sweet boy, an unusual boy, an intelligent boy. You like me, I’m certain of that.

But if...

Yes, if that happens, I’ll deny everything, absolutely everything. The boy is lying, I’ll say. There is no truth in him.

The early morning agonies of hell.

“AH, MR. EISENHARDT,” our principal calls, “do you have a moment?”

I’ve already seen the car with the two plain-clothesmen — I know what I can expect. It is a couple of days after the Easter holidays. My Danish class for the eight-month students has just ended. Our principal is waiting for me in the corridor outside the classroom.

“It’s about Kim,” he says.

I nod silently. I cannot speak. I am knotted with fear. My legs start to give way. I hold myself up by clinging to the radiator knob under the window and look dully out into the school yard. The car with the two men is still there. I’d spotted it the instant it arrived, near the end of my class. It was all I could do to finish what I was writing at the blackboard. One of the men — a typical cop: tweed jacket, pipe — climbed out of the car, looked around inquiringly and went over to the principal’s residence. A little later he returned with our principal himself. And now it has happened...
It was to be expected. Every time, since that Easter Sunday disaster, a strange car has driven into the school grounds, my first thought is, Here they come — at last. So now I’m not in the least surprised.

But I am afraid.

At the same time I know I’ll fight. They won’t get me all that easily. We’ll go up to our principal’s office and these gentlemen in plain clothes will grill me, politely but firmly, to discover the truth. Which is that you, this youth, this boy, this child, this under-age student, this fourteen-year-old Kim Steffensen from Valby, you have told them all about me, how I, your adviser, your teacher...

But nothing happened! The words scream inside my head.

How can that help me now?

Be that as it may, information has been received of an attempted abuse of authority. I’d tried to take advantage of my greater age and experience...

I see my safe little school world crumbling before me in ruins. I see those warm, amiable people among whom I live, colleagues and friends, transformed into adversaries and enemies, all because of one word from you.

In the last several days I have told myself over and over again I must talk to you. I must make sure you aren’t gossiping, that you are keeping quiet. But I’ve procrastinated. In truth, I simply haven’t dared.

And now it is too late.

“Kim’s principal phoned me this morning,” says our principal, and by the tone of his voice I know what is coming.

“Yes?”

That’s all I can get out. My mouth is dry. Bile rises in my throat. I’m clinging to the radiator handle so hard my knuckles have turned white.
Outside in the school yard the two men sit in the car and glance through some papers.

My case file?

Our principal says something I don’t understand. I have to ask him to repeat it.

“We can keep him,” he says. “The Department has given its approval.”

“Department?”

“Yes, that’s why Kim’s principal phoned. I couldn’t wait to tell you. After all, you’re the one who’s had the most to do with him.”

Out in the school yard the two men put their papers away. The one behind the wheel starts the motor.

“That’s... That’s very nice,” I stammer.

“When you get a chance you might phone Kim and tell him the good news. He’s a little anxious, I’ve seen...”

I nod.

“Yes, I’ll do that,” I say.

The car with the two men starts and backs out of the school yard.

“Kim makes twenty-one in our new ten-month programme, so things are looking up, aren’t they?”

“Yes they are.”

The car drives off.

“Well... that was all.”

As is his habit, our principal remains standing even though he has finished his business. I feel... No, I don’t know how I feel. But I have to ask:

“Who were those people in that car?”

“Oh, you mean the surveyors. They show up at the damndest times. Apparently there’s some sort of major project under way.”

Now I can smile at him.

“I’m glad this thing has worked out for Kim. He visited
me, you know, over Easter, and I really think he is serious and eager to get something out of our programme.”

“Yes,” says our principal. It seems he is finally about to leave. “We’ll enjoy having him with us.”

I can only agree.

“ONE MOMENT, MR. EISENHARDT, I shall see if he is in.”

Our gym teacher’s old mother puts down the receiver. I can hear her walk out of the room and call you. I’m still afraid. Even though I have the best excuse in the world for talking to you, I have no idea how you’ll react.

I will soon find out.

“Hello?”

Your light, slightly hoarse voice seems so little and despondent. Are you, too, afraid?

“Is that Kim?” I ask. Out of nervousness I go into my grown-up routine: I am to greet you from your principal and our principal and tell you arrangements have been completed for you to remain with us through the next school year.

“Oh, that’s great!” you exclaim. The joy is unmistakably genuine.

“Yes, isn’t it? Here we’re all very glad, too. Everything else is all right?”

“Yes, thanks, everything’s fine.”

“Are you coming in on Friday for the farewell party for your class?”

