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«Right about there you should have beeen psychoanalyzed,» Jack opined.

«Maybe, but I bulled ahead, dedicated to succes. Now it seems rather unimportant.»

«What is more important?» Jack said gently.

«You, and what you offer me. Think that is a sudden decision? It isn't! I have been looking for you—all my life long. Forgive my doubts, but I had to be sure!»

«And are you sure?» Jack demanded.

«Most important to me right now is: are you *sure?*»

«You wouldn't be here if I wasn't sure,» Jack said quietly. «Now—will you kiss me goodnight?»

«Let's have the good night first. A goodnight kiss means: 'sleep well'. Who wants to sleep?»

THE FRONTIER

by O.F. SIMPSON

Wild horses won't drag from me the name of the mountain pass, though some of you may recognize it—and recognize Mario, whom this story is about. All I will say is that it has Italy on its south side, and is one of those where the two frontier stations are adjacent; the collection of passport and customs controls, petrol coupon offices, money changers, filling stations, carparks cafés and all is a confusing one—we poor English, who don't have such things in our own country and are unversed in the exact shades of uniform worn by the officials of different countries must be forgiven for being terribly muddled by the general bustle of it all.

In 1964, driving alone over this pass from the north, I had parked my car and gone to one of the cafés to buy a postcard of the place for a friend of mine who «collects» passes. Standing in front of the postcard stall, evidently also intent on postcards, was a swarthy young Italian of about 25 in very old scrubbed russet-coloured jeans and a blue lumber jacket. He stood casually with his weight on one foot, back to me, presenting to the world in general a supremely good pair of full muscular dimpled buttocks. I believe in acting on the spur of the moment, so as I passed him I brushed the back of my right hand gently across his bottom —he could notice it or not, as he liked. He did like, and turned on me at once a most attractive white-toothed smile, then arranged gracefully and cunningly for me to see his front—his chest was bare under the lumber jacket—in a pose which showed me quickly all I need to know. I am lucky enough to be able to be very choosey over the young men I use for sex, but I doubt if I have ever achieved a pick-up quite so instantaneously; I thought him a young animal of very fine natural athletic grace, and there was something about his directness and self-confidence, which had an element of modesty and dignity about it as well, which answered my own tastes exactly. To cut a long story short, I drove him in my car over the pass down to a mountain village on the Italian side where he had hired a room in a farmhouse; and here unter the low ceiling, on a huge floor divan which took up nearly all the space, we made male love together with no holds barred for what I will always consider

one of the happiest two hours of my life. Naked he was magnificent, his muscles not over developed but immensely strong and hard as steel in «tone», wich made his mature, panther's body all the more wonderfully desirable when they were relaxed and at rest. We took each other twice before it was time to go. I grant that his affection was mercenary, but he was more than satisfied by the bargain we struck—I wanted him to remember me.

Like many rather lonely types—and like most Italians—Mario talked a lot. He spent the whole of his summers in this way, he said; the postcard stand where I found him was his «beat» and all his regular clients knew they would find him there. Of course, he said, most of the private motorists crossing the pass were family parties; still there were always a few homos in this as in any other collection of human beings, and he had got good at spotting them. He had also some regulars among the heavy truck drivers who used the route—some of whom actually did their business with him in their driving cabs in the station car park. All the winter he worked as a crane-driver in Turin—there is very high pay for skilled navvy work in Italy as elsewhere—then at the end of every May sacked himself from whatever job he had and took his room in the mountain village again for the summer.

What happens, I asked him, when the client was driving up from Italy northwards? It made no difference, he said; he kept a bag of clothes and his passport stowed in the café and was quite prepared to go north in the client's car if required—he'd been away for a week, as far as Vienna and Budapest, on one such trip. «That's how you see the world,» he grinned.

The next year, 1965, when I came through again, I nearly missed him. It was raining and he had retired from his usual stance by the postcard stall into one of the cafés, where I found him, tan jeans and all, playing table football with another man. He broke away to come with me and we had another go together, but this time it was more of a scramble than before. Perhaps trade was bad for him—at any rate he seemed more discontented, his love play was rougher, less subtle, he'd begun to chain-smoke, and at the end he actually asked for more money, which I didn't give him. I knew that for years I'd always make the detour in his direction if I could, and I believed I could always get him to respond to me in the same way—our naked bodies spoke exactly the same harsh male language of their own—but something of the honest animal passion seemed to have left him, and we parted vaguely dissatisfied.

In September 1966 I crossed the frontier again. This time I had with me in the car a London boy Terry P. whom I'd met at a party that summer and decided to give a holiday to. (One of the results of our new government's restrictions on holiday spending is greatly to increase the number and biddability of the boys waiting on the cabrank to come away on holiday with wicked fellows like me, who have legitimate business reasons for touring Europe!) He was a good-looker—I'd hardly have picked him otherwise—fair haired and curiously shy, but with a fund of innocent enthusiasm for life in general which rather pleased me. I take the old-fashioned Greek view that the man is responsible for his chosen boy's education in the widest sense, and after a few meetings I knew I should

enjoy his company and his fresh, unhackneyed and often quite dotty observations on the world about him. As to enjoying his body, I didn't mind taking a chance on that, and I wasn't wrong; the first evening after we'd crossed the Channel—I guess when he felt the influence of his respectable friends and a highly possessive mother slipping away—he gave me that too without any fuss, and we were very happy together.

