

## Richard R. Karlen

*Pedophiles come in all different sizes and shapes. They are for the most part miserable, unhappy people, who usually wind up either institutionalized or in jail. But like many things in life, you have to be careful when you generalize on those perversions that are most abhorrent to us and the effects the perpetrators have on their victims.*

*This is a story about a pedophile that I knew almost sixty years ago. Except for a little stretching of the truth here and there, a writer's privilege, what went on between us is pretty much the way I remembered it.*

### **SONATA FACILE**

“That’s him, that’s Moe, the homo,” Ziggy Berlow whispered to me in his cracking, adolescent voice.

“Why are you whispering?” I asked. “He’s a hundred yards away.”

Ziggy always whispered when he had something unbelievable to tell, even if there wasn’t anyone within miles. His sense of the dramatic could get on your nerves, but you sort of got used to it after a while.

Ziggy was my best friend at Camp Klatzman-on-the-Hudson in the summer of 1943, and we remained good friends until he got his head blown off by a North Korean hand grenade near Pusan in 1950. They awarded him a medal posthumously. Who’d ever figure a smart guy like Ziggy doing some dumb thing like getting his head blown off?

Ziggy and I were standing on a narrow porch, a flimsy, unpainted, wooden extension of Cabin No. 11, our eyes fixed on a large, round man striding slowly across the infield grass of the ball field.

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“I thought Moe wasn’t coming ‘till tomorrow,” I said.

“That’s what the Ripper told me.”

*The Ripper* referred to Jack Horowitz, our senior bunk counselor, the nickname having been tagged onto him by the collective mentality of Ziggy, myself, and the other five thirteen-year-old campers of our cabin, the *paratroopers*, because his first name was “Jack.”

Yesterday at lunch, the founder and owner of the camp, Herman Klatzman also had informed us that Captain Morris Schwartz would be visiting the camp and during his two-week stay would live in our cabin. He explained to us in that gruff, booming voice that could reduce you to the size of an earthworm, how before the war Captain Schwartz had been a counselor for many years at Klatzman-on-the-Hudson, and had always been in charge of Cabin 11, the *Paratroopers*. Now that he was a distinguished officer in the United States Army serving our country in this terrible war against Fascism, we were all obliged to make sure that he enjoyed a super vacation during his leave.

Ziggy, who had groaned at Klatzman’s pronouncement, shrank into his seat when the camp owner had lifted his bushy eyebrows and focused his terrible dark eyes on him.

“And what’s eating you, Mr. Berlow?” Herman Klatzman had roared.

“Nothing, Chiefy, nothing at all. A little food got stuck in my throat.”

Believe it or not, the printed brochure that the camp sent before the season opened stated that the owner Herman Klatzman was to be called *Chiefy* by the campers. As it turned out even the counselors had to call him *Chiefy*, if they wanted to keep their jobs. I swear I’m not making it up.

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At the first period after lunch, while we were playing around with clay in Arts and Crafts, making ashtrays so we would have something to show to our parents on visiting day, Ziggy gave me the lowdown on Captain Morris Schwartz. Last year Ziggy had been a *Marine* in Cabin 10, when Moe had made his annual visit to the camp and then, as now, had stayed with the *Paratroopers* in Cabin 11. What went on in Cabin 11 had been no secret to Ziggy, whose reason for existence was to be a master spy.

“He likes kids,” Ziggy whispered.

“So what?”

“What do you mean, so what? He likes boys. Don’t you get it, lunkhead?”

“Yeah, sure.” I didn’t have the faintest notion what he was talking about, but I’d be damned if I was going to look like some sort of moron to Ziggy Berlow.

Ziggy saw right through me. “He’s queer,” he said.

“How’s he queer?”

“He’s a homo, for chrissakes.”

I knew from a general science course I had taken in Eighth that human beings were “Homo Sapiens,” but to be perfectly honest I had no idea what Ziggy was talking about.

“Great,” I said. “Now what do you say we sneak over to Archery? We can finish these stupid ashtrays tomorrow.”

But Ziggy wasn’t about to end what he considered one of the most important discussions of our lives. I was his best friend and I had to be warned. “Don’t believe anything he tells you,” he said. “One false move and he’s all over you like a boa constrictor. For the next two weeks, we stick together like glue.”

You’d have thought that by age thirteen I would have had some idea of what a ‘homo’ was. Today, it’s a

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different world. Even my six-year old grandson knows about gays and lesbians, gay liberation, gays in the military, AIDS. On TV and in the movies, stories about homosexuality are commonplace. Not so in 1943.