“Yes, I’ll be there.”

“And you’re well?”

“I am, thanks, and you?”

“Fine, thank you.”

I’m almost unable to go on. I squeeze the telephone and hear my voice on the verge of breaking.
“Well, that was all I called you about, what I just told you. You had to know right away. Say hello to the family out there for me. See you.”
“‘Yes,’” you say, “‘see you.’”
“‘Goodbye, Kim,’” I say.
“‘Goodbye,’” you say.
And I go up to my room and weep.

FRIDAY, A LITTLE before noon and just after I’ve changed my clothes, there is a knock on the door.
“‘Come in,’” I call, adjusting my Windsor knot in front of the mirror.

The door opens. It’s you.
We stare at each other. I cannot guess what you are thinking. I only know that right away I feel enormously relieved. Your face is blank, mouth a bit sulky.
But I am no longer afraid.
“‘Hello,’” you say. “‘I thought I’d just come by before we go.’”
“‘Well, first let’s go down and enjoy your banquet.’”
“‘There’ll be an awful lot of people,’” you say.
What he means slowly sinks in. I am so glad! But I just can’t keep quiet.
“‘You must excuse what happened the other night.’ I’m not looking at you. Instead I stand at the window and watch our two principals walking down to the dining hall.
You don’t say anything.
“‘We’ll forget about it, right?’”
I look at you, and now you nod.
So I take a deep breath and start fresh. “‘Actually I have something for you,’” I say, leaving the window and going over to my desk. “‘I know how you like to read, so I thought maybe you’d get some small pleasure out of these over the holidays.’”
I hand you a package. You take it, surprised but at the same time pleased. I hope you won’t see in my gift the bribe it really is.

You tear off the wrapping.

‘‘Hans Christian Andersen’s Fairy-tales!’’ you cry enthusiastically. ‘‘Oh, that’s wonderful, Mr. Eisenhardt. Thanks a million!’’

‘‘I suspected you might like them,’’ I mumble, embarrassed by your spontaneous joy, ‘‘and so I thought, with this nice new paperback edition...’’

You come to me and put out your hand.

‘‘I’m pleased as hell!’’ you tell me, then, realizing what you’ve said, ‘‘Oh, excuse me... I mean...’’

You shake your head and smile, every bit as uncertain as I. So, characteristically, you repeat yourself, just to make sure:

‘‘Thanks a million!’’

They don’t call you ‘‘The Thankster’’ for nothing.

‘‘Well, we better catch up with the others,’’ I say brusquely in a vain attempt to hide my emotion.

How I want to give you just the slightest pat on the shoulders!

But I won’t risk even that.

And then the triangle rings down in the school yard, sounding the official end of the eight-month students’ term. Their parents have been invited. The students themselves have decorated the dining hall for the celebration. By ingenious maneuvering I manage to sit at your side. Or is it you who makes sure you sit by me?

Afterwards we all say our goodbyes, milling around in a big mess.

‘‘Thanks for the winter,’’ you say, and warmly shake my hand.

‘‘Same here, Kim. See you soon.’’

‘‘Yes,’’ you say, ‘‘see you soon.’’
“QUIT FIDDLING WITH MY TYPEWRITER!” I tell you for the thousandth time.

You make a face.

“And stop it now.”

“Are you mad?”

“No, I’m not mad. Not at all. But you have to realise that isn’t a toy. It’s an implement, it’s my tool. What are you grinning at?”

“You.”

“At me? Well, maybe I am just a big joke,” I say acidulously and smile at you.

October winds pick up the yellow and brown leaves and whirl them around my new little house. Outside my picture window the hill lies black and sear under the stormy skies. My willow tree streams wildly south in the wind, a broad stripe of water glistening between and beyond its branches. Not the fjord but the cove; the fjord is on the other side, to the north-west. If I rise from my chair I can see it through the narrow oblong window above my green sofa. On the other side of the road, where burned-off fields slope down to the beach and the sea-wall, red tractors are moving to and fro, ploughs turning the soil, flocks of greedy seagulls following the long furrows.

Yes, the wind whistles and roars around my new little house.

Outside, October storm. Inside, comfort.

We write poetry.

That is to say, you write poetry. I stay in the background with my book and my pipe. You have proposed in the new student council that your group put on a musical review during the weeks you are ‘studying agriculture’, as we call it.

As teacher, I’ve had nothing to do with the project. Officially.

