# Teddy

I'LL EXQUISITE DAY you, buddy, if you don't get down off that bag this minute. And I mean it," Mr. McArdle said. He was speaking from the inside twin bed--the bed farther away from the porthole. Viciously, with more of a whimper than a sigh, he foot-pushed his top sheet clear of his ankles, as though any kind of coverlet was suddenly too much for his sunburned, debilitated-looking body to bear. He was lying supine, in just the trousers of his pajamas, a lighted cigarette in his right hand. His head was propped up just enough to rest uncomfortably, almost masochistically, against the very base of the headboard. His pillow and ashtray were both on the floor, between his and Mrs. McArdle's bed. Without raising his body, he reached out a nude, inflamed-pink, right arm and flicked his ashes in the general direction of the night table. "October, for God's sake," he said. "If this is October weather, gimme August." He turned his head to the right again, toward Teddy, looking for trouble. "C'mon," he said. "What the hell do you think I'm talking for? My health? Get down off there, please." Teddy was standing on the broadside of a new looking cowhide Gladstone, the better to see out of his parents' open porthole. He was wearing extremely dirty, white ankle-sneakers, no socks, seersucker shorts that were both too long for him and at least a size too large in the seat, an overly laundered T shirt that had a hole the size of a dime in the right shoulder, and an incongruously handsome, black alligator belt. He needed a haircut--especially at the nape of the neck--the worst way, as only a small boy with an almost full-grown head and a reedlike neck can need one.

"Teddy, did you hear me?"

Teddy was not leaning out of the porthole quite so far or so precariously as small boys are apt to lean out of open portholes--both his feet, in fact, were flat on the surface of the Gladstone--but neither was he just conservatively well-tipped; his face was considerably more outside than inside the cabin. Nonetheless, he was well within hearing of his father's voice--his father's voice, that is, most singularly. Mr. McArdle played leading roles on no fewer than three daytime radio serials when he was in New York, and he had what might be called a third-class leading man's speaking voice: narcissistically deep and resonant, functionally prepared at a moment's notice to outmale anyone in the same room with it, if necessary even a small boy. When it was on vacation from its professional chores, it fell, as a rule, alternately in love with sheer volume and a theatrical brand of quietness-steadiness. Right now, volume was in order. "Teddy. God damn it--did you hear me?"

Teddy turned around at the waist, without changing the vigilant position of his feet on the Gladstone, and gave his father a look of inquiry, whole and pure. His eyes, which were pale brown in color, and not at all large, were slightly crossed--the left eye more than the right. They were not crossed enough to be disfiguring, or even to be necessarily noticeable at first glance. They were crossed just enough to be mentioned, and only in context with the fact that one might have thought long and seriously before wishing them straighter, or deeper, or browner, or wider set. His face, just as it was, carried the impact, however oblique and slow-travelling, of real beauty.

"I want you to get down off that bag, now. How many times do you want me to tell you?" Mr. McArdle said.

"Stay exactly where you are, darling," said Mrs. McArdle, who evidently had a little trouble with her sinuses early in the morning. Her eyes were open, but only just. "Don't move the tiniest part of an inch." She was lying on her right side, her face, on the pillow, turned left, toward Teddy and the porthole, her back to her husband. Her second sheet was drawn tight over her very probably nude body, enclosing her, arms and all, up to the chin. "Jump up and down," she said, and closed her eyes. "Crush Daddy's bag."

"That's a Jesus-brilliant thing to say," Mr. McArdle said quietly-steadily, addressing the back of his wife's head. "I pay twenty-two pounds for a bag, and I ask the boy civilly not to stand on it, and you tell him to jump up and down on it. What's that supposed to be? Funny?"

"If that bag can't support a ten-year-old boy, who's thirteen pounds underweight for his age, I don't want it in my cabin," Mrs. McArdle said, without opening her eyes.

"You know what I'd like to do?" Mr. McArdle said. "I'd like to kick your goddam head open."

"Why don't you?"

Mr. McArdle abruptly propped himself up on one elbow and squashed out his cigarette stub on the glass top of the night table. "One of these days--" he began grimly.

"One of these days, you're going to have a tragic, tragic heart attack," Mrs. McArdle said, with a minimum of energy. Without bringing her arms into the open, she drew her top sheet more tightly around and under her body. "There'll be a small, tasteful funeral, and everybody's going to ask who that attractive woman in the red dress is, sitting there in the first row, flirting with the organist and making a holy--"

"You're so goddam funny it isn't even funny," Mr. McArdle said, lying inertly on his back again.

During this little exchange, Teddy had faced around and resumed looking out of the porthole. "We passed the Queen Mary at three-thirty-two this morning, going the other way, if anybody's interested," he said slowly. "Which I doubt." His voice was oddly and beautifully rough cut, as some small boys' voices are. Each of his phrasings was rather like a little ancient island, inundated by a miniature sea of whiskey. "That deck steward Booper despises had it on his blackboard."

"I'll Queen Mary you, buddy, if you don't get off that bag this minute," his father said. He turned his head toward Teddy. "Get down from there, now. Go get yourself a haircut or something." He looked at the back of his wife's head again. "He looks precocious, for God's sake."

"I haven't any money," Teddy said. He placed his hands more securely on the sill of the porthole, and lowered his chin onto the backs of his fingers. "Mother. You know that man who sits right next to us in the dining room? Not the very thin one. The other one, at the same table. Right next to where our waiter puts his tray down."

"Mm-hmm," Mrs. McArdle said. "Teddy. Darling. Let Mother sleep just five minutes more, like a sweet boy."