In 1943, what mattered when you were thirteen was collecting baseball cards and reading the latest comic books. I was so dumb that I didn't even know what a hardon was. A month before camp, at a grammar school graduation party, Jennifer Sperling sat on my lap during a game of Spin the Bottle, and sucked my lips like a hungry guppie. In bed that night I kept thinking about Jennifer's warm mouth pressing against mine, until I discovered that my skinny, limp organ had swollen and become stiff as a rock. It wasn't until I concentrated on Snuffy Stirnweiss stealing home against the Red Sox that the damn thing went back to being normal again and I was able to relax.

Ziggy's final warning was: "At night, don't let him slip a hand under the covers. And always wear a jock strap."

"What for?"

"Protection, stupid."

"Yeah, I getcha." Of course, I didn't get him at all, but when he talked about wearing a jock strap, even a moron like me could begin to figure out what part of my anatomy needed protection from Moe.

So there we were on this hot, steamy day in August, standing on the cabin porch awaiting Captain Morris Schwartz, who had dropped his suitcases and was standing on second base wiping his forehead. With one broad sweep he seemed to take in all the cabins that circled the perimeter of the ball field, until he spotted Ziggy and me. Joyously, he waved to us, then picked up his luggage and with a quickened step started toward the bunk.

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Ziggy put the palms of his hands together as if in prayer and looked to the heavens. “Lord help us, here he comes,” he whispered desperately. “Let’s get out of here.”

But it was too late. We were *The Welcoming Committee!* And there was Moe, dressed in army tans, open collar, service hat tucked inside his belt, double silver bars pinned to his shoulders, standing in front of us, a huge smile plastered across his round, amiable face. He was even bigger than Ziggy had described him, but not big in a menacing way, sort of like a good-natured grizzly bear. He had soft, brown hair, thinning a little on the top, and nice eyes, large ones, round and blue, eyes that could look you over in a glance and didn’t make you feel as if you were an insignificant kid, which is the way most adults looked at you.

Then Moe did the most extraordinary thing. He saluted us! Just snapped to attention and whipped up his right hand to his forehead like he was reporting for duty, and we might have been Eisenhower and Patton. He wouldn’t give up on the salute until we saluted him back, and then he tossed his suitcases onto the porch and vaulted the railing with surprising ease for such a beefy man. He then proceeded to embrace poor Ziggy in a powerful hug.

After releasing Ziggy, who looked as if he were going to collapse, Moe turned to me and stretched out a big, fat hand. “Moe Schwartz,” he said.

“Lowell Franklin,” I said. Moe did most of the shaking, my hand totally swallowed up within his.

“Hey, where’s everybody?” Moe asked.

“Swimming,” I replied.

We led Moe inside the cabin and showed him the bunk bed that the Ripper had assigned him, which turned out to be the lower half of the double-decker that I slept

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in. The Ripper had asked me to move to the upper half of the double-decker, normally Ziggy's bed, after Ziggy had enthusiastically volunteered to move to an empty cot on the far end of the cabin.

"How come you guys aren't swimming?" Moe asked, as he sat at the edge of his bed.

I pointed to a bandage just above my left elbow. "Infected mosquito bite," I said. "Nurse doesn't want me to swim for a few days. Ziggy's been keeping me company."

Moe reached over and tousled Ziggy's hair. "Why don't you go ahead and take your swim now?" he said to Ziggy. "I'll keep Lowell company."

"Great," said Ziggy. So much for loyalty to friends. I couldn't believe the way that turd had caved in so easily after all the bull he had been handing me about how we had to stick together while Moe was around.

Ziggy gone, I sat on the bunk bed next to ours and watched Moe unpack his things into an empty cubby-hole. Moe didn't look especially dangerous as he unloaded his belongings, and I began to wonder whether Ziggy wasn't off his rocker with all his talk about Moe.

While he went about his business, Moe began to ask me questions, stuff like how long I'd been coming to camp, did I like it here, where did I live, the usual junk.

Then he told me a little bit about himself, like he also lived in Newark where he had taught English at one of the high schools. What was more interesting was the stuff he told me about how after Pearl Harbor he had been drafted into the army and because of his Master's degree he had wound up as an officer working at the Pentagon.

"It's probably where I belong," he said. He laughed self-consciously. "As much as I hate the Nazis and the

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Japs, I don't see myself leading troops into battle. I guess you might say I'm basically a pacifist."

"What's a pacifist?"

