



**OLIVER TWINK**  
STORY  
**DENNIS COOPER**

**"A DISQUIETING GENIUS."—VANITY FAIR**

# OLIVER TWINK

SHORT STORY

DENNIS COOPER



HarperCollins e-books



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“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).



OLIVER TWINK





**Chris?**

What?

**Chris.**

What.

**How long have  
you lived here?**

I don't know.

**It's been exactly  
three and a half  
months tonight.**

Yeah, I guess.

**A lot's changed.**

I guess. What do  
you mean?

**Well, for one  
thing, you were  
only shooting  
dope once a day  
then.**

About, yeah.

**Sometimes twice.**

Yeah. Something  
like that.

**I mean you  
weren't a full-  
blown junkie like**

**you are now.**  
**Sorry.**

No, you're right.  
That was stupid.

**What was?**

I should've never  
started doing this  
much.

**Because how  
much do you do  
now?**

A day?

**Yeah.**

Fuck. Three shots,  
I guess.

**Actually, it's five.**

No it isn't. Oh  
wait, yeah,  
sometimes.

**Thanks to me.**

What?

**I just mean I'm  
paying for it.**

Fuck, you're going  
to pull that shit?

**That's not what  
I'm saying.**

Fuck you. You're  
the one that wanted  
to be my fucking  
uncle.

**I never said that.  
That's your take.**

I hate it when you  
pull this shit.

**Calm down.**

Shut up. God.

**You're ruining  
your high.**

You're ruining it,  
you fuck. Jesus.

**Calm down. I was  
just saying . . .**

What.

**That we've  
known each other  
for a while now.  
That we've been  
through a lot.**

Yeah.

**That's all.**

Okay.

**And it's been  
great to know  
you.**

Yeah, well, that  
cuts both ways.

**What do you  
mean?**

I don't want to get  
into it.

**Go ahead.**

Look, you help me  
out. You give me  
all this shit, but  
I'm fucked, aren't  
I? I mean what the  
fuck do I do?

**You do what you  
want.**

I don't know.  
Maybe you  
shouldn't just give  
me shit. Maybe if  
you told me to fuck  
off, I'd stop doing

dope and . . . Fuck, I  
don't know.

**Get a job?**

Who knows?  
That's the fucking  
point.

**But it's too late.**

What?

**It's too late. This  
is what you are.  
It's what you  
wanted. You said  
so. You wanted it  
to be easy.**

Yeah, when I was  
fucking . . . I'm  
only fucking  
nineteen.

**What would you  
do?**



I don't know.

**Look, you've got  
problems, deep  
problems.**

Oh, great.

**You went on anti-  
depressants when  
you were . . . what,  
seven? You did  
nothing but get  
into trouble. You  
had no close  
friends, no  
money. You  
never wanted to  
do anything. You  
don't speak to  
your parents.  
You don't have a  
single friend left.  
Right?**

Yeah, yeah.

**Your whole life**

**you've either been  
suicidal or you've  
blown up and  
alienated  
everyone.**

Shit.

**What?**

Nothing. I'm just  
agreeing with you.

**But I understand  
you. You hate it,  
but I'm the only  
person who's  
stuck it out with  
you.**

Whatever.

**And I haven't  
asked you for  
anything.**

Yeah, but you ask  
for a lot.

**Your company.**

You practically  
own me, you  
know? It's fucked  
up.

**I don't own you.**

Yeah, you fucking  
do. You and  
getting loaded are  
my whole fucking  
world now. You  
could throw me  
out, and I'd be  
fucked.

**But you know I  
wouldn't.**

No, I don't know  
that. It's fucked  
up. You're all  
generous and  
obsessed or  
whatever with me  
and shit, but you

have all the power.  
It's like a fucking  
game.

**That's the heroin  
talking.**

Yeah, but what  
have you gotten  
out of it? And  
don't say I'm such  
a great guy, and  
it's just great to be  
around me.

**It's true. Well, I  
don't know about  
great. Interesting  
for sure.**

Come on. I'm a  
fucking . . . I watch  
TV. I listen to  
music you hate.

