

## *Homemade*



I can see now our cramped, overlit bathroom and Connie with a towel draped round her shoulders, sitting on the edge of the bath weeping, while I filled the sink with warm water and whistled - such was my elation - 'Teddy Bear' by Elvis Presley, I can remember, I have always been able to remember, fluff from the candlewick bedspread swirling on the surface of the water, but only lately have I fully realized that if this was the *end* of a particular episode, in so far as real-life episodes may be said to have an end, it was Raymond who occupied, so to speak, the beginning and middle, and if in human affairs there are no such things as episodes then I should really insist that this story is about Raymond and not about virginity, coitus, incest and self-abuse. So let me begin by telling you that it was ironic, for reasons which will become apparent only very much later - and you must be patient - it was ironic that Raymond of all people should want to make me aware of my virginity. On Finsbury Park one day Raymond approached me, and steering me across to some laurel bushes bent and unbent his finger mysteriously before my face and watched me intently as he did so. I looked on blankly. Then I bent and unbent my finger too and saw that it was the right thing to do because Raymond beamed.

'You get it?' he said. 'You get it!' Driven by his

exhilaration I said yes, hoping then that Raymond would leave me alone now to bend and unbend my finger, to come at some understanding of his bewildering digital allegory in solitude. Raymond grasped my lapels with unusual intensity.

'What about it, then?' he gasped. Playing for time, I crooked my forefinger again and slowly straightened it, cool and sure, in fact so cool and sure that Raymond held his breath and stiffened with its motion. I looked at my erect finger and said,

'That depends,' wondering if I was to discover today what it was we were talking of.

Raymond was fifteen then, a year older than I was, and though I counted myself his intellectual superior - which was why I had to pretend to understand the significance of his finger - it was Raymond who *knew* things, it was Raymond who conducted my education. It was Raymond who initiated me into the secrets of adult life which he understood himself intuitively but never totally. The world he showed me, all its fascinating detail, lore and sin, the world for which he was a kind of standing master of ceremonies, never really suited Raymond. He knew that world well enough, but it - so to speak - did not want to know him. So when Raymond produced cigarettes, it was I who learned to inhale the smoke deeply, to blow smoke-rings and to cup my hands round the match like a film star, while Raymond choked and fumbled; and later on when Raymond first got hold of some marihuana, of which I had never heard, it was I who finally got stoned into euphoria while Raymond admitted - something I would never have done myself - that he felt nothing at all. And again, while it was Raymond with his deep voice and wisp of beard who got us into horror films, he would sit through the show with his fingers in his ears and his eyes

shut. And that was remarkable in view of the fact that in one month alone we saw twenty-two horror films. When Raymond stole a bottle of whisky from a supermarket in order to introduce me to alcohol, I giggled drunkenly for two hours at Raymond's convulsive fits of vomiting. My first pair of long trousers were a pair belonging to Raymond which he had given to me as a present on my thirteenth birthday. On Raymond they had, like all his clothes, stopped four inches short of his ankles, bulged at the thigh, bagged at the groin and now, as if a parable for our friendship, they fitted me like tailor-mades, in fact so well did they fit me, so comfortable did they feel, that I wore no other trousers for a year. And then there were the thrills of shoplifting. The idea as explained to me by Raymond was quite simple. You walked into Foyle's bookshop, crammed your pockets with books and took them to a dealer on the Mile End Road who was pleased to give you half their cost price. For the very first occasion I borrowed my father's overcoat which trailed the pavement magnificently as I swept along. I met Raymond outside the shop. He was in shirtsleeves because he had left his coat on the Underground but he was certain he could manage without one anyway, so we went into the shop. While I stuffed into my many pockets a selection of slim volumes of prestigious verse, Raymond was concealing on his person the seven volumes of the Variorum Edition of the Works of Edmund Spenser. For anyone else the boldness of the act might have offered some chance of success, but Raymond's boldness had a precarious quality, closer in fact to a complete detachment from the realities of the situation. The under-manager stood behind Raymond as he plucked the books from the shelf. The two of them were standing by the door as I brushed by with my own load, and I gave Raymond, who still clasped the tomes about him, a

conspiratorial smile, and thanked the under-manager who automatically held the door open for me. Fortunately, so hopeless was Raymond's attempt at shoplifting, so idiotic and transparent his excuses, that the manager finally let him go, liberally assuming him to be, I suppose, mentally deranged.