He sat down on his bunk, the weight of his big frame causing the mattress to sag a notch. "A pacifist, Lowell, is someone who believes in trying to solve problems peacefully, who tries everything possible to avoid violence."

I looked at Moe's thick wrists and huge arms and thought that when you're built like a grizzly bear it's easy to be a pacifist. Who would ever want to mess with Moe?

"How about you, Lowell?"

I shrugged. "If I'm in the war, I'm going to kill as many Nazis as I can. I guess I'm no pacifist."

Moe laughed. "A good thing, too. If everybody was like me, how would we ever win this damn war?"

He stood up and continued unpacking his belongings, which included a bunch of books and a chess set and board. He placed them neatly on the shelf behind his bunk, and then turned to me.

"You play chess?" he asked.

"Don't know how."

"Would you like to learn?"

"I guess so."

You could see how much the idea that I might want to learn to play chess pleased him and right off the bat began to explain the game to me. The guy had a real schoolteacher mentality.

"Chess is like war," he began. "The objective is to capture the king. It doesn't matter how many pieces you lose in the process. You capture the king and you win. That's the way generals think. It doesn't matter how many men are sacrificed as long as you win the war."

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I didn't really know what Moe was talking about with his bull about chess and war and everything. But to tell you truth, right off the bat I liked the way he talked to you like you weren't some dumb kid without a brain in your head.

"I know how to play checkers," I said.

"How about tonight after dinner we'll set up the chess pieces and I'll teach you a few basics."

The time after dinner was usually a free hour before evening activities. Sometimes Ziggy and I would go down to the lake and catch frogs, or play a little one on one basketball. I mean, we'd do just about any damn thing we pleased. Playing chess with Moe would not be in my top ten list of things to do after supper, nevertheless, I said, "Yeah, sure. Sounds like fun." Why I said that I don't know, except maybe it was because Moe had this sort of expectant, trusting look on his face, and you didn't want to be the one to change it by disappointing him.

"I think I'll take a little swim before it gets too late," Moe said, after he had finished putting away all his belongings. "Want to go with me?"

On the walk down the long, dirt path leading to the lake, Moe continued to ask me questions about myself and my family, this time a little more personal. I hate it when people want to know everything about you when they don't even really know you. I think Moe was the sort of adult who liked to ask questions because he felt uncomfortable with a kid if he wasn't saying something to him. Anyway, rather than be impolite, I gave him a bunch of short answers, which seemed to be okay with him.

When we finally got to the lake, I made a beeline to Ziggy, who was standing on the dock ready to dive in,



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while Moe began to talk to one of the swimming counselors.

“I thought we were supposed to stick together,” I said to Ziggy. “How come you walked out on me?”

“What did he do?” Ziggy asked in his frenetic way that made you want to scratch.

I shrugged. “Not much.”

“He didn’t try anything funny, did he?”

“What’re you talking about?”

“You know.”

“All he did was unpack his bags, and now he wants to play chess with me tonight after dinner.”

Ziggy looked disappointed. “That’s it?”

“What the hell did you expect?”

“He’s clowning around, throwing you off guard. When you least expect it, he’s going to make his move.”

While we were talking, Moe had disrobed and put on goggles and a swimming cap. He went over to the edge of the dock and seemed poised to dive into the lake. The campers swimming in the deep area between the dock and the raft were instructed by the head waterfront counselor to return to the dock. Once the area had been cleared, Moe inhaled mightily and dove into the water. The dock was crowded with campers and counselors watching what turned out to be a world’s record for Camp Klatzman-on-the-Hudson. Moe swam three times back and forth to the raft—*underwater*. With the final lap, he had broken his own record, one he had set last year. Even Ziggy was impressed.

“The guy is a human hippo,” he said.

Campers and counselors were crowding around Moe, congratulating him, patting him on the back. Then, to my surprise, he brushed everyone aside and walked over to Ziggy and me.

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“I was thinking of going for one more lap,” he said to us, “but I wasn’t sure if I could make it.”

“Yeah, that would have been great,” I said.

I have to admit that I felt a little special because Moe had singled us out to speak to immediately after breaking the world’s underwater swimming record. Dressed only in a bathing suit, he looked even bigger than he did with regular clothes on. He had a huge barrel chest and a pair of shoulders as wide as some of those wrestlers we’d watch on Seymour Bass’s eight-inch TV back home in Newark. You definitely did not want to be around Moe if he lost his temper.