**You're  
surprisingly  
interesting—**

Interesting?

**To me, you are.**

Jesus, I treat you  
like shit.

**I know you really  
well, okay? In  
some ways, much  
better than you  
know yourself.**

This is what I  
mean.

**What?**

I don't know. That  
it's confusing.  
Fuck.

**What's  
confusing?**

What do you mean  
“what’s  
confusing”?

**I mean what are  
you thinking?**

Nothing.

**Say it.**

Say what?

**What you're  
thinking.**

What I'm  
thinking? I'm  
thinking I wish I  
was dead. I'm  
thinking what I  
always think. Who  
fucking cares? It's  
boring.

**That's interesting.**

I'm sure it is to  
you.

**Okay.**

What, that's not  
interesting to you?

**Obviously, it is.**

Okay, then.

**So . . . ?**

So . . . Fuck.

**What?**

Okay, I'm thinking  
maybe I should do  
something for you.  
I never do shit for  
you.

**Like what?**

What could I do  
for you that would  
be really great?

**What do you have  
in mind?**

I don't know.

**Do you want me  
to think of  
something?**

Yeah, if you want  
to. I don't know.  
The only thing I  
can think of . . . but  
I don't know if you  
still want it . . .

**What?**

You remember that  
time . . . Shit, that  
time we had that  
talk about . . . you  
know?

**We've had a lot of  
talks.**

You know what I  
mean. When I was  
here that first  
night. I thought



you were . . . you  
know, that you  
were being nice to  
me because . . .  
Fuck, you know  
what I'm talking  
about.

**Because I wanted  
to fuck you.**

Yeah, but you said  
. . . shit, you know  
what you said.

**What did I say?**

Fuck you.

**What?**

You fucking  
remember what  
you said. I'm not  
going to say it.

**I remember.**

Okay, so you said  
that it wasn't just  
about you fucking  
me because you  
were into that other  
thing, but that,  
yeah, you thought I  
was good looking.

**I think what I  
said was that I  
would fuck you in  
a millisecond.**

Yeah. Well, I  
guess you sort of  
got over that.

**No, I didn't.**

Yeah, right.

**I still think you'd  
be an amazing  
fuck.**

Right.

**I do.**

What, are you  
fucking nuts? I'm  
sorry.

**There's just  
something about  
you. It's not just  
the looks,  
although there's  
this tragedy to  
you, to what the  
drugs have done  
to your looks,  
that's incredibly  
hot. You've gone  
from really cute  
to beautiful in this  
scary, profound  
way. But it's not  
physical. It's the  
whole thing. It's  
the way you are,  
the way you  
move, the fucked-  
up shit, the  
boring stuff, what**

a loser you are,  
the whole thing.  
It just gets to me.  
You turn me on  
even more than  
you used to, since  
you asked.

Yeah, right.

You'll be nodding  
out, watching TV,  
whatever, and I'll  
get hard just  
looking at you.  
Sometimes when  
you're out of it, I  
bury my face in  
your crotch just  
to smell you.

Yeah, well, I know  
that.

Yeah, just  
to know what  
having you would  
be like.

Okay, that's  
enough of that.

**That's just one  
example. You  
don't even want  
to know.**

Shit. If you'd said  
that a month ago, I  
would've fucking  
...

**What?**

I don't know.  
That's fucked up.

**You would have  
had sex with me,  
or ...?**

No. I don't know.  
I don't even  
remember ...

**Remember ...**

I don't know. You  
know, why? Why,  
you know . . . I  
don't know. Fuck,  
I hate myself.

**I know.**

I'm so fucked up.  
I'm just a waste. I  
just drain the  
fucking world. I'm  
just a fucking pain  
in the ass. There's  
just nothing about  
me that means any  
fucking thing. I  
hate that I'm  
fucking alive.

**I understand.**

I know you  
fucking do.

**Go ahead and  
cry. I don't mind.**

Fuck. I'm so  
fucking selfish,  
and I don't even  
know what I want.  
I don't understand  
myself. I never  
did. I don't know  
why I do things or  
don't do things,  
and then I don't  
fucking do  
anything, and I'm  
such a fucking  
asshole. I really  
fucking hate  
myself.