After discharging the frontier formalities, I thought I'd like to pass the time of day with Mario, so parked the car and began to walk back with Terry to the postcard shop where once more I'd noticed the familiar tan jeans in their usual position. Half way over I realized I'd left my money behind in the car. I told Terry to go on slowly and I'd catch him up later. Back at the car, I decided it was silly to walk, so drove the car out of the park down to the postcard shop—all of which took a bit of time as the road was crowded at that time of day. When I got to the postcard shop—no Terry and no Mario, the place was deserted. I was beginning to be much mystified when some extraordinary mixed grunts, cries and muffled groans came to my ear. Following the sound round a corner of the building I came on a small plot of grass, on which Mario and Terry were rolling over and over fighting like two alley cats. Terry's tight white slacks had been more or less torn off his legs, I could see, and his thighs were badly cut and bruised; but I could also see that, young as he was, he was giving as good as he got and had already blacked both Mario's eyes, which were beginning to ooze blood. I remembered he had had an Irish father, now dead, and that the Irish love a fight. I yelled to them to stop and tried to pull them apart—I might as well hav tried singlehanded to restore peace in Vietnam.

What to do? I know they recommend pepper for dogfights, but I hadn't any. I did, however, remember that the day before I'd been persuaded by a garage hand to buy a car tow rope, which now lay coiled up unused in the back of my Aston Martin. I got it double quick, tore it out of its polythene bag and began to lay in as hard as I knew, metal pulley end and all, on the backs of the two combatants. Well, whipping boys can be fun, but there was no time to find any pleasure in this situation. As I cracked the rope's end down on their heaving bodies, I did just wonder what on earth Terry's mother would have said if she had seen me mercilessly beating the daylight out of her darling son—fortunately, however, women don't know just everything that goes on—and in fact Mario was usually uppermost and it was his broad shoulders and lovely swelling buttocks that caught most of the hardest blows. I knew I'd have to hurt him, and I did hurt him, so that finally he rolled sideways off Terry and they both picked themselves up slowly and confronted me shamefacedly. I cursed them till all was blue, but cursing only helped to relieve me—what *they* wanted was not cursing, but nursing. I was thankful to an officious aunt of mine in England wo after I'd been in a smash some years before insisted on giving me a first aid outfit for my car—it was Aunt Dodo who perhaps saved these young men's lives; there certainly wasn't much of her outfit left after I'd taken them out of sight round the back of the building and done my stuff binding them up. It was hardly a case for getting a public ambulance if that could be avoided, and I thought it just could.

(Terry told me afterwards that as he reached the postcard stand Mario—whom of course he didn't know from Adam—came and took him by the elbow saying in English «You are Fred's boy? Please come with me»—then the moment they had got round the corner of the building had set on him without another word.)

After I'd done my first aid stuff and the tension had quietened down a bit, I for one began to feel very hungry. I sat Terry in the back of the car and Mario by my side in front and, telling the latter to stop me when he found a good picnic place, drove off down the chain of hairpin bends into Italy. Mario was exceedingly glum and silent—und it takes a big shock to silence an Italian—but it didn't stop him taking advantage of his situation to reach over with his right hand and explore intimately and expertly between my thighs the whole time as we drove. He knew I could do nothing about it, having to keep both hands on the wheel for the tricky descent; and by the time we reached his chosen picnic place my desire for him was well and truly aroused. It was one trick up to him.

He chose well. A rough path among the rocks led up round a corner to a pleasant little grassy clearing complete with waterfall. I made them both strip completely and bathed them, Mario first, renewing their dressings as best I could. It would be nice to be able to record that they embraced naked under that waterfall in a romantic reconciliation scene, and they certainly would have made a pretty picture—but it was not so. For one thing the water was ice cold, for another they were still not speaking to each other or anything near it; indeed at one point when Terry slipped on a moving stone and stumbled against Mario, the latter took a swipe at him and I thought it had all started again. But on the whole they were both broken up: the weals were already showing raw on Mario's back and buttocks—they'd spoil his trade for a week or two, I supposed, but whose fault was that?

Terry won the next trick, hands down. After I had finished with him, he wound a towel round his waist and strode away down the path to the car. In five minutes he reappeared coming slowly up the path in the latest, most carefully chosen, Carnaby Street get-up—black T-shirt, black mohair hipster slacks, held up by a wide golden American fish-scale belt. His slacks were not absurdly tight, as you see them on some boys; but though Terry was, as I have said, years younger than Mario, his vital young body had it all, front and back, and those slacks did to perfection their work of discreet revelation and temptation. The effect was marred by the fact that he was limping badly, but he came on up that path towards us like a young prince, combing his hair as he went. He was a symphony in black and gold—the clothes black, the hair and belt gold—the whole effect wonderfully severe and simple on that wild sunny mountain slope. When he had finally got his hair up into the central «wave-crest» quiff that satisfied him, he switched on me a dazzlingly affectionate smile, and in a natural sort of gesture of reconciliation turned and offered his comb to Mario—who put himself badly in the wrong by sulkily refusing to touch it. Terry sat down and began to eat, and so the awkward meal went on—all of us hungry, but none of us, least of all Mario, finding anything to say. At the end Mario unbent far enough to wash the various glasses and knives under the waterfall while Terry dried them

and I packed them away; but even this operation was got through with the minimum of words.