"Wait just a second. This is quite interesting," Teddy said, without raising his chin from its resting place and without taking his eyes off the ocean. "He was in the gym a little while ago, while Sven was weighing me. He came up and started talking to me. He heard that last tape I made. Not the one in April. The one in May. He was at a party in Boston just before he went to Europe, and somebody at the party knew somebody in the Leidekker examining group--he didn't say who--and they borrowed that last tape I made and played it at the party. He seems very interested in it. He's a friend of Professor Babcock's. Apparently he's a teacher himself. He said he was at Trinity College in Dublin, all summer."

"Oh?" said Mrs. McArdle. "At a party they played it?" She lay gazing sleepily at the backs of Teddy's legs.

"I guess so," Teddy said. "He told Sven quite a bit about me, right while I was standing there. It was rather embarrassing."

"Why should it be embarrassing?"

Teddy hesitated. "I said `rather' embarrassing. I qualified it."

"I'll qualify you, buddy, if you don't get the hell off that bag," Mr. McArdle said. He had just lit a fresh cigarette. "I'm going to count three. One, God damn it ... Two.. ."

"What time is it?" Mrs. McArdle suddenly asked the backs of Teddy's legs. "Don't you and Booper have a swimming lesson at ten-thirty?"

"We have time," Teddy said. "--Vloom!" He suddenly thrust his whole head out of the porthole, kept it there a few seconds, then brought it in just long enough to report, "Someone just dumped a whole garbage can of orange peels out the window."

"Out the window. Out the window," Mr. McArdle said sarcastically, flicking his ashes. "Out the porthole, buddy, out the porthole." He glanced over at his wife. "Call Boston. Quick, get the Leidekker examining group on the phone."

"Oh, you're such a brilliant wit," Mrs. McArdle said. "Why do you try?"

Teddy took in most of his head. "They float very nicely," he said without turning around. "That's interesting."

"Teddy. For the last time. I'm going to count three, and then I'm-"

"I don't mean it's interesting that they float," Teddy said. "It's interesting that I know about them being there. If I hadn't seen them, then I wouldn't know they were there, and if I didn't know they were there, I wouldn't be able to say that they even exist. That's a very nice, perfect example of the way--"

"Teddy," Mrs. McArdle interrupted, without visibly stirring under her top sheet. "Go find Booper for me. Where is she? I don't want her lolling around in that sun again today, with that bum."

"She's adequately covered. I made her wear her dungarees," Teddy said. "Some of them are starting to sink now. In a few minutes, the only place they'll still be floating will be inside my mind. That's quite interesting, because if you look at it a certain way, that's where they started floating in the first place. If I'd never been standing here at all, or if somebody'd come along and sort of chopped my head off right while I was--"

"Where is she now?" Mrs. McArdle asked. "Look at Mother a minute, Teddy."

Teddy turned and looked at his mother. "What?" he said.

"Where's Booper now? I don't want her meandering all around the deck chairs again, bothering people. If that awful man--"

"She's all right. I gave her the camera."

Mr. McArdle lurched up on one arm. "You gave her the cameral" he said. "What the hell's the idea? My goddam Leica! I'm not going to have a six-year-old child gallivanting all over--"

"I showed her how to hold it so she won't drop it," Teddy said. "And I took the film out, naturally."

"I want that camera, Teddy. You hear me? I want you to get down off that bag this minute, and I want that camera back in this room in five minutes--or there's going to be one little genius among the missing. Is that clear?"

Teddy turned his feet around on the Gladstone, and stepped down. He bent over and tied the lace of his left sneaker while his father, still raised up on one elbow, watched him like a monitor.

"Tell Booper I want her," Mrs. McArdle said. "And give Mother a kiss."

Finished tying his sneaker lace, Teddy perfunctorily gave his mother a kiss on the cheek. She in turn brought her left arm out from under the sheet, as if bent on encircling Teddy's waist with it, but by the time she had got it out from under, Teddy had moved on. He had come around the other side and entered the space between the two beds. He stooped, and stood up with his father's pillow under his left arm and the glass ashtray that belonged on the night table in his right hand. Switching the ashtray over to his left hand, he went up to the night table and, with the edge of his right hand, swept his father's cigarette stubs and ashes into the ashtray. Then, before putting the ashtray back where it belonged, he used the under side of his forearm to wipe off the filmy wake of ashes from the glass top of the table. He wiped off his forearm on his seersucker shorts. Then he placed the ashtray on the glass top, with a world of care, as if he believed an ashtray should be dead-centered on the surface of a night table or not placed at all. At that point, his father, who had been watching him, abruptly gave up watching him. "Don't you want your pillow?" Teddy asked him.

"I want that camera, young man."

"You can't be very comfortable in that position. It isn't possible," Teddy said. "I'll leave it right here." He placed the pillow on the foot of the bed, clear of his father's feet. He started out of the cabin.

"Teddy," his mother said, without turning over. "Tell Booper I want to see her before her swimming lesson."

"Why don't you leave the kid alone?" Mr. McArdle asked. "You seem to resent her having a few lousy minutes' freedom. You know how you treat her? I'll tell you exactly how you treat her. You treat her like a bloomin' criminal."

"Bloomin'! Oh, that's cute! You're getting so English, lover."

Teddy lingered for a moment at the door, reflectively experimenting with the door handle, turning it slowly left and right. "After I go out this door, I may only exist in the minds of all my acquaintances," he said. "I may be an orange peel."

"What, darling?" Mrs. McArdle asked from across the cabin, still lying on her right side.