What he did next, however, I didn’t appreciate. Without warning, he mussed up my hair and then patted me on the back. “Let’s go shower up,” he said.

I turned to Ziggy. “You coming?” I asked him.

“No,” the skinny, redheaded bastard said without a blink. “I think I’ll swim a little more. See you later.”

At the bunk, Moe showered while I lay on my bed and pretended to read the latest Captain Marvel Comics, wondering when Moe was going to make his move. I couldn’t imagine exactly what that move would be, but whatever it was, I had to be ready. As it turned out, the only move Moe made, after coming out of the shower, was to play a 78 inch record on his RCA turntable before lying down.

The music, some classical thing, was really annoying, and when Moe asked me how I liked the record, I said not to be rude. “It’s okay,” I mean the guy was really ecstatic about the piece.

“You’ve got to develop a taste for Bach,” he said, and then quickly added, “like good champagne.”

I wondered why he’d figure that I’d enjoy this composer? Actually the music was the most unpleasant noise I had ever heard, bordering on sheer torture with its

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repetitive, busy, grating sounds. The worst part about it was that there was no singing. Hell, how could you sing to music when there wasn't any melody? Actually, my father liked classical music, but a different sort, opera stuff and big loud symphonies, especially the one where Fate is knocking on the door.

My mother's taste was Bing Crosby and Rudy Valley. Sometimes she'd tune in to *The Kate Smith Hour*, but only when my father wasn't around. I remember him saying once that if he had to listen to Kate Smith sing "God Bless America" one more time, he'd throw the radio out the window. Personally, I liked Frank Sinatra and old muscle-throat, Vaughn Monroe, the best. In a million years I didn't think I'd ever enjoy this Bach guy.

That evening after supper, sure enough I got stuck with Moe, who trotted out the chessboard and with terrific patience went about teaching me the fundamentals of the game. I was pretty upset at missing out on a pick-up softball game between the *Paratroopers* and the junior counselors until I began to get the hang of the different moves of the chess pieces.

In fact, I started to look forward to our nightly chess games, and after a week, I was beginning to move the pieces like I had some idea of what I was doing. I liked the way Moe wouldn't let me beat him, though he'd spot me a queen and a rook, which he said was all the advantage he was going to give me.

"During the winter join a chess club," he advised me. "You could be good. You'll see, next year we'll be playing even up."

While we played chess, Moe liked to talk about all sorts of books he had read.

"Reading books can open up a whole new world for you, Lowell. A person writes a book, and if that book is honest you find out about a complete stranger's life, the

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way he looks at the world, the things he loves and hates. Maybe the way he sees things is different than yours and then you become a little smarter than you were, a little richer as a human being.”

Moe’s favorite book was *Moby Dick* by an author named Herman Melville. “Yeah,” I said ecstatically. “I read that.” What I meant, of course, was that I had read the Classics Comics version of *Moby Dick*.

“So what did you think?” asked Moe.

“It was pretty good. I liked the ending when the whale, all harpooned and mad, charged the boat and sunk it. Captain Ahab was really a nut case. To tell you the truth, the rest of it didn’t make much sense.”

“For Melville, *Moby Dick* was more than a whale. He was a symbol of the power of nature. Man can never change nature, and if he tries he’s doomed.”

Moe liked to talk about books that way, always trying to give you the inside dope on what the book really meant, not what it seemed to mean. When he talked about books, it was with a lot of enthusiasm, as if it was a truly important part of his life. I guess you had to respect that but since I hadn’t read these books myself, other than the ones I knew about from Classic Comics, sometimes I’d get a little bored when he’d start up with *another one of his favorite books* stuff.

One night, maybe about eight or nine days after Moe had been living in our bunk, I think it was the day when I had almost beaten him with the Queen and rook spot and he had said that starting tomorrow he was taking back the rook, Moe kissed me. I mean it wasn’t any big deal, just a little good night peck on the cheek while I was lying in bed.

Taps had sounded and I was thinking about how damn close I had come to checkmating Moe in our game that night, when there he was, this huge shadow,

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standing next to the double-decker and without warning planting his lips on my cheek. I really didn't mind that as much as the alien hand on my back that began to deliver this funny little massage, a sort of herky-jerky rubbing of my skin. Was this the boa constrictor, Ziggy had talked about that was getting read to strike? I held my breath. After a few long seconds the hand abruptly withdrew from my back and without a word, Moe walked away.

The next day at Archery I told Ziggy about the kiss and the massage. He got all upset. "That's it," he said. "He's making his move. What're you going to do about it?"

