



BRIAN AKA "BEAR"

STORY

DENNIS COOPER

"A DISQUIETING GENIUS." — *VANITY FAIR*

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Jerk” previously appeared in the book *Jerk* (Artspace Books, 1993).

“Ugly Man” and “The Boy on the Far Left” previously appeared in Scott Treleaven’s art catalog *Some Boys Wander by Mistake* (Kavi Gupta Gallery, John Connelly Presents, and Marc Selwyn Fine Art, 2007) and in *Dennis Cooper: Writing at the Edge* (Sussex Academic Press, 2008).

“Graduate Seminar,” “Santa Claus vs. Johnny Crawford,” “The Worst (1960–1971),” and “Three Boys Who Thought

Experimental Fiction Was for Pussies” previously appeared in *Dennis Cooper: Writing at the Edge* (Sussex Academic Press, 2008).

“Knife/Tape/Rope” was originally the text of a performance art work of the same name created and directed by Ishmael Houston-Jones in 1985.

“One Night in 1979 . . .” previously appeared in the anthology *Thrills, Pills, Chills, and Heartache: Adventures in the First Person* (Alyson Press, 2004).

BRIAN AKA “BEAR”

I spent the summer of 1969 vacationing with my family on the island of Maui. I was sixteen, and Bear was fifteen. He lived very near the beachfront hotel where we were staying and spent most of his mornings surfing the smallish, reliable waves that died on the sand a few yards below our balcony. Watching him became my daily routine, not because I liked surfing itself, much less his rather klutzy if patient style. He was the kind of boy I used to close my eyes, reach into my underwear, and build from scratch. To see Bear, track down a

photo of the legendary skateboarding wunderkind Jay Adams when he was in his early teens. Take away Adams's grace, and Bear could have been his twin. One morning early in our vacation, my favorite surfer noticed the pale, slightly older boy studying him from a perch on the hotel and yelled for me to come down and share a joint. By the time he'd lit the second joint, Bear, who was as confident and blunt as I was shy and circuitous, had forced me to admit I was into him, and we were walking back to his place.

Bear was a jokey, class clown type who seemed lazily asexual in public, but, when alone and stoned, he was a sex maniac with the wildest imagination I'd ever encountered to that point. Nowadays there are labels for guys like him—"hungry, insatiable bottom" might begin to do the trick—but back then he seemed indescribable. I'd read about boys like him in novels, but the novels in question had been written by de Sade, and the characters in question were only slutty thanks to other characters' death threats. With Bear, it was almost nonstop sex the whole two months we spent together, both one-on-one and with a wide array of other young locals and tourists, quite a few of them otherwise straight guys disarmed by drugs and Bear's lean, persuasive body. We even had several incestuous S&M-ish three-ways with his thuggish older brother. He taught me a lot, instigated my lifelong fascination with rimming, and, even more than that, with young male asses in general, scarring my fantasies and fiction forever.

When I returned to LA at the end of summer, Bear and I exchanged pornographic letters for a while. There was even some

back and forth about him running away to LA to live secretly in our “maid’s quarters,” as my parents joshingly referred to the disused, semi-storage room area over our garage. But then Bear started enthusing too much about all the crazy sex he could have with all my horny LA friends. For some reason, I had been thinking we’d be devoted boyfriends, so I changed the subject. Then one day Bear wrote to say he’d quit doing drugs and found Christ. There was no regret or backpedaling or recrimination in the message, just his casual announcement and a less lascivious than usual good-bye. It was okay with me by then because his body had been usurped by bodies more or less available to me. About two years later, I got an invitation to Bear’s wedding accompanied by a touristy snapshot of him and the presumed bride standing in a comically tight hug on the same beach where he’d surfed.

About the Author

DENNIS COOPER is the author of the George Miles Cycle, an interconnected sequence of five novels that includes *Closer*, *Frisk*, *Try*, *Guide*, and *Period*. His post-George Miles Cycle novels include *My Loose Thread*, *The Sluts*, which won France's Prix Sade and the 2005 Lambda Literary Award for Best Men's Fiction, and his most recent work, the highly acclaimed *God, Jr.* He divides his time between Los Angeles and Paris.

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