**You shouldn't,  
but you've never  
let anyone help  
you.**

I let you help me.

**Yeah, in your  
own weird way.**

I want you to help

me, okay? It's just  
... I never  
understood why. I  
don't understand  
anything. I'm  
afraid of you. I'm  
afraid of my  
fucking self, you  
know?

**I know.**

You know, a  
month ago ... It's  
just, I don't know.

**What?**

I thought about it.

**About what?**

You know. Just  
sort of ... you  
know. Fuck, you  
know what I mean.

**Sleeping with me.**



Yeah, but . . . Fuck.  
Why are you doing  
this shit? You  
know what I mean.

**I want you to say  
it.**

Why?

**Because I need to  
know you really  
want it. I need to  
know that you're  
sure.**

I'm sure.

**Then say it.  
Make it real.**

Fuck. I want . . .  
I'm just going to  
say it like this,  
because . . . I hate  
that you're making  
me do this. Don't  
fucking look at me.

I thought about  
what if . . . I wanted  
to be with God?  
Would that be like  
your big dream  
come true?

**Honestly?**

Yeah.

**If you mean if you  
were dead, yeah.  
If it were you,  
yeah.**

It makes a  
difference that it's  
me.

**A huge difference.**

Why?

**Because I'd know  
who was dying so  
it would be heavy  
and tragic. You'd**

**be here, and then  
you wouldn't.  
You'd just be  
something that  
looks like you.  
And then it would  
look less and less  
like you until you  
were just a  
corpse, a male  
corpse.**

Because I'd rot.

**I wouldn't let you  
rot. I'd fuck you  
for a while and  
then burn you or  
dismember you or  
bury you.**

Wait. After I was  
dead?

**I honestly don't know.**

You haven't said  
anything about that

in a while.

**Really?**

Yeah, you used to say things. You used to make these weird jokes about it.

**I think it's too real to be funny now.**

So you're not going to kill me?

**I was, but . . . I don't know. I haven't done it, have I? So I honestly don't know. I think I waited too long. Maybe I never really wanted to anyway. Maybe it was just an idea.**

So you aren't  
going to?

**Why, do you want  
me to?**

No. I don't know.  
When I think about  
killing myself  
sometimes, I do.  
But maybe that's  
because I can't do  
it myself. All I  
have to do is shoot  
too much dope, but  
I just can't. I've  
tried a couple of  
times, obviously.

**I know.**

But you didn't let  
me die.

**I didn't want it to  
happen like that.**

I could have made myself

OD when you weren't  
around, but I guess  
I was afraid to.

**Yeah, well, please  
don't.**

I won't. Wow,  
that's kind of cool.

**What is?**

You saying please  
don't.

**You know ...  
honestly, you're  
very sweet. It's a  
shame. You  
really had  
possibilities.**

That's cool.

**But I meant  
please don't  
because I don't  
want to have to**

**deal with it. I'd  
have to . . . deal  
with it, you  
know? I mean  
with your body  
and the guilt and  
all of that.**

Oh, right. That  
would be fucked  
up.

**But . . . I also don't  
want you to die  
because I just  
don't want you to,  
okay?**

Okay.

**I can't believe I  
told you that.**

So you don't want  
to be boyfriends?

**I don't think you**

**even know what  
that means.**

I know what  
boyfriends means.  
I'm not a fucking  
idiot. I had gay  
friends and shit. I  
just think that way  
I could do  
something useful,  
and maybe you'd  
give me some  
money, and you'd  
maybe get off on  
that.

**That's what you  
meant?**

Yeah, what did you  
think?

**I thought you  
meant boyfriends.  
Like normal in  
love boyfriends.**



Yeah, well . . . yeah,  
I did. I just  
thought that's how  
you wanted it.

**But aren't you  
straight? I mean  
you've always  
made this big deal  
about how you're  
straight.**

Fuck off.