I shrugged. "I don't know. What am I supposed to do? I mean, what's the big deal?"

"Everybody's been noticing how much time you've been spending with Moe."

"So what? The guy's fighting the Japs and the Nazis. The least we can do is be nice to him on his vacation. They might ship him out tomorrow and he could get his head blown off. How would you feel about that, smart ass?"

"Last night his hand was on your back."

"So what? All he did was rub it a little."

"Before you know it that hand will be on your ass."

"How do you know?"

"Cause that's the way a homo operates. First he rubs your back a little, and then he squeezes your ass, and before you know it, he's got your dick in his mouth."

"That's disgusting."

"You'll see."

That night after we finished our chess game, Moe asked me if I'd like to take a walk. I was feeling pretty damn good since even with only a Queen spot, I had given him a tough match and I said okay, why not. We

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went down to the lake and sat down on the grass. There was a pretty neat sunset, a lot of purple and orange in the sky that looked like a giant version of a painting I saw last year when our class took a trip to the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Like always, Moe asked me a lot of questions about myself.

As I got to know Moe, I found that it was really easy to talk to him about stuff that bothered you and that you didn't want to talk to your parents about. I liked the way he always seemed to be listening to you when you spouted off on just about any subject, never interrupting, never trying to pawn off some adult crap about how when you get older you'll understand better all those little things that bother you when you're thirteen. On our way back, we stopped at the rec room and Moe sat down at the piano, an old console that always sounded a little out of tune. I couldn't take my eyes off those hands that had massaged me last night as they flew across the keyboard turning that beat-up old piano into a great music-making machine.

I asked him what he was playing.

"Mozart. The Sonata in C major. You must have heard it before. It's sometimes called the *Sonata Facile*. *Facile* in Italian means easy, but the music isn't easy at all. That's Mozart's trick. The beauty is in its extraordinary simplicity."

He started the piece again, but played very slowly. "You gotta love Mozart," he said without looking up. "His music touches the soul."

I didn't know what he was talking about, but I had to admit that I liked this better than the other music I had heard on his record player. I mentioned that to him.

Moe smiled. "Comparing Mozart to Bach is like comparing Joe DiMaggio to Ted Williams. It's just a

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matter of choice. They're both pretty good." And then he asked me, "Do you play at all?"

"I can play the top part on *Heart and Soul*."

"Let's do it."

It was a bit of a tight squeeze on the bench. Moe being such a big man, our hips butted up against each other. I began to plunk away the melody with one finger, while Moe did a great improvisation on the bass part. Afterwards, we laughed, and then Moe reached over and squeezed my knee affectionately. The thing is he didn't take the hand off the knee right away, which sort of made me feel uncomfortable. Finally, I stood up, though if it wasn't for that lousy hand, I would liked to have played the piano with him some more. He didn't say anything, and we walked back to the bunk.

That Sunday was Parents' Day. I went out boating with my Dad, while Moe spent a lot of time talking with my Mom. After dinner, I walked my parents back to their car. Mom couldn't stop talking about Moe.

"He's such a gentleman," Mom said. "And he seems to like you so much, Lowell."

"You should see him swim underwater," I said.

"He invited all of us down to Washington for a weekend," she said. "He wants to show us around the city. Isn't that nice?"

Moe only kissed me a couple more times before his vacation was up and he had to report back to duty. On the day he left, he was standing in front of the bunk, his bags at his side, a huge smile plastered all over his big, round face. All the campers were instructed to be on the porch to say farewell.

"Thanks for a great two weeks," Moe said, then proceeded to shake everyone's hand. After shaking my hand, he reached across the railing and gave me a big bear hug, which was embarrassing as hell.

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After Moe left, Ziggy approached me. He was all upset. “Last night, Moe even gave me a kiss,” he said. “The guy is really a sicko.”

“He invited my parents and me to visit him in Washington.”

“Are you going to do it?”

“Mom seemed to think it might be fun.”

“Are you going to tell them?”

“Moe’s a goddamn Captain in the United States Army.”

“You better tell them or you’re an even bigger *schmuck* than I thought you were.”

Mom and I went to visit Moe in Washington on the first weekend in November. Dad’s colitis was acting up, and he insisted that we go without him.

Moe shared an apartment with another officer in the Georgetown section of Washington. The apartment consisted of a small kitchen, a decent sized living room, one bathroom and two bedrooms. The sleeping arrangements were as follows: Moe’s roommate occupied his own bedroom, Moe offered his bedroom to my mother, and Moe and I would have to share a sofa bed in the living room. My heart sank.