And finally, and perhaps most significantly, Raymond acquainted me with the dubious pleasures of masturbation. At the time I was twelve, the dawn of my sexual day. We were exploring a cellar on a bomb site, poking around to see what the dossers had left behind, when Raymond, having lowered his trousers as if to have a piss, began to rub his prick with a coruscating vigour, inviting me to do the same. I did and soon became suffused with a warm, indistinct pleasure which intensified to a floating, melting sensation as if my guts might at any time drift away to nothing. And all this time our hands pumped furiously. I was beginning to congratulate Raymond on his discovery of such a simple, inexpensive yet pleasurable way of passing the time, and at the same time wondering if I could not dedicate my whole life to this glorious sensation - and I suppose looking back now in many respects I have - I was about to express all manner of things when I was lifted by the scruff of the neck, my arms, my legs, my insides, haled, twisted, racked, and producing for all this two dollops of sperm which flipped over Raymond's Sunday jacket - it was Sunday - and dribbled into his breast pocket.

'Hey,' he said, breaking with his action, 'what did you do that for?' Still recovering from this devastating experience I said nothing, I could not say anything.

'I show you how to do this,' harangued Raymond, dabbing delicately at the glistening jissom on his dark jacket, 'and all you can do is spit.'

And so by the age of fourteen I had acquired, with

Raymond's guidance, a variety of pleasures which I rightly associated with the adult world. I smoked about ten cigarettes a day, I drank whisky when it was available, I had a connoisseur's taste for violence and obscenity, I had smoked the heady resin of *cannabis sativa* and I was aware of my own sexual precocity, though oddly it never occurred to me to find any use for it, my imagination as yet unnourished by longings or private fantasies. And all these pastimes were financed by the dealer in the Mile End Road. For these acquired tastes Raymond was my Mephistopheles, he was a clumsy Virgil to my Dante, showing me the way to a Paradiso where he himself could not tread. He could not smoke because it made him cough, the whisky made him ill, the films frightened or bored him, the cannabis did not affect him, and while I made stalactites on the ceiling of the bomb-site cellar, he made nothing at all.

'Perhaps,' he said mournfully as we were leaving the site one afternoon, 'perhaps I'm a little too old for that sort of thing.'

So when Raymond stood before me now intently crooking and straightening his finger I sensed that here was yet another fur-lined chamber of that vast, gloomy and delectable mansion, adulthood, and that if I only held back a little, concealing, for pride's sake, my ignorance, then shortly Raymond would reveal and then shortly I would excel.

'Well, that depends.' We walked across Finsbury Park where once Raymond, in his earlier, delinquent days had fed glass splinters to the pigeons, where together, in innocent bliss worthy of the 'Prelude', we had roasted alive Sheila Harcourt's budgerigar while she swooned on the grass nearby, where as young boys we had crept behind bushes to hurl rocks at the couples fucking in the arbour;