"Let's get on the ball, buddy. Let's get that Leica down here."

"Come give Mother a kiss. A nice, big one."

"Not right now," Teddy said absently. "I'm tired." He closed the door behind him.

The ship's daily newspaper lay just outside the doorsill. It was a single sheet of glossy paper, with printing on just one side. Teddy picked it up and began to read it as he started slowly aft down the long passageway. From the opposite end, a huge, blond woman in a starched white uniform was coming toward him, carrying a vase of long-stemmed, red roses. As she passed Teddy, she put out her left hand and grazed the top of his head with it, saying, "Somebody needs a haircut!" Teddy passively looked up from his newspaper, but the woman had passed, and he didn't look back. He went on reading. At the end of the passageway, before an enormous mural of Saint George and the Dragon over the staircase landing, he folded the ship's newspaper into quarters and put it into his left hip pocket. He then climbed the broad, shallow, carpeted steps up to Main Deck, one flight up. He took two steps at a time, but slowly, holding on to the banister, putting his whole body into it, as if the act of climbing a flight of stairs was for him, as it is for many children, a moderately pleasurable end in itself. At the Main Deck landing, he went directly over to the Purser's desk, where a good-looking girl in naval uniform was presiding at the moment. She was stapling some mimeographed sheets of paper together.

"Can you tell me what time that game starts today, please?" Teddy asked her.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Can you tell me what time that game starts today?" The girl gave him a lipsticky smile. "What game, honey?" she asked.

"You know. That word game they had yesterday and the day before, where you're supposed to supply the missing words. It's mostly that you have to put everything in context."

The girl held off fitting three sheets of paper between the planes of her stapler. "Oh," she said. "Not till late afternoon, I believe. I believe it's around four o'clock. Isn't that a little over your head, dear?"

"No, it isn't ... Thank you," Teddy said, and started to leave.

"Wait a minute, honey! What's your name?"

"Theodore McArdle," Teddy said. "What's yours?"

"My name?" said the girl, smiling. "My name's Ensign Mathewson."

Teddy watched her press down on her stapler. "I knew you were an ensign," he said. "I'm not sure, but I believe when somebody asks your name you're supposed to say your whole name. Jane Mathewson, or Phyllis Mathewson, or whatever the case may be."

"Oh, really?"

"As I say, I think so," Teddy said. "I'm not sure, though. It may be different if you're in uniform. Anyway, thank you for the information. Goodbye!" He turned and took the stairs up to the Promenade Deck, again two at a time, but this time as if in rather a hurry.

He found Booper, after some extensive looking, high up on the Sports Deck. She was in a sunny clearing--a glade, almost--between two deck-tennis courts that were not in use. In a squatting position, with the sun at her back and a light breeze riffling her silky, blond hair, she was busily piling twelve or fourteen shuffleboard discs into two tangent stacks, one for the black discs, one for the red. A very small boy, in a cotton sun suit, was standing close by, on her right, purely in an observer's capacity. "Look!" Booper said commandingly to her brother as he approached. She sprawled forward and surrounded the two stacks of shuffleboard discs with her arms to show off her accomplishment, to isolate it from whatever else was aboard ship. "Myron," she said hostilely, addressing her companion, "you're making it all shadowy, so my brother can't

see. Move your carcass." She shut her eyes and waited, with a cross-bearing grimace, till Myron moved.

Teddy stood over the two stacks of discs and looked down appraisingly at them. "That's very nice," he said. "Very symmetrical."

"This guy," Booper said, indicating Myron, "never even heard of backgammon. They don't even have one."

Teddy glanced briefly, objectively, at Myron. "Listen," he said to Booper. "Where's the camera? Daddy wants it right away."

"He doesn't even live in New York," Booper informed Teddy. "And his father's dead. He was killed in Korea." She turned to Myron. "Wasn't he?" she demanded, but without waiting for a response. "Now if his mother dies, he'll be an orphan. He didn't even know that." She looked at Myron. "Did you?"

Myron, non-committal, folded his arms.

"You're the stupidest person I ever met," Booper said to him. "You're the stupidest person in this ocean. Did you know that?"

"He is not," Teddy said. "You are not, Myron." He addressed his sister: "Give me your attention a second. Where's the camera? I have to have it immediately. Where is it?"

"Over there," Booper said, indicating no direction at all. She drew her two stacks of shuffleboard discs in closer to her. "All I need now is two giants," she said. "They could play backgammon till they got all tired and then they could climb up on that smokestack and throw these at everybody and kill them." She looked at Myron. "They could kill your parents," she said to him knowledgeably. "And if that didn't kill them, you know what you could do? You could put some poison on some marshmellows and make them eat it."

The Leica was about ten feet away, next to the white railing that surrounded the Sports Deck. It lay in the drain gully, on its side. Teddy went over and picked it up by its strap and hung it around his neck. Then, immediately, he took it off. He took it over to Booper. "Booper, do me a favor. You take it down, please," he said. "It's ten o'clock. I have to write in my diary."

"I'm busy."

"Mother wants to see you right away, anyway," Teddy said.

"You're a liar."

"I'm not a liar. She does," Teddy said. "So please take this down with you when you go . . . C'mon, Booper."

"What's she want to see me for?" Booper demanded. "I don't want to see her." She suddenly struck Myron's hand, which was in the act of picking off the top shuffleboard disc from the red stack. "Hands off," she said.

Teddy hung the strap attached to the Leica around her neck. "I'm serious, now. Take this down to Daddy right away, and then I'll see you at the pool later on," he said. "I'll meet you right at the pool at ten-thirty. Or right outside that place where you change your clothes. Be on time, now. It's way down on E Deck, don't forget, so leave yourself plenty of time." He turned, and left.