Moe was a terrific host. On the first day he gave us the grand tour: the top of the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, the White House, Congress, all the stuff you’re supposed to see in Washington. Tomorrow he was going to take us into the Pentagon. But as much fun as I supposed to be having, all I could think about was sharing that sofa couch with Moe later that evening.

But I was prepared. Under my pajamas I put on two jock straps and over the jock straps underwear briefs. We weren’t in bed five minutes before Moe began to whisper



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to me some sort of crap about how I needed to relax, and then his big hand started in the massage routine on my back. I squirmed about like an earthworm, but there was no getting rid of that hand.

“I want to go to sleep, Moe,” I kept repeating over and over, and he kept repeating “Relax, relax.” His breathing seemed to have quickened, and I kept remembering Ziggy’s warning: *“First he rubs your back a little, then he squeezes your ass, and before you know it, he’s got your dick in his mouth.”*

The two jock straps provided a small measure of comfort, but how were they going to stop Moe’s hand from squeezing my ass? Finally, I said, “Moe, if you don’t let me go to sleep, I’m going to tell my mother.” I must have spoken in an unfamiliar voice because immediately Moe quit the hand massage and the heavy breathing and, like a giant panda, rolled away from me. Within minutes he was sound asleep, heavy gasping noises emanating from that great barrel chest, probably the only chest in the world large enough to hold enough oxygen for a full three minutes to enable a person to break underwater swimming records.

The *“I’m going to tell my mother”* threat really turned the trick. The next night, after spending the day at the Pentagon, the FBI building, and the Mint, Moe merely registered a quick kiss on my cheek before rolling over onto his side of the bed.

All in all, you’d have to say that the weekend was a big success. My mother had a great time, and Moe never got to suck my dick.

Two months later, Ziggy’s father called my father. The shit had hit the fan because that asshole Ziggy had spilled the beans about Moe.

After the conversation with Ziggy’s father, Mom and Dad cornered me in the sunparlor. “Did you know about

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this man?" Dad asked in his infamous *watch what you say* voice.

"He only kissed me a couple of times," I said.

Mom got all flushed and began to fan herself with the palm of her hand. "He seemed like such a nice man," she half-gasped.

"Where did he kiss you?" Dad shouted. He began to breath so hard I got scared that he was going to have a heart attack.

I pointed to my cheek. "No big deal."

Dad turned to Mom. "The man is a pedophile and you let him sleep in the same bed with Lowell?" Poor Mom, I thought she was going to faint.

A couple of days later, I overheard Mom talking to her sister, Sydell. "To tell you the truth, Sydell, the one I thought he was interested in was me."

Ziggy's father wrote a letter to Moe warning him that if he ever went back to Camp Klatzman-on-the-Hudson or tried to make contact with any of the campers, especially Ziggy or myself, that he'd write to Moe's superior officer and have him court-martialled. A week later, Moe wrote back to Ziggy's father: "I will comply." The note was scribbled on a torn piece of paper. He signed it with his initials MS.

The next year Moe failed to return to Klatzman-on-the Hudson for his annual vacation. We all assumed he must have been in Europe fighting the Nazis since no one had heard from him or had any notion of what had happened to him.

About ten years later, I bumped into The Ripper at a Yankee ball game and asked him about Moe. Klatzman had told him that several years ago he had read an article in the *Central Jewish News* that Moe had been killed in

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an automobile accident in Germany. He had called up Moe's sister to offer his condolences. She told him that the information that had been released by the army was inaccurate. Moe was dead all right, but there had been no accident. Moe had shot himself with his service revolver.

Last month my wife and I went to a concert at the Performing Arts Center in Newark. The pianist played the Brahms Second Piano Concerto. After he had finished, the applause was so enthusiastic that he graciously played an encore—the first movement of the Mozart Sonata in C Major, the *Sonata Facile*.

The soloist received a standing ovation. While we were applauding, my wife glanced at me. “Lowell, you're crying,” she said.

“Dammit, I can cry if I feel like it.” I ran a hand across my eyes. “Concerts over, let's go home,” I said, the *Sonata Facile* still playing in my mind.

There are some things in life that you can never explain. Maybe Ziggy would have understood. Of course, Ziggy never got to play chess or *Heart and Soul* with Moe on that crappy out-of-tune console in the rec room, but he did watch Moe break the world's underwater swimming record, not a bad achievement for a fat, out-of-shape, lonely English teacher.