We drove on down to the village where Mario had his room, and left him there. He got out of the car, came round to the right-hand window where I sat in the driver's seat (a British car, you'll remember) and said curtly to me in Italian:

«You are coming again?»

«Of course, Mario.»

«Alone?»

With a sort of nervous smile I began to say «After today it hardly seems safe for me to come any other way, does it?» But he was far from smiling and repeated: «Alone?»

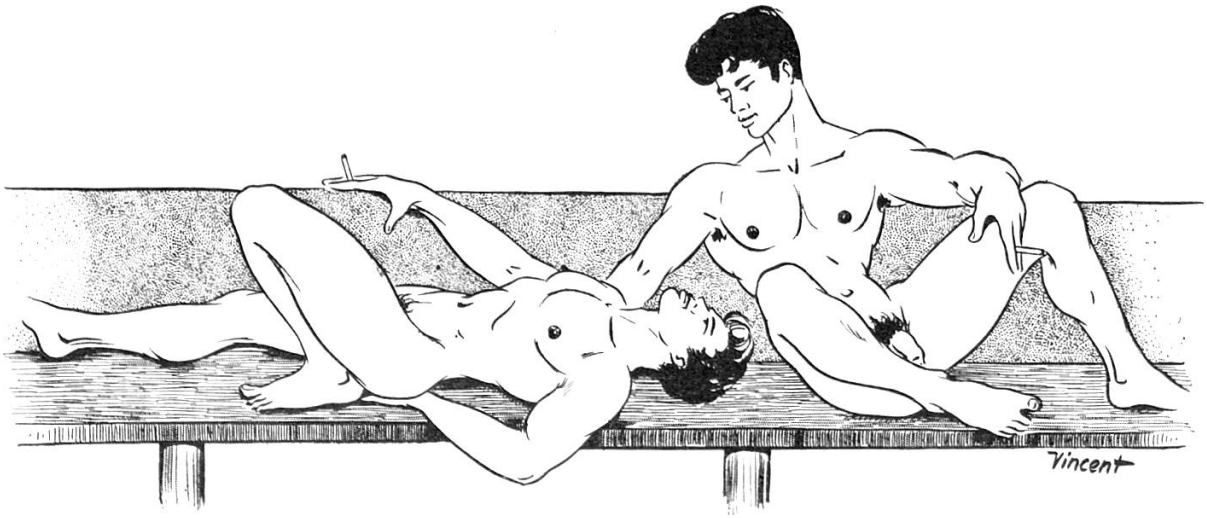
«Very well, Mario, alone.»

«Good.» As he turned away, this was followed by a string of colloquial Italian half under his breath, too idiomatic for me to follow, though I understood it to be to the effect that I could have a hundred boy tarts if I wanted, so long as I kept them in London.

As I drove away, I happened to look back through the driving mirror and saw him quite clearly and deliberately spit at the left back wheel of the car—Terry being again installed in the left-hand front seat next to me. I know I ought to have stopped at once and gone back to teach him some manners—after all, to spit at my friends is to spit at me—but by now I'd had enough of it all, so pretended not to notice, and we drove on down into the Lombardy plain.

At the inn where we stopped the night, Terry wrote two more of the long string of descriptive postcards with which he liked to regale his mother about our trip. He gave them to me to post, and postcards not being entirely private I couldn't resist looking at the second of them, which contained the following account of the matter: «Coming over the —pass into Italy, quite by chance Fred met a young Italian he'd known before, and we all had a picnic together. I didn't take to him much.»

I began to think there might be something in what people say about our English genius for understatement.



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Köchlistrasse 15, II. Etage, 8004 Zürich
Das Clublokal der KREIS-Abonnenten

Geöffnet: Mittwoch von 20.00—23.30 Uhr Samstag von 19.30—23.30 Uhr

Eintrittspreise: Abonnenten Fr. 4.40 Gäste Fr. 6.40
Gäste müssen sich durch gültige Ausweispapiere legitimieren und können nur durch Abonnenten eingeführt werden.

Alle Getränke bitte mitbringen.
Gläser und Tassen stellen wir zur Verfügung. Fredy

Samstag, den 6. Mai: 20.00 Uhr bis ?? FRÜHLINGSFEST *mit Kabarett-Einlagen.*
Eintrittspreise: Abonnenten Fr. 5.50 Gäste Fr. 7.50

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geöffnet jeden Mittwoch von 20.30—24.00
jeden Samstag von 20.00—01.00

April 1967: Thé-Dansant am 16. und 23. April (MUBA)

Am 29. April: GROSSES FRÜHLINGSFEST

DER GEDIEGENE TREFFPUNKT IN BASEL

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