"I hate you! I hate everybody in this ocean!" Booper called after him.

Below the Sports Deck, on the broad, after end of the Sun Deck, uncompromisingly alfresco, were some seventy-five or more deck chairs, set up and aligned seven or eight rows deep, with aisles just wide enough for the deck steward to use without unavoidably tripping over the sunning passengers' paraphernalia knitting bags, dust-jacketed novels, bottles of sun-tan lotion, cameras. The area was crowded when Teddy arrived. He started at the rearmost row and moved methodically, from row to row, stopping at each chair, whether or not it was occupied, to read the name placard on its arm. Only one or two of the reclining passengers spoke to him--that is, made any of the commonplace pleasantries adults are sometimes prone to make to a ten-year-old boy who is single-mindedly looking for the chair that belongs to him. His youngness and single-mindedness were obvious enough, but perhaps his general demeanor altogether lacked, or had too little of, that sort of cute solemnity that many adults readily speak up, or down, to. His clothes may have had something to do with it, too. The hole in the

shoulder of his T shirt was not a cute hole. The excess material in the seat of his seersucker shorts, the excess length of the shorts themselves, were not cute excesses.

The McArdles' four deck chairs, cushioned and ready for occupancy, were situated in the middle of the second row from the front. Teddy sat down in one of them so that--whether or not it was his intention--no one was sitting directly on either side of him. He stretched out his bare, unsuntanned legs, feet together, on the leg rest, and, almost simultaneously, took a small, ten-cent notebook out of his right hip pocket. Then, with instantly one-pointed concentration, as if only he and the notebook existed--no sunshine, no fellow passengers, no ship--,he began to turn the pages.

With the exception of a very few pencil notations, the entries in the notebook had apparently all been made with a ball-point pen. The handwriting itself was manuscript style, such as is currently being taught in American schools, instead of the old, Palmer method. It was legible without being pretty-pretty. The flow was what was remarkable about the handwriting. In no sense--no mechanical sense, at any rate--did the words and sentences look as though they had been written by a child.

Teddy gave considerable reading time to what looked like his most recent entry. It covered a little more than three pages:

Diary for October 27, 1952
Property of Theodore McArdle
412 A Deck

Appropriate and pleasant reward if finder promptly returns to Theodore McArdle.

See if you can find daddy's army dog tags and wear them whenever possible. It won't kill you and he will like it.

Answer Professor Mandell's letter when you get a chance and the patience. Ask him not to send me any more poetry books. I already have enough for 1 year anyway. I am quite sick of it anyway. A man walks along the beach and unfortunately gets hit in the head by a cocoanut. His head unfortunately cracks open in two halves. Then his wife comes along the beach singing a song and sees the 2 halves and recognizes them and picks them up. She gets very sad of course and cries heart breakingly. That is exactly where I am tired of poetry. Supposing the lady just picks up the 2 halves and shouts into them very angrily "Stop that!" Do not mention this when you answer his letter, however. It is quite controversial and Mrs. Mandell is a poet besides.

Get Sven's address in Elizabeth, New Jersey. It would be interesting to meet his wife, also his dog Lindy. However, I would not like to own a dog myself.

Write condolence letter to Dr. Wokawara about his nephritis. Get his new address from mother.

Try the sports deck for meditation tomorrow morning before breakfast but do not lose consciousness. Also do not lose consciousness in the dining room if that waiter drops that big spoon again. Daddy was quite furious.

Words and expressions to look up in library tomorrow when you return the books--
Nephritis
myriad
gift horse
cunning
triumvirate

Be nicer to librarian. Discuss some general things with him when he gets kittenish.

Teddy abruptly took out a small, bullet-shaped, ballpoint pen from the side pocket of his shorts, uncapped it, and began to write. He used his right thigh as a desk, instead of the chair arm.

Diary for October 28, 1952
Same address and reward as written on October 26 and 27, 1952.

I wrote letters to the following persons after meditation this morning.
Dr. Wokawara
Professor Mandell
Professor Peet
Burgess Hake, Jr.
Roberta Hake
Sanford Hake
Grandma Hake
Mr. Graham
Professor Walton

I could have asked mother where daddy's dog tags are but she would probably say I don't have to wear them. I know he has them with him because I saw him pack them.

Life is a gift horse in my opinion.

I think it is very tasteless of Professor Walton to criticize my parents. He wants people to be a certain way.

It will either happen today or February 14, 1955 when I am sixteen. It is ridiculous to mention even.

After making this last entry, Teddy continued to keep his attention on the page and his ball-point pen poised, as though there were more to come.

He apparently was unaware that he had a lone interested observer. About fifteen feet forwardship from the first row of deck chairs, and eighteen or twenty rather sun-blinding feet overhead, a young man was steadily watching him from the Sports Deck railing. This had been going on for some ten minutes. It was evident that the young man was now reaching some sort of decision, for he abruptly took his foot down from the railing. He stood for a moment, still looking in Teddy's direction, then walked away, out of sight. Not a minute later, though, he turned up, obtrusively vertical, among the deck-chair ranks. He was about thirty, or younger. He directly started to make his way down-aisle toward Teddy's chair, casting distracting little shadows over the pages of people's novels and stepping rather uninhibitedly (considering that his was the only standing, moving figure in sight) over knitting bags and other personal effects.

