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«I don't want coffee,» Johnny said. «All I want is some understanding.» He placed his arm around the boy's waist, and this time, despite the glances of the people on the street, the boy didn't remove it.

«I know how you feel, Johnny, but I must be leaving.»

«No, you don't know how I feel,» Johnny said, removing his arm.

«Here, I'll give you some money.» The boy took some change from his pocket. «This is all I have, except enough to get me to Long Beach and back.»

Johnny accepted the money, peevishly.

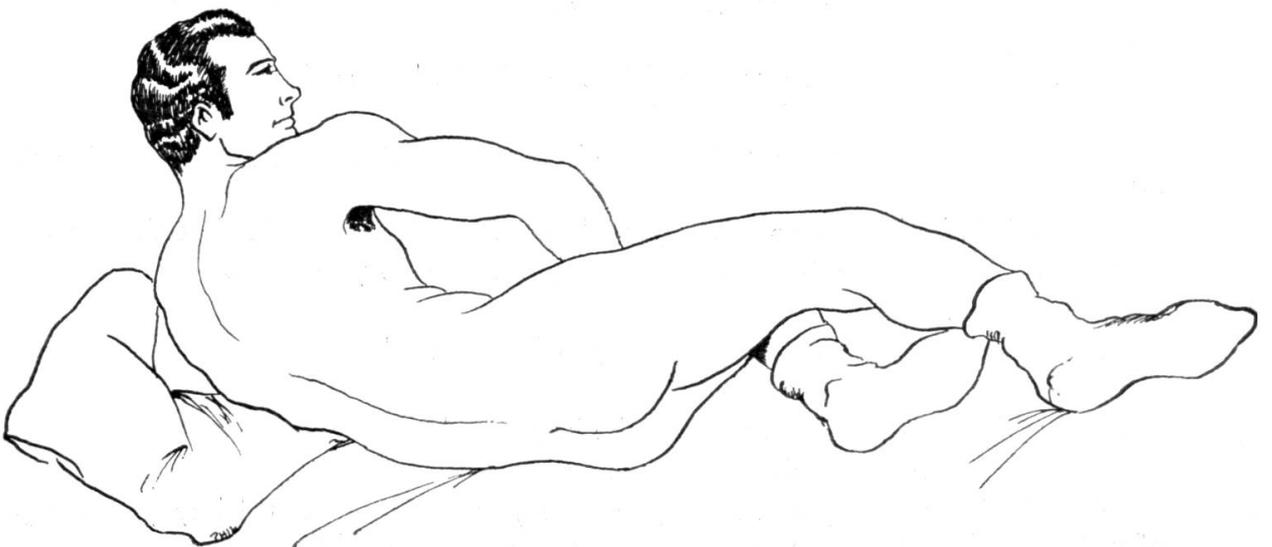
The boy placed his hand on Johnny's shoulders. «Goodbye, Johnny,» he said. «Take care of yourself.» The boy walked away, and after a few steps turned and called, «So long, Johnny.»

Johnny stood motionless. He answered with only a slight nod of the head. He put the change into his pocket, and stood looking at the boy until he vanished around the corner.

CONSOLATION

As for your glee at seeing your lover's receding hairline—ah god, that's something we all feel, as we sit and watch the young arrogant ones grow old, fade, turn grey, grow pots, get bald—a great many times in my life, on being slurred or offended by one of those pipsqueaks, I have either thought or sometimes said aloud—«Well, that's the only consolation of growing old: we can watch you decline, lose your looks, grow fat or bald—and then the arrogant refusal gradually changes to the hunt, and on down the line, until you begin to pay for sex—and I want to be around and alive to watch you come to such a point.» Trouble with young punks (and I was the same) you think either that a) you're gonna live forever, and still look the same as at 18; or b) that you're never gonna live to be 21, and so it doesn't matter. This all boils down to the generalization that the young believe that any situation which exists at any given moment is going to be permanent; they have no conception of change or compromise . . .

(From a letter.)



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