“What rhymes with ‘swine’?” you ask.
"Now what's the matter?"
"Well, I can't think of anything."
"Of course you can."
"You don't want to help me?"
"You're the one who's writing this script, not me. It was your idea."
"Damnit all, it was your idea!"
"Sssh, we can't say that. Officially it's one hundred percent your show."
"Wait, man, I have it, I have it!" you suddenly howl.
"Listen:

And when we saw the Funen swine,
They made us laugh, they made us whine.

Don't you think that's good?"
"No!"
"Then you think up something better, for God's sake! I'm not writing any more poetry."
You throw the ball-point away and glare up at the ceiling.
"Okay, let me have a look at it."
"Will you?"
"All right, but this is just between you and me, right?"
"Agreed," you say magnanimously. "But you've got to admit you're a little more professional than the rest of us."
"Thank you."
And we begin.

YES, I AM a bit more professional than you. In the past summer I have finally finished the story of my childhood under the German occupation, and it has been accepted for publication as a book and will be produced as a radio play. As a matter of fact, a good deal has happened in those months when we were apart. Among other things, you turned fifteen. I surreptitiously peeped in our principal's
files and discovered your birthday is in July. So, with many doubts and misgivings, and just as many hesitations, I sent you another Hans Christian Andersen book. You thanked me in a nice little letter — without spelling mistakes, I was proud to see. And so...

No, I could never tell you this. The day I received your letter I sneaked upstairs into the deserted boys’ dormitory, stole into your old room. In your closet I found the khaki overalls you always wore when you helped out at the farm. I undressed and crawled into them, as though it were a new skin. I got in your bed. I made love to you at a distance of several hundred kilometres, longing only to be absolutely sure that the sharp, rich odours in the cloth were really yours.

And later I moved into my own little house with its study, bedroom, kitchenette, entrance hall and bathroom.

A happy change from last year’s noisy teacher’s den at the foot of the stairs.

I thrived. I yearned.

The whole summer I waited for you in my new house.

My books occupy the wall at the end of the room. Posters and reproductions decorate the other walls. I especially like my colour litho of a Braque with two small, elegant fish. And, of course, Picasso’s nude boy with the horse: he is so tanned and gentle. He reminds me of you. I have put him up over my bed.

I live quite close to the students’ dormitory, between the fields and the path that leads down through the vegetable garden to the school courtyard. My little wooden house has a front terrace from which I can look out over the countryside and talk to people on the path. Yet inside it is cleverly designed to shut out the mass of humanity. This is a place where I can work in peace. But... except to the school’s community of cats, which come in all sizes, ages, colours and temperaments and live in the crawl space under
the floor, the front door into the entry hall is always open. It works like a magnet, my little house. Something is always going on inside its thin walls. My living-room isn’t just a work place for me: it’s also a sort of club centre, work shop, classroom and whatever.

And now a place to write poetry in as well.

"Tell me, frankly, what you think of this," you say, and brake into something like singing.

"Help! Stop it! You’re off key!"

"Really? I just can’t tell," you say, surprised.

"No, that’s just the point. Let’s put a record on. And what about a cup of tea? I need something to pick me up after all these poetics!"

YOU HAVE NOW BEEN here more than a month. And we’ve begun well. When I say well I mean well. I’m teaching well, far better, it seems to me, than before. Something is happening. There’s a sense of movement. I’m inspired as I have never been in the past.

Remarkable, isn’t it?

And I’ve made a trip to Odense to hash over progressive education with my progressive pedagogue friends: new teaching methods, new and exciting ideas.

"Divide them into groups," they advised. "Give them group projects. Let them try to figure out how to go about their work co-operatively. They’ll have to get together on things like a pair of scissors, a tube of glue, a dictionary. They’ll learn a lot about themselves, and about working with others."

And so I’m trying it.

We fill the classrooms with newspapers, reference books, film strips, everything we can think of. We prepare plates, workbooks. We make displays. We canvass the parish and interview the town clerk, the priest, the co-op manager, the head teacher, fishermen down in the harbour and, of course,
the farmers. We discuss such subjects as THE UNITED NATIONS, THE NEWSPAPER, AFRICA. And sometimes we join the tables into a square and hold a forum. Yes, things are moving. When I walk about through our humming groups I no longer feel that all those old Pioneers of Education, with their goatees and sideburns, are threatening to tumble off the walls on top of my head but are actually looking down rather kindly on what we are up to.

"Well," you say, "I better get back. Aren’t you going to have supper with us in the dining-room this evening?"

"What’s being served?"

"Stuffed cabbages."

"No. Between you and me, I think I’ll wait until next week."