Teddy seemed oblivious of the fact that someone was standing at the foot of his chair--or, for that matter, casting a shadow over his notebook. A few people in the row or two behind him, however, were more distractible. They looked up at the young man as, perhaps, only people in deck chairs can look up at someone. The young man had a kind of poise about him, though, that looked as though it might hold up indefinitely, with the very small proviso that he keep at least one hand in one pocket. "Hello, there!" he said to Teddy.

Teddy looked up. "Hello," he said. He partly closed his notebook, partly let it close by itself.

"Mind if I sit down a minute?" the young man asked, with what seemed to be unlimited cordiality. "This anybody's chair?"

"Well, these four chairs belong to my family," Teddy said. "But my parents aren't up yet."

"Not up? On a day like this," the young man said. He had already lowered himself into the chair at Teddy's right. The chairs were placed so close together that the arms

touched. "That's sacrilege," he said. "Absolute sacrilege." He stretched out his legs, which were unusually heavy at the thighs, almost like human bodies in themselves. He was dressed, for the most part, in Eastern seaboard regimentals: a turf haircut on top, run-down brogues on the bottom, with a somewhat mixed uniform in between--buff-colored woolen socks, charcoal-gray trousers, a button-down-collar shirt, no necktie, and a herringbone jacket that looked as though it had been properly aged in some of the more popular postgraduate seminars at Yale, or Harvard, or Princeton. "Oh, God, what a divine day," he said appreciatively, squinting up at the sun. "I'm an absolute pawn when it comes to the weather." He crossed his heavy legs, at the ankles. "As a matter of fact, I've been known to take a perfectly normal rainy day as a personal insult. So this is absolute manna to me." Though his speaking voice was, in the usual connotation, well bred, it carried considerably more than adequately, as though he had some sort of understanding with himself that anything he had to say would sound pretty much all right--intelligent, literate, even amusing or stimulating--either from Teddy's vantage point or from that of the people in the row behind, if they were listening. He looked obliquely down at Teddy, and smiled. "How are you and the weather?" he asked. His smile was not unpersonable, but it was social, or conversational, and related back, however indirectly, to his own ego. "The weather ever bother you out of all sensible proportion?" he asked, smiling.

"I don't take it too personal, if that's what you mean," Teddy said.

The young man laughed, letting his head go back. "Wonderful," he said. "My name, incidentally, is Bob Nicholson. I don't know if we quite got around to that in the gym. I know your name, of course."

Teddy shifted his weight over to one hip and stashed his notebook in the side pocket of his shorts.

"I was watching you write--from way up there," Nicholson said, narratively, pointing. "Good Lord. You were working away like a little Trojan."

Teddy looked at him. "I was writing something in my notebook."

Nicholson nodded, smiling. "How was Europe?" he asked conversationally. "Did you enjoy it?"

"Yes, very much, thank you."

"Where all did you go?"

Teddy suddenly reached forward and scratched the calf of his leg. "Well, it would take me too much time to name all the places, because we took our car and drove fairly great distances." He sat back. "My mother and I were mostly in Edinburgh, Scotland, and Oxford, England, though. I think I told you in the gym I had to be interviewed at both those places. Mostly the University of Edinburgh."

"No, I don't believe you did," Nicholson said. "I was wondering if you'd done anything like that. How'd it go? They grill you?"

"I beg your pardon?" Teddy said.

"How'd it go? Was it interesting?"

"At times, yes. At times, no," Teddy said. "We stayed a little bit too long. My father wanted to get back to New York a little sooner than this ship. But some people were coming over from Stockholm, Sweden, and Innsbruck, Austria, to meet me, and we had to wait around."

"It's always that way."

Teddy looked at him directly for the first time. "Are you a poet?" he asked.

"A poet?" Nicholson said. "Lord, no. Alas, no. Why do you ask?"

"I don't know. Poets are always taking the weather so personally. They're always sticking their emotions in things that have no emotions."

Nicholson, smiling, reached into his jacket pocket and took out cigarettes and matches. "I rather thought that was their stock in trade," he said. "Aren't emotions what poets are primarily concerned with?"

Teddy apparently didn't hear him, or wasn't listening. He was looking abstractedly toward, or over, the twin smokestacks up on the Sports Deck.

Nicholson got his cigarette lit, with some difficulty, for there was a light breeze blowing from the north. He sat back, and said, "I understand you left a pretty disturbed bunch--"

" `Nothing in the voice of the cicada intimates how soon it will die,' " Teddy said suddenly. "'Along this road goes no one, this autumn eve.'"

"What was that?" Nicholson asked, smiling. "Say that again."

"Those are two Japanese poems. They're not full of a lot of emotional stuff," Teddy said. He sat forward abruptly, tilted his head to the right, and gave his right ear a light clap with his hand. "I still have some water in my ear from my swimming lesson yesterday," he said. He gave his ear another couple of claps, then sat back, putting his arms up on both armrests. It was, of course, a normal, adult-size deck chair, and he looked distinctly small in it, but at the same time, he looked perfectly relaxed, even serene.

"I understand you left a pretty disturbed bunch of pedants up at Boston," Nicholson said, watching him. "After that last little set-to. The whole Leidekker examining group, more or less, the way I understand it. I believe I told you I had rather a long chat with Al Babcock last June. Same night, as, a matter of fact, I heard your tape played off."

"Yes, you did. You told me."

"I understand they were a pretty disturbed bunch," Nicholson pressed. "From What Al told me, you all had quite a little lethal bull session late one night--the same night you made that tape, I believe." He took a drag on his cigarette. "From what I gather, you made some little predictions that disturbed the boys no end. Is that right?"