across Finsbury Park then, and Raymond saying,

'Who do you know?' Who did I know? I was still blundering, and this could be a change of subject, for Raymond had an imprecise mind. So I said, 'Who do *you* know?' to which Raymond replied, 'Lulu Smith,' and made everything clear - or at least the subject matter, for my innocence was remarkable. Lulu Smith! Dinky Lulu! the very name curls a chilly hand round my balls. Lulu Lamour, of whom it was said she would do anything, and that she had done everything. There were Jewish jokes, elephant jokes and there were Lulu jokes, and these were mainly responsible for the extravagant legend. Lulu Slim - but how my mind reels - whose physical enormity was matched only by the enormity of her reputed sexual appetite and prowess, her grossness only by the grossness she inspired, the legend only by the reality. Zulu Lulu! who - so fame had it - had laid a trail across north London of frothing idiots, a desolation row of broken minds and pricks spanning Shepherds Bush to Holloway, Ongar to Islington. Lulu! Her wobbling girth and laughing piggy's eyes, blooming thighs and dimpled finger-joints, this heaving, steaming leg-load of schoolgirl flesh who had, so reputation insisted, had it with a giraffe, a humming-bird, a man in an iron lung (who had subsequently died), a yak, Cassius Clay, a marmoset, a Mars Bar and the gear stick of her grandfather's Morris Minor (and subsequently a traffic warden).

Finsbury Park was filled with the spirit of Lulu Smith and I felt for the first time ill-defined longings as well as mere curiosity. I knew approximately what was to be done, for had I not seen heaped couples in all corners of the park during the long summer evenings, and had I not thrown stones and water bombs? - something I now superstitiously regretted. And suddenly there in Finsbury

Park, as we threaded our way through the pert piles of dog shit, I was made aware of and resented my virginity; I knew it to be the last room in the mansion, I knew it to be for certain the most luxurious, its furnishings more elaborate than any other room, its attractions more deadly, and the fact that I had never had it, made it, done it, was a total anathema, my malodorous albatross, and I looked to Raymond, who still held his forefinger stiff before him, to reveal what I must do. Raymond was bound to know ...

After school Raymond and I went to a cafe near Finsbury Park Odeon. While others of our age picked their noses over their stamp collections or homework, Raymond and I spent many hours here, discussing mostly easy ways of making money, and drinking large mugs of tea. Sometimes we got talking to the workmen who came there. Millais should have been there to paint us as we listened transfixed to their unintelligible fantasies and exploits, of deals with lorry drivers, lead from church roofs, fuel missing from the City Engineer's department, and then of cunts, bits, skirt, ofstrokings, beatings, fuckings, suckings, of arses and tits, behind, above, below, in front, with, without, ofscratching and tearing, licking and shitting, of juiced cunts streaming, warm and infinite, of others cold and arid but worth a try, ofpricks old and limp, or young and ebullient, ofcoming, too soon, too late or not at all, of how many times a day, of attendant diseases, of pus and swellings, cankers and regrets, of poisoned ovaries and destitute testicles; we listened to who and how the dustmen fucked, how the Co-op milkmen fitted it in, what the coalmen could hump, what the carpet-fitter could lay, what the builders could erect, what the meter man could inspect, what the bread man could deliver, the gas man sniff out, the plumber plumb, the electrician connect, the doctor inject, the lawyer solicit, the furniture man install -

and so on, in an unreal complex of timeworn puns and innuendo, formulas, slogans, folklore and bravado. I listened without understanding, remembering and filing away anecdotes which I would one day use myself, putting by histories of perversions and sexual manners - in fact a whole sexual morality, so that when finally I began to understand, from my own experience, what it was all about, I had on tap a complete education which, augmented by a quick reading of the more interesting parts of Havelock Ellis and Henry Miller, earned me the reputation of being the juvenile connoisseur of coitus to whom dozens of males - and fortunately females, too - came to seek advice. And all this, a reputation which followed me into art college and enlivened my career there, all this after only one fuck - the subject of this story.

So it was there in the cafe where I had listened, remembered and understood nothing that Raymond now relaxed his forefinger at last to curl it round the handle of his cup, and said,