"Picky eater!" you grin, and you go — no, dash — off through the door, spring over the terrace and run down the path.

But behind, in the gathering twilight, I can still see your fallow-deer’s eye, looking at me.

KIM, CAN YOU REMEMBER those pictures the photographer from south Jutland came up every spring to take of us?

Now, twenty years later, I am looking at one of them. And sixty-three pairs of eyes are looking back at me. These are the people from your second winter at the school, and my fourth. Here are your teachers and my colleagues and friends. Here are your comrades and my students. Here are the girls in the kitchen, the matron. And last but not least, here’s our bombastic incumbent vicar — how did he ever manage to get there on time? And here you are, and here I am. The two of us and all our erstwhile companions. They look at me from this old photo pasted on cardboard. It has turned yellow. The edges are frayed. Strangely enough, I remember all of these people, I remember you,
I remember us, but to me the pictures are useless. Sixty-three portraits looking back at me, each from its own oval. Small islands. Small mirrors. Hello, there. Greetings to you all!

I sit looking at the faces in the ovals ordered around a central rectangle. In the rectangle is our school as it was then. Nothing much to brag about, as our principal’s wife would say. Here she sits in the centre with husband and child. That’s only as it should be. The students are arranged alphabetically: you, Kim, look at me from a point just under our first family. Is this really the way I remember you?

In any case the plain school buildings, forming a square behind the courtyard, did look rather bare and poor. Is that actually all we had? More than half of it, anyhow. In the old free school we finally installed a dining room and kitchen on the right; classrooms, hall, school kitchen and carpentry shop to the left. But for gym, indoor sports and all larger meets, we still had to ask permission from the parish council to use the facilities of the municipal school down in the village.

It’s the building permit we were waiting for.

The school really was larger than that. One cannot see in the picture the old grey residence on the hill where you students slept in two groups, girls on the ground floor and boys above, and where I, too, at first had my room at the foot of the stairs — until I moved into my little house, which is also not shown in the photo.

Nor can you see the principal’s new residence, first of the buildings that eventually sprang up but which didn’t near completion, either, in my, or I should say in our time.

I sit here looking at this relic from those days and see it hasn’t preserved the truth very well. Photographs freeze things: this is the way it was! But no, never; it wasn’t only like that: it was more. Photographs terrorize the memory.
I can only rely on myself. Which isn’t much. But I must believe that my inner eye sees more clearly, its view is sharper, cuts closer to the truth....
Yet it can also reel before such a backward glance. Become dazzled as memory overwhelms. Then I must rely on the courage of my feelings.

I AM HEAD OVER HEELS in love.
But that’s absurd. It cannot be.
Yes, but it is. And I, after all, have to be the best judge.
But, Jens, you must be insane, I tell myself.
All right, I answer. Let me be insane: I’m in love.
But...
No buts! Good God, I’m twenty-nine, in the full flood of life. Is it, then, so astounding that I’m in love? People go around falling in love all the time. People meet and sweet music rises in their hearts. All the world loves a lover...
Okay, but not a lover like you!
Even so, I love him.
Impossible. He is a boy.
So what?
You can’t love a boy.
Why can’t I?
In any case, you can’t make love to a boy.
Oh, can’t I?
You’re mad, I tell myself.
I love him.
Yes, but he’s your student.
So what?
You are his teacher.
I am. So what?
The truth is you just don’t dare. You backed off after that — misunderstanding — last Easter. Nothing happened,
thanks to him and not to you. Wouldn’t it be rather stupid to try to get something going again?

But I love him so! I answer myself. I love him, and he must never, never know.

This thought seems bearable, at least. Yes, obviously I must resign myself. I’ve done it often before. It is enough for me that you are simply there all the time. At least that is what I make myself believe. And where else could you be? As long as we are teacher and student at the same school how can we be parted? That is some comfort.

So it’s just a question of making this arrangement last as long as possible.

“LISTEN TO ME!” I shout. “Kim, that means you, too. Huh? Well, okay, but that’ll be the last peep out of you, the very last. Oh, no, my friend, don’t try to make me laugh — because you might succeed...”

You little bastard!

No, that was last year. Now you are grown up. You look at your watch and say, “Well, I better be off with the others.”

Now I’m the one who forgets about your bedtime.

Nevertheless...

You are a child.

What is a child?

You are a child, according to the law.

Okay, but what’s a law?

In class...

No, I don’t dare think about it...

In class I cannot ever seem to get close enough to you. Your scent of boy. Your faint smell of sweat. Your light blue sweater. The down on your neck. I have to stop behind