**And . . . look, I'm  
sort of . . . I'm not  
sure if I . . .**

It's okay. Forget  
it.

**No, listen. The  
boyfriend thing . . .  
I've never even  
considered it.**

Forget it.

**No, I'm saying  
maybe that's the  
answer. I'm just  
not sure.**

I don't care.

**Yeah, you do.**

No, why would I?  
Oh, you mean  
you're going to  
throw me out?

**What?**

You're going to kick  
me out.

**Where the hell  
did that come  
from?**

You will. I  
fucking know it. I  
never should have  
said that. God, I  
hate you.

**No, that's the  
problem. I don't  
want to throw you  
out. I know how  
horrible that  
would be for you.  
I've put you and  
me in this total  
mess. There's no  
solution, and I  
don't know what  
in the hell to do.**

Yeah, you do. You  
want me dead so  
you can do your  
sex thing and then  
feel sad that I'm  
dead or whatever.  
You just said that.

**Ideally, yeah.  
Realistically, no.**

Didn't you say  
that?

**Basically.**

Then I don't  
understand.

**It's not a realistic  
idea.**

But I've fucked  
everything up, and  
you never made it  
seem like I was so  
... Oh, forget it.  
Whatever. I really  
don't care.

**Look, you're  
straight.**

Fuck you.

**And you're a  
junkie. You  
chose that. You  
don't care about  
anything but  
doing dope.**

How do you  
fucking know?

**What, I'm  
wrong?**

I . . . Fuck, man.

**What?**

You know what  
I'm going to say.

**No, I don't. This  
is your problem.  
You don't give me  
anything. You  
just assume I'm  
so interested in  
you that I know  
what you think.**

Fuck. You don't  
love me.

**What?**

You don't love me,  
right? You don't  
fucking love me,  
right? That's what  
you're saying.

**You're not even  
gay. You're such  
a junkie, you  
don't even think  
about things like  
that.**

Fuck off.

**What?**

You know fucking  
what. Shit.

**I honestly don't.**

Fuck you. You  
know I'm gay.  
You know I just  
can't fucking deal  
with it. I hate that  
you do that. I just  
hate that you do  
that.

**Chris.**

What?!

**I don't think you  
know what you  
are.**

Yeah, I do.

**Then why haven't  
you given me a  
sign? I would  
have fucked you  
in a second. You  
know that. You  
knew it would  
have been a  
disaster, but I  
would have done  
it in a second.**

You know why I  
didn't.

**Because you  
aren't really gay  
and when you  
thought about the  
sex you couldn't  
do it.**

No, because people  
want what they  
can't have and all  
that shit. They  
make things they  
can't have into  
more than they are,  
and . . . you know,  
that's the one thing  
I had, that I have,  
that you . . . like me  
or whatever so  
much and it  
doesn't make any  
sense.

**It makes total  
sense.**

Yeah, well, I don't  
think so.

**Look, from  
your perspective, have  
you ever had  
anyone in your  
life like me, who  
accepts you so**



**unconditionally,  
who wants to  
spend all their  
time with you,  
and who gives you  
anything you  
want?**

Yeah, my uncle.

**Who you loved.**

Yeah, and who  
fucking died  
because of me.

**So what else do  
you need to  
know?**

What? I don't  
know what the  
fuck you're saying.

**Your paranoia  
aside, I've never  
wavered in my  
interest in you.**

What are you  
saying?

**I don't know  
what I'm saying.  
I'm just saying it.**

Forget it. It's just  
fucking bullshit  
anyway.

**What is?**

You want to fuck  
me but you don't  
want to fuck me or  
I don't know.

**I do.**

Bullshit. I don't  
want to do it  
anyway. You'd  
just hate me after  
that.

**You're the one  
who'd hate me.**

No, I wouldn't.

**Why, what do you  
think you'd feel?**

It depends on what  
you felt.

**What do you  
think I'd feel?**

That I'm an ugly,  
skinny piece of shit  
who's boring in  
bed.

**You don't get it.**

What?