'Lulu Smith will let you see it for a shilling.' I was glad of that. I was glad we were not rushing into things, glad that I would not be left alone with Zulu Lulu and be expected to perform the terrifyingly obscure, glad that the first encounter of this necessary adventure would be reconnaissance. And besides, I had only ever seen two naked females in my life. The obscene films we patronized in those days were nowhere near obscene enough, showing only the legs, backs and ecstatic faces of happy couples, leaving the rest to our tumescent imaginations, and clarifying nothing. As for the two naked women, my mother was vast and grotesque, the skin hanging from her like flayed toad-hides, and my ten-year-old sister was an ugly bat whom as a child I could hardly bring myself to look at, let alone share the bath-tub with. And after all, a

shilling was no expense at all, considering that Raymond and I were richer than most of the workmen in the cafe. In fact I was richer than any of my many uncles or my poor overworked father or anyone else I knew in my family. I used to laugh when I thought of the twelve-hour shift my father worked in the flour mill, of his exhausted, blanched, ill-tempered face when he got home in the evening, and I laughed a little louder when I thought of the thousands who each morning poured out of the terraced houses like our own to labour through the week, rest up on Sunday and then back again on Monday to toil in the mills, factories, timber yards and quaysides of London, returning each night older, more tired and no richer; over our cups of tea I laughed with Raymond at this quiescent betrayal of a lifetime, heaving, digging, shoving, packing, checking, sweating and groaning for the profits of others, at how, to reassure themselves, they made a virtue of this lifetime's grovel, at how they prized themselves for never missing a day in the inferno; and most of all I laughed when uncles Bob or Ted or my father made me a present of one of their hard-earned shillings - and on special occasions a ten-shilling note - I laughed because I knew that a good afternoon's work in the bookshop earned more than they scraped together in a week. I had to laugh discreetly, of course, for it would not do to mess up a gift like that, especially when it was quite obvious that they derived a great deal of pleasure from giving it to me. I can see them now, one of my uncles or my father striding the tiny length of the front parlour, the coin or banknote in his hand, reminiscing, anecdoting and advising me on Life, poised before the luxury of giving, and feeling good, feeling so good that it was a joy to watch. They felt, and for that short period they were, grand, wise, reflective, kind-hearted and expansive, and perhaps, who knows, a

little divine; patricians dispensing to their son or nephew in the wisest, most generous way, the fruits of their sagacity and wealth - they were gods in their own temple and who was I to refuse their gift? Kicked in the arse round the factory fifty hours a week they needed these parlour miracle-plays, these mythic confrontations between Father and Son, so I, being appreciative and sensible of all the nuances of the situation, accepted their money, at the risk of boredom played along a little and suppressed my amusement till afterwards when I was made weak with tearful, hooting laughter. Long before I knew it I was a student, a promising student, of irony.

A shilling then was not too much to pay for a glimpse at the incommunicable, the heart of mystery's mystery, the Fleshly Grail, Dinky Lulu's pussy, and I urged Raymond to arrange a viewing as soon as possible. Raymond was already sliding into his role of stage manager, furrowing his brow in an important way, humming about dates, times, places, payments, and drawing ciphers on the back of an envelope. Raymond was one of those rare people who not only derive great pleasure from organizing events, but also are forlornly bad at doing it. It was quite possible that we would arrive on the wrong day at the wrong time, that there would be confusion about payment or the length of viewing time, but there was one thing which was ultimately more certain than anything else, more certain than the sun rising tomorrow, and that was that we would finally be shown the exquisite quim. For life was undeniably on Raymond's side; while in those days I could not have put my feelings into so many words, I sensed that in the cosmic array of individual fates Raymond's was cast diametrically opposite mine. Fortuna played practical jokes on Raymond, perhaps she even kicked sand in his eyes, but she never spat in his face or trod deliberately on