"I wish I knew why people think it's so important to be emotional," Teddy said. "My mother and father don't think a person's human unless he thinks a lot of things are very sad or very annoying or very-very unjust, sort of. My father gets very emotional even when he reads the newspaper. He thinks I'm inhuman."

Nicholson flicked his cigarette ash off to one side. "I take it you have no emotions?" he said.

Teddy reflected before answering. "If I do, I don't remember when I ever used them," he said. "I don't see what they're good for."

"You love God, don't you?" Nicholson asked, with a little excess of quietness. "Isn't that your forte, so to speak? From what I heard on that tape and from what Al Babcock--"

"Yes, sure, I love Him. But I don't love Him sentimentally. He never said anybody had to love Him sentimentally," Teddy said. "If I were God, I certainly wouldn't want people to love me sentimentally. It's too unreliable."

"You love your parents, don't you?"

"Yes, I do--very much," Teddy said, "but you want to make me use that word to mean what you want it to mean--I can tell."

"All right. In what sense do you want to use it?"

Teddy thought it over. "You know what the word `affinity' means?" he asked, turning to Nicholson.

"I have a rough idea," Nicholson said dryly.

"I have a very strong affinity for them. They're my parents, I mean, and we're all part of each other's harmony and everything," Teddy said. "I want them to have a nice time while they're alive, because they like having a nice time . . . But they don't love me and Booper--that's my sister--that way. I mean they don't seem able to love us just the way we are. They don't seem able to love us unless they can keep changing us a little bit. They love their reasons for loving us almost as much as they love us, and most of the time more. It's not so good, that way." He turned toward Nicholson again, sitting slightly forward. "Do you have the time, please?" he asked. "I have a swimming lesson at ten-thirty."

"You have time," Nicholson said without first looking at his wrist watch. He pushed back his cuff. "It's just ten after ten," he said.

"Thank you," Teddy said, and sat back. "We can enjoy our conversation for about ten more minutes." Nicholson let one leg drop over the side of the deck chair, leaned

forward, and stepped on his cigarette end. "As I understand it," he said, sitting back, "you hold pretty firmly to the Vedantic theory of reincarnation."

"It isn't a theory, it's as much a part--"

"All right," Nicholson said quickly. He smiled, and gently raised the flats of his hands, in a sort of ironic benediction. "We won't argue that point, for the moment. Let me finish." He crossed his heavy, outstretched legs again. "From what I gather, you've acquired certain information, through meditation, that's given you some conviction that in your last incarnation you were a holy man in India, but more or less fell from Grace-"

"I wasn't a holy man," Teddy said. "I was just a person making very nice spiritual advancement."

"All right--whatever it was," Nicholson said. "But the point is you feel that in your last incarnation you more or less fell from Grace before final Illumination. Is that right, or am I--"

"That's right," Teddy said. "I met a lady, and I sort of stopped meditating." He took his arms down from the armrests, and tucked his hands, as if to keep them warm, under his thighs. "I would have had to take another body and come back to earth again anyway-I mean I wasn't so spiritually advanced that I could have died, if I hadn't met that lady, and then gone straight to Brahma and never again have to come back to earth. But I wouldn't have had to get incarnated in an American body if I hadn't met that lady. I mean it's very hard to meditate and live a spiritual life in America. People think you're a freak if you try to. My father thinks I'm a freak, in a way. And my mother--well, she doesn't think it's good for me to think about God all the time. She thinks it's bad for my health."

Nicholson was looking at him, studying him. "I believe you said on that last tape that you were six when you first had a mystical experience. Is that right?"

"I was six when I saw that everything was God, and my hair stood up, and all that," Teddy said. "It was on a Sunday, I remember. My sister was only a very tiny child then, and she was drinking her milk, and all of a sudden I saw that she was God and the milk was God. I mean, all she was doing was pouring God into God, if you know what I mean."

Nicholson didn't say anything.

"But I could get out of the finite dimensions fairly often when I was four," Teddy said, as an afterthought. "Not continuously or anything, but fairly often."

Nicholson nodded. "You did?" he said. "You could?"

"Yes," Teddy said. "That was on the tape . . . Or maybe it was on the one I made last April. I'm not sure."

Nicholson took out his cigarettes again, but without taking his eyes off Teddy. "How does one get out of the finite dimensions?" he asked, and gave a short laugh. "I mean, to begin very basically, a block of wood is a block of wood, for example. It has length, width--"

"It hasn't. That's where you're wrong," Teddy said. "Everybody just thinks things keep stopping off somewhere. They don't. That's what I was trying to tell Professor Peet." He shifted in his seat and took out an eyesore of a handkerchief--a gray, wadded entity--and blew his nose. "The reason things seem to stop off somewhere is because that's the only way most people know how to look at things," he said. "But that doesn't mean they do." He put away his handkerchief, and looked at Nicholson. "Would you hold up your arm a second, please?" he asked.

"My arm? Why?"

"Just do it. Just do it a second."

Nicholson raised his forearm an inch or two above the level of the armrest. "This one?" he asked.

Teddy nodded. "What do you call that?" he asked.

"What do you mean? It's my arm. It's an arm."

"How do you know it is?" Teddy asked. "You know it's called an arm, but how do you know it is one? Do you have any proof that it's an arm?"

Nicholson took a cigarette out of his pack, and lit it. "I think that smacks of the worst kind of sophistry, frankly," he said, exhaling smoke. "It's an arm, for heaven's sake,

because it's an arm. In the first place, it has to have a name to distinguish it from other objects. I mean you can't simply--"

"You're just being logical," Teddy said to him impassively.