his existential corns - Raymond's mistakings, losses, betrayals and injuries were all, in the final estimate, comic rather than tragic. I remember one occasion when Raymond paid seventeen pounds for a two-ounce cake of hashish which turned out not to be hashish at all. To cover his losses Raymond took the lump to a well-known spot in Soho and tried to sell it to a plainclothes man who fortunately did not press a charge. After all, there was, at that time at least, no law against dealing in powdered horse-dung, even if it was wrapped in tinfoil. Then there was the cross-country. Raymond was a mediocre runner and was among ten others chosen to represent the school in the sub-counties meeting. I always went along to the meetings. In fact there was no other sport I watched with such good heart, such entertainment and elation as a good cross-country. I loved the racked, contorted faces of the runners as they came up the tunnel of flags and crossed the finishing line; I found especially interesting those who came after the first fifty or so, running harder than any of the other contestants and competing demoniacally among themselves for the hundred and thirteenth place in the field. I watched them stumble up the tunnel of flags, clawing at their throats, retching, flailing their arms and falling to the grass, convinced that I had before me here a vision of human futility. Only the first thirty runners counted for anything in the contest and once the last of these had arrived the group of spectators began to disperse, leaving the rest to fight their private battles - and it was at this point that my interest pricked up. Long after the judges, marshals and time-keepers had gone home I remained at the finishing line in the descending gloom of a late winter's afternoon to watch the last of the runners crawl across the end marker. Those who fell I helped to their feet, I gave handkerchiefs to bloody noses, I thumped vomiters on the

back, I massaged cramped calves and toes - a real Florence Nightingale, in fact, with the difference that I felt an elation, a gay fascination with the triumphant spirit of human losers who had run themselves into the ground for nothing at all. How my mind soared, how my eyes swam, when, after having waited ten, fifteen, even twenty minutes in that vast, dismal field, surrounded on all sides by factories, pylons, dull houses and garages, a cold wind rising, bringing the beginnings of a bitter drizzle, waiting there in that heavy gloom - and then suddenly to discern on the far side of the field a limp white blob slowly making its way to the tunnel, slowly measuring out with numb feet on the wet grass its micro-destiny of utter futility. And there beneath the brooding metropolitan sky, as if to unify the complex totality of organic evolution and human purpose and place it within my grasp, the tiny amoebic blob across the field took on human shape and yet still it held to the same purpose, staggering determinedly in its pointless effort to reach the flags - just life, just faceless, self-renewing life to which, as the figure jack knifed to the ground by the finishing line, my heart warmed, my spirit rose in the fulsome abandonment of morbid and fatal identification with the cosmic life process - the Logos.

'Bad luck, Raymond,' I would say cheerily as I handed him his sweater, 'better luck next time.' And smiling wanly with the sure, sad knowledge of Arlecchino, of Feste, the knowledge that of the two it is the Comedian, not the Tragedian, who holds the Trump, the twenty-second Arcanum, whose letter is Than, whose symbol is Sol, smiling as we left the now almost dark field, Raymond would say,

'Well, it was only a cross-country, only a game, you know.'

Raymond promised to confront the divine Lulu Smith

with our proposition the following day after school, and since I was pledged to look after my sister that evening while my parents were at the Walthamstow dog track, I said goodbye to Raymond there at the cafe. All the way home I thought about cunt. I saw it in the smile of the conductress, I heard it in the roar of the traffic, I smelt it in the fumes from the shoe-polish factory, conjectured it beneath the skirts of passing housewives, felt it at my finger tips, sensed it in the air, drew it in my mind and at supper, which was toad-in-the-hole, I devoured, as in an unspeakable rite, genitalia of batter and sausage. And for all this I still did not know just exactly what a cunt was. I eyed my sister across the table. I exaggerated a little just now when I said she was an ugly bat - I was beginning to think that perhaps she was not so bad-looking after all. Her teeth protruded, that could not be denied, and if her cheeks were a little too sunken it was not so you would notice in the dark, and when her hair had been washed, as it was now, you could almost pass her off as plain. So it was not surprising that I came to be thinking over my toad-in-the-hole that with some cajoling and perhaps a little honest deceit Connie could be persuaded to think of herself, if only for a few minutes, as something more than a sister, as, let us say, a beautiful young lady, a film star and maybe, Connie, we could slip into bed here and try out this rather moving scene, now you get out of these clumsy pyjamas while I see to the light ... And armed with this comfortably gained knowledge I could face the awesome Lulu with zeal and abandon, the whole terrifying ordeal would pale into insignificance, and who knows, perhaps I could lay her out there and then, halfway through the peepshow.

I never enjoyed looking after Connie. She was petulant, demanding, spoiled and wanted to play games all the

while instead of watching the television. I usually managed to get her to bed an hour early by winding the clock forward. Tonight I wound it back. As soon as my mother and father had left for the dog track I asked Connie which games she would like to play, she could choose anything she liked.

'I don't want to play games with you.'

'Why not?'

'Because you were staring at me all the time through supper.'

'Well, of course I was, Connie. I was trying to think of the games you liked to play best and I was just looking at you, that was all.' Finally she agreed to play hide and seek, which I had suggested with special insistence because our house was of such a size that there were only two rooms you could hide in, and they were both bedrooms. Connie was to hide first. I covered my eyes and counted to thirty, listening all the while to her footsteps in my parents' bedroom directly above, hearing with satisfaction the creak of the bed - she was hiding under the eiderdown, her second favourite place. I shouted 'Coming' and began to mount the stairs. At the bottom of the stairs I do not think I had decided clearly what I was about to do; perhaps just look around, see where things were, draw a mental plan for future reference - after all it would not do to go scaring my little sister who would not think twice about telling my father everything, and that would mean a scene of some sort, laborious lies to invent, shouting and crying and that sort of thing, just at a time when I needed all my energy for the obsession in hand. By the time I reached the top of the stairs, however, the blood having drained from brain to groin, literally, one might say, from sense to sensibility, by the time I was catching my breath on the top stair and closing my moist hand round the

bedroom door-handle, I had decided to rape my sister. Gently I pushed the door open and called in a sing-song voice,

'Connieeee, where aaare you?' That usually made her giggle, but this time there was no sound. Holding my breath I tip-toed over to the bedside and sang,

'I knooow where youuu are,' and bending down by the tell-tale lump under the eiderdown, I whispered,

'I'm coming to get you,' and began to peel the bulky cover away, softly, almost tenderly, peeking into the dark warmth underneath. Dizzy with expectation I drew it right back, and there, helplessly and innocently stretched out before me were my parents' pyjamas, and even as I was leaping back in surprise I received a blow in the small of my back of such unthinking vigour as can only be inflicted by a sister on her brother. And there was Connie dancing with mirth, the wardrobe door swinging open behind her.

'I saw you, I saw you and you didn't see me!' To relieve my feelings I kicked her shins and sat on the bed to consider what next, while Connie, predictably histrionic, sat on the floor and boo-hooed. I found the noise depressing after a while so I went downstairs and read the paper, certain that soon Connie would follow me down. She did, and she was sulking.

'What game do you want to play now?' I asked her. She sat on the edge of the sofa pouting and sniffing and hating me. I was even considering forgetting the whole plan and giving myself up to an evening's television when I had an idea, an idea of such simplicity, elegance, clarity and formal beauty, an idea which wore the assurance of its own success like a tailor-made suit. There is a game which all home-loving, unimaginative little girls like Connie find irresistible, a game which, ever since she had learned to

speaking the necessary words, Connie had plagued me to play with her, so that my boyhood years were haunted by her pleadings and exorcised by my inevitable refusals; it was a game, in short, which I would rather be burned at the stake for than have my friends see me play it. And now at last we were going to play Mummies and Daddies.

'I know a game you'd like to play, Connie,' I said. Of course she would not reply, but I let my words hang there in the air like bait. 'I know a game *you'd* like to play.' She lifted her head.

'What is it?'

'It's a game you're always wanting to play.'

She brightened. 'Mummies and Daddies?' She was transformed, she was ecstatic. She fetched prams, dolls, stoves, fridges, cots, teacups, a washing machine and a kennel from her room and set them up around me in a flutter of organizational zeal.