"I'm just being what?" Nicholson asked, with a little excess of politeness.

"Logical. You're just giving me a regular, intelligent answer," Teddy said. "I was trying to help you. You asked me how I get out of the finite dimensions when I feel like it. I certainly don't use logic when I do it. Logic's the first thing you have to get rid of."

Nicholson removed a flake of tobacco from his tongue with his fingers.

"You know Adam?" Teddy asked him.

"Do I know who?"

"Adam. In the Bible."

Nicholson smiled. "Not personally," he said dryly.

Teddy hesitated. "Don't be angry with me," he said. "You asked me a question, and I'm--"

"I'm not angry with you, for heaven's sake."

"Okay," Teddy said. He was sitting back in his chair, but his head was turned toward Nicholson. "You know that apple Adam ate in the Garden of Eden, referred to in the Bible?" he asked. "You know what was in that apple? Logic. Logic and intellectual stuff. That was all that was in it. So--this is my point--what you have to do is vomit it up if you want to see things as they really are. I mean if you vomit it up, then you won't have any more trouble with blocks of wood and stuff. You won't see everything stopping off all the time. And you'll know what your arm really is, if you're interested. Do you know what I mean? Do you follow me?"

"I follow you," Nicholson said, rather shortly.

"The trouble is," Teddy said, "most people don't want to see things the way they are. They don't even want to stop getting born and dying all the time. They just want new bodies all the time, instead of stopping and staying with God, where it's really nice." He reflected. "I never saw such a bunch of apple-eaters," he said. He shook his head.

At that moment, a white-coated deck steward, who was making his rounds within the area, stopped in front of Teddy and Nicholson and asked them if they would care to have morning broth. Nicholson didn't respond to the question at all. Teddy said, "No, thank you," and the deck steward passed them by.

"If you'd rather not discuss this, you don't have to," Nicholson said abruptly, and rather brusquely. He flicked his cigarette ash. "But is it true, or isn't it, that you informed the whole Leidekker examining bunch--Walton, Peet, Larsen, Samuels, and that bunch--when and where and how they would eventually die? Is that true, or isn't it? You don't have to discuss it if you don't want to, but the way the rumor around Boston--"

"No, it is not true," Teddy said with emphasis. "I told them places, and times, when they should be very, very careful. And I told them certain things it might be a good idea for them to do . . . But I didn't say anything like that. I didn't say anything was inevitable, that way." He took out his handkerchief again and used it. Nicholson waited, watching him. "And I didn't tell Professor Peet anything like that at all. Firstly, he wasn't one of the ones who were kidding around and asking me a bunch of questions. I mean all I told Professor Peet was that he shouldn't be a teacher any more after January--that's all I told him." Teddy, sitting back, was silent a moment. "All those other professors, they practically forced me to tell them all that stuff. It was after we were all finished with the interview and making that tape, and it was quite late, and they all kept sitting around smoking cigarettes and getting very kittenish."

"But you didn't tell Walton, or Larsen, for example, when or where or how death would eventually come?" Nicholson pressed.

"No. I did not," Teddy said firmly. "I wouldn't have told them any of that stuff, but they kept talking about it. Professor Walton sort of started it. He said he really wished he knew when he was going to die, because then he'd know what work he should do and what work he shouldn't do, and how to use his time to his best advantage, and all like that. And then they all said that . . . So I told them a little bit."

Nicholson didn't say anything.

"I didn't tell them when they were actually going to die, though. That's a very false rumor," Teddy said. "I could have, but I knew that in their hearts they really didn't want to know. I mean I knew that even though they teach Religion and Philosophy and all, they're still pretty afraid to die." Teddy sat, or reclined, in silence for a minute. "It's so silly," he said. "All you do is get the heck out of your body when you die. My gosh, everybody's done it thousands and thousands of times. Just because they don't remember it doesn't mean they haven't done it. It's so silly."

"That may be. That may be," Nicholson said. "But the logical fact remains that no matter how intelligently--"

"It's so silly," Teddy said again. "For example, I have a swimming lesson in about five minutes. I could go downstairs to the pool, and there might not be any water in it. This might be the day they change the water or something. What might happen, though, I might walk up to the edge of it, just to have a look at the bottom, for instance, and my sister might come up and sort of push me in. I could fracture my skull and die instantaneously." Teddy looked at Nicholson. "That could happen," he said. "My sister's only six, and she hasn't been a human being for very many lives, and she doesn't like me very much. That could happen, all right. What would be so tragic about it, though? What's there to be afraid of, I mean? I'd just be doing what I was supposed to do, that's all, wouldn't I?"

Nicholson snorted mildly. "It might not be a tragedy from your point of view, but it would certainly be a sad event for your mother and dad," he said "Ever consider that?"

"Yes, of course, I have," Teddy said. "But that's only because they have names and emotions for everything that happens." He had been keeping his hands tucked under his legs again. He took them out now, put his arms up on the armrests, and looked at Nicholson. "You know Sven? The man that takes care of the gym?" he asked. He waited till he got a nod from Nicholson. "Well, if Sven dreamed tonight that his dog died, he'd have a very, very bad night's sleep, because he's very fond of that dog. But when he woke up in the morning, everything would be all right. He'd know it was only a dream."

Nicholson nodded. "What's the point, exactly?"

"The point is if his dog really died, it would be exactly the same thing. Only, he wouldn't know it. I mean he wouldn't wake up till he died himself." Nicholson, looking detached, was using his right hand to give himself a slow, sensuous massage at the back of the neck. His left hand, motionless on the armrest, with a fresh, unlighted cigarette between the fingers, looked oddly white and inorganic in the brilliant sunlight.