'Now you go here, no there, and this can be the kitchen and this is the door where you come in and don't tread on there because there's a wall and I come in and see you and I say to you and then you say to me and you go out and I make lunch.' I was plunged into the microcosm of the dreary, everyday, ponderous banalities, the horrifying, niggling details of the life of our parents and their friends, the life that Connie so dearly wanted to ape. I went to work and came back, I went to the pub and came back, I posted a letter and came back, I went to the shops and came back, I read a paper, I pinched the Bakelite cheeks of my progeny, I read another paper, pinched some more cheeks, went to work and came back. And Connie? She just cooked on the stove, washed up in the sink unit, washed, fed, put to sleep and roused her sixteen dolls and then poured some more tea - and she was happy. She was the inter-galactic-earth-goddess-housewife, she owned and

controlled all around her, she saw all, she knew all, she told me when to go out, when to come in, which room I was in, what to say, how and when to say it. She was happy. She was complete, I have never seen another human so complete, she smiled, wide open, joyous and innocent smiles which I have never seen since - she tasted paradise on earth. And one point she was so blocked with the wonder, the ecstasy of it all, that mid-sentence her words choked up and she sat back on her heels, her eyes glistening, and breathed one long musical sigh of rare and wonderful happiness. It was almost a shame I had it in mind to rape her. Returning from work the twentieth time that half hour I said,

'Connie, we're leaving out one of the most important things that Mummies and Daddies do together.' She could hardly believe we had left anything out and she was curious to know.

'They fuck together, Connie, surely you know about that.'

'Fuck?' On her lips the word sounded strangely meaningless, which in a way I suppose it was, as far as I was concerned. The whole idea was to give it some meaning.

'Fuck? What does that mean?'

'Well, it's what they do at night, when they go to bed at night, just before they go to sleep.'

'Show me.' I explained that we would have to go upstairs and get into bed.

'No, we don't. We can pretend and this can be the bed,' she said, pointing at a square made by the design of the carpet.

'I cannot pretend and show it to you at the same time.' So once again I was climbing the stairs, once again my blood pounding and my manhood proudly stirring. Connie was quite excited too, still delirious with the

happiness of the game and pleased at the novel turn it was taking.

'The first thing they do', I said, as I led her to the bed, 'is to take off all their clothes.' I pushed her on to the bed and, with fingers almost useless with agitation, unbuttoned her pyjamas till she sat naked before me, still sweet-smelling from her bath and giggling with the fun of it all. Then I got undressed too, leaving my pants on so as not to alarm her, and sat by her side. As children we had seen enough of each other's bodies to take our nakedness for granted, though that was some time ago now and I sensed her unease.

'Are you sure this is what they do?'

My own uncertainty was obscured now by lust. 'Yes,' I said, 'it's quite simple. You have a hole there and I put my weenie in it.' She clasped her hand over her mouth, giggling incredulously.

'That's silly. Why do they want to do that?' I had to admit it to myself, there was something unreal about it.

'They do it because it's their way of saying they like each other.' Connie was beginning to think that I was making the whole thing up, which, again, in a way I suppose I was. She stared at me, wide-eyed.

'But that's daft, why don't they just tell each other?' I was on the defensive, a mad scientist explaining his new crack-pot invention - coitus - before an audience of sceptical rationalists.

'Look,' I said to my sister, 'it's not only that. It's also a very nice feeling. They do it to get that feeling.'

'To get the feeling?' She still did not quite believe me. 'Get the feeling? What do you mean, get the feeling?'

I said, 'I'll show you.' And at the same time I pushed Connie on to the bed and lay on top of her in the manner I

had inferred from the films Raymond and I had seen together. I was still wearing my underpants. Connie stared blankly up at me, not even afraid - in fact, she might have been closer to boredom. I writhed from side to side, trying to push my pants off without getting up.

'I still don't get it,' she complained from underneath me. 'I'm not getting any feeling. Are you getting any feeling?'

'Wait,' I grunted, as I hooked the underpants round the end of my toes with the very tips of my fingers, 'if you just wait a minute I'll show you.' I was beginning to lose my temper with Connie, with myself, with the universe, but mostly with my underpants which snaked determinedly round my ankles. At last I was free. My prick was hard and sticky on Connie's belly and now I began to manoeuvre it between her legs with one hand while I supported the weight of my body with the other. I searched her tiny crevice without the least notion of what I was looking for, but half expecting all the same to be transformed at any moment into a human whirlwind of sensation. I think perhaps I had in mind a warm fleshy chamber, but as I prodded and foraged, jabbed and wheedled, I found nothing other than tight, resisting skin. Meanwhile Connie just lay on her back, occasionally making little comments.

'Ooh, that's where I go wee-wee. I'm sure *our* mummy and daddy don't do this.' My supporting arm was being seared by pins and needles, I was feeling raw and yet still I poked and pushed, in a mood of growing despair. Each time Connie said, 'I still don't get any feeling,' I felt another ounce of my manhood slip away. Finally I had to rest. I sat on the edge of the bed to consider my hopeless failure, while behind me Connie propped herself up on her elbows. After a moment or two I felt the bed begin to shake with silent spasms and, turning, I saw Connie with

tears spilling down her screwed-up face, inarticulate and writhing with choked laughter.

'What is it?' I asked, but she could only point vaguely in my direction and groan, and then she lay back on the bed, heaving and helpless with mirth. I sat by her side, not knowing what to think but deciding, as Connie quaked behind me, that another attempt was now out of the question. At last she was able to get out some words. She sat up and pointed at my still erect prick and gasped,

'It looks so ... it looks so ...' sank back in another fit, and then managed in one squeal, '*So silly, it looks so silly,*' after which she collapsed again into a high-pitched, squeezed-out titter. I sat there in lonely detumescent blankness, numbed by this final humiliation into the realization that this was no real girl beside me, this was no true representative of that sex; this was no boy, certainly, nor was it finally a girl - it was my sister, after all. I stared down at my limp prick, wondering at its hang-dog look, and just as I was thinking of getting my clothes together, Connie, silent now, touched me on the elbow.

'I know where it goes,' she said, and lay back on the bed, her legs wide apart, something it had not occurred to me to ask her to do. She settled herself among the pillows. 'I know where the hole is.'

I forgot my sister and my prick rose inquisitively, hopefully, to the invitation which Connie was whispering. It was all right with her now, she was at Mummies and Daddies and controlling the game again. With her hand she guided me into her tight, dry little-girl's cunt and we lay perfectly still for a while. I wished Raymond could have seen me, and I was glad he had brought my virginity to my notice, I wished Dinky Lulu could have seen me, in fact if my wishes had been granted I would have had all my friends, all the people I knew, file through the bedroom

to catch me in my splendidous pose. For more than sensation, more than any explosion behind my eyes, spears through my stomach, searings in my groin or rackings of my soul - more than any of these things, none of which I felt anyway, more then than even the thought of these things, I felt proud, proud to be fucking, even if it were only Connie, my ten-year-old sister, even if it had been a crippled mountain goat I would have been proud to be lying there in that manly position, proud in advance of being able to say 'I have fucked', of belonging intimately and irrevocably to that superior half of humanity who had known coitus, and fertilized the world with it. Connie lay quite still too, her eyes half-closed, breathing deeply - she was asleep. It was way past her bedtime and our strange game had exhausted her. For the first time I moved gently backwards and forwards, just a few times, and came in a miserable, played-out, barely pleasurable way. It woke Connie into indignation.

'You've wet inside me,' and she began to cry. Hardly noticing, I got up and started to get dressed. This may have been one of the most desolate couplings known to copulating mankind, involving lies, deceit, humiliation, incest, my partner falling asleep, my gnat's orgasm and the sobbing which now filled the bedroom, but I was pleased with it, myself, Connie, pleased to let things rest a while, to let the matter drop. I led Connie to the bathroom and began to fill the sink - my parents would be back soon and Connie should be asleep in her bed. I had made it into the adult world finally, I was pleased about that, but right then I did not want to see a naked girl, or a naked anything for a while yet. Tomorrow I would tell Raymond to forget the appointment with Lulu, unless he wanted to go it alone. And I knew for a fact that he would not want that at all.