Teddy suddenly got up. "I really have to go now, I'm afraid," he said. He sat down, tentatively, on the extended leg attachment of his chair, facing Nicholson, and tucked in his T shirt. "I have about one and a half minutes, I guess, to get to my swimming lesson," he said. "It's all the way down on E Deck."

"May I ask why you told Professor Peet he should stop teaching after the first of the year?" Nicholson asked, rather bluntly. "I know Bob Peet. That's why I ask."

Teddy tightened his alligator belt. "Only because he's quite spiritual, and he's teaching a lot of stuff right now that isn't very good for him if he wants to make any real spiritual advancement. It stimulates him too much. It's time for him to take everything out of his head, instead of putting more stuff in. He could get rid of a lot of the apple in just this one life if he wanted to. He's very good at meditating." Teddy got up. "I better go now. I don't want to be too late."

Nicholson looked up at him, and sustained the look--detaining him. "What would you do if you could change the educational system?" he asked ambiguously. "Ever think about that at all?"

"I really have to go," Teddy said.

"Just answer that one question," Nicholson said. "Education's my baby, actually--that's what I teach. That's why I ask."

"Well . . . I'm not too sure what I'd do," Teddy said. "I know I'm pretty sure I wouldn't start with the things schools usually start with." He folded his arms, and reflected briefly. "I think I'd first just assemble all the children together and show them how to meditate. I'd try to show them how to find out who they are, not just what their names

are and things like that . . . I guess, even before that, I'd get them to empty out everything their parents and everybody ever told them. I mean even if their parents just told them an elephant's big, I'd make them empty that out. An elephant's only big when it's next to something else--a dog or a lady, for example." Teddy thought another moment. "I wouldn't even tell them an elephant has a trunk. I might show them an elephant, if I had one handy, but I'd let them just walk up to the elephant not knowing anything more about it than the elephant knew about them. The same thing with grass, and other things. I wouldn't even tell them grass is green. Colors are only names. I mean if you tell them the grass is green, it makes them start expecting the grass to look a certain way--your way--instead of some other way that may be just as good, and may be much better . . . I don't know. I'd just make them vomit up every bit of the apple their parents and everybody made them take a bite out of."

"There's no risk you'd be raising a little generation of ignoramuses?"

"Why? They wouldn't any more be ignoramuses than an elephant is. Or a bird is. Or a tree is," Teddy said. "Just because something is a certain way, instead of just behaves a certain way, doesn't mean it's an ignoramus."

"No?"

"No!" Teddy said. "Besides, if they wanted to learn all that other stuff--names and colors and things--they could do it, if they felt like it, later on when they were older. But I'd want them to begin with all the real ways of looking at things, not just the way all the other apple-eaters look at things--that's what I mean." He came closer to Nicholson, and extended his hand down to him. "I have to go now. Honestly. I've enjoyed--"

"Just one second-sit down a minute," Nicholson said. "Ever think you might like to do something in research when you grow up? Medical research, or something of that kind? It seems to me, with your mind, you might eventually--"

Teddy answered, but without sitting down. "I thought about that once, a couple of years ago," he said. "I've talked to quite a few doctors." He shook his head. "That wouldn't interest me very much. Doctors stay too right on the surface. They're always talking about cells and things."

"Oh? You don't attach any importance to cell structure?"

"Yes, sure, I do. But doctors talk about cells as if they had such unlimited importance all by themselves. As if they didn't really belong to the person that has them." Teddy brushed back his hair from his forehead with one hand. "I grew my own body," he said. "Nobody else did it for me. So if I grew it, I must have known how to grow it. Unconsciously, at least. I may have lost the conscious knowledge of how to grow it sometime in the last few hundred thousand years, but the knowledge is still there, because--obviously--I've used it. . . . It would take quite a lot of meditation and emptying out to get the whole thing back--I mean the conscious knowledge--but you could do it if you wanted to. If you opened up wide enough." He suddenly reached down and picked up Nicholson's right hand from the armrest. He shook it just once, cordially, and said, "Goodbye. I have to go." And this time, Nicholson wasn't able to detain him, he started so quickly to make his way through the aisle.

Nicholson sat motionless for some few minutes after he left, his hands on the armrests of the chair, his unlighted cigarette still between the fingers of his left hand. Finally, he raised his right hand and used it as if to check whether his collar was still open. Then he lit his cigarette, and sat quite still again.

He smoked the cigarette down to its end, then abruptly let one foot over the side of the chair, stepped on the cigarette, got to his feet, and made his way, rather quickly, out of the aisle.

Using the forwardship stairway, he descended fairly briskly to the Promenade Deck. Without stopping there, he continued on down, still quite rapidly, to Main Deck. Then to A Deck. Then to B Deck. Then to C Deck. Then to D Deck.

At D Deck the forwardship stairway ended, and Nicholson stood for a moment, apparently at some loss for direction. However, he spotted someone who looked able to guide him. Halfway down the passageway, a stewardess was sitting on a chair outside a galleyway, reading a magazine and smoking a cigarette. Nicholson went down to her, consulted her briefly, thanked her, then took a few additional steps forwardship and

opened a heavy metal door that read: TO THE POOL. It opened onto a narrow, uncarpeted staircase.

He was little more than halfway down the staircase when he heard an all-piercing, sustained scream--clearly coming from a small, female child. It was highly acoustical, as though it were reverberating within four tiled walls.