**Do you think  
you're that hot?  
Has your life been  
filled with guys  
and girls  
obsessing on  
sleeping with  
you? Waiting  
and waiting and**

**doing anything  
they had to do to  
fuck you, no  
matter how long  
it took?**

No, no. Fucking  
hardly.

**Okay.**

Yeah, okay.

**So you can't  
really think that if  
we had sex, I'd  
say, Okay, I really  
expected a lot  
more than that. I  
changed my  
mind. It's over.**

Yeah, but what if  
you're  
disappointed?

**What do you  
mean?**

I mean girls used  
to say I was  
fucking boring in  
bed.

**How so?**

Because I just  
wanted what I  
wanted. I didn't  
fucking care. I  
didn't go out of my  
fucking way to do  
anything for them.

**But this would be  
different.**

**Besides, you  
wouldn't have  
to do  
anything except  
cooperate. I  
would just want  
to have you there  
to enjoy in  
whatever way I  
wanted.**

Why?

**You want me to  
get graphic?**

No. I don't know.  
I just mean . . .  
you haven't even seen  
me with my  
clothes off except  
for my shirt, unless  
you spied on me or  
something when I  
didn't know it.

**I saw you naked  
once.**

When?

**You know when.  
About a month  
ago.**

How?

**You know how. I  
walked by your**

**door for whatever  
reason, and it was  
open, and I  
wondered why  
you left it open,  
because you  
always shut it,  
and I looked  
inside, and you  
were naked.**

Okay.

**Yeah.**

Doing what?

**You remember  
what.**

Okay, I remember.

**So I've seen you.**

So you know I'm  
no fucking big  
deal.

**Honestly, I  
thought you  
looked hot.**

Girls didn't think  
so.

**Fuck girls.  
Anyway, how do  
you know?**

I don't know.  
They never said  
anything. I'm not  
muscular or  
whatever.

**Thank God.**

Yeah, well, then  
why didn't you  
fucking come in? I  
fucking looked at  
you. You fucking  
knew. I could see  
that you knew.



**You know what I  
thought? I  
thought you were  
feeling so  
depressed that  
you didn't care.  
To me, your eyes  
said, Fuck, here it  
is. You still want  
it, take it.**

Exactly.

**That's not the  
same thing as  
wanting it.**

It is to me. When  
you didn't want it,  
it fucking killed  
me. I've never  
hated myself so  
much.

**Do you know I  
went into the  
kitchen and got  
that big knife and**

**almost ran in  
your room and  
stuck it in your  
back? I was so  
frustrated and so  
turned on and so  
sick of you  
depriving me.**

Yeah, I heard you  
in the kitchen.

**What did you  
think?**

I didn't think  
anything. I was  
scared that it was  
happening, and . . . I  
don't know, that I  
just . . . I was just  
fucking scared.

**Me too. You  
should have seen  
me.**

It's like I knew  
exactly how it  
would feel, and  
when I knew that, I  
wanted it. I was  
shaking and I  
couldn't breathe I  
wanted it so bad.  
Oh, fuck.

**So what did it feel  
like?**

I can't describe it.  
I'm not like you.

**Maybe I should  
have done it.**

When you didn't  
come back, I  
wanted to kill  
myself. I mean  
more than I ever  
have before. I felt  
so fucking  
hopeless and ugly  
and stupid. I

thought you saw  
me, and then you  
didn't want me.

**If I'd come back,  
I would have  
killed you.**

I would have let  
you. God, you're  
such a fucking  
asshole.

**Don't yell.**

Fuck you, fuck  
you, fuck you.  
Don't you fucking  
understand? Don't  
you fucking get it?

**I think I get it. I  
just can't believe  
it.**

I fucking love you.  
I don't want to  
fucking live.

**Okay, but don't  
you understand?**

I don't fucking  
care.

**I want you to love  
me. I almost  
killed you because  
you didn't.**

**Because you were  
finally giving it to  
me, but it didn't  
mean anything  
because it didn't  
mean anything to  
you.**

You didn't want it.

**I did.**

No, you wanted to  
kill me.

**Because you  
didn't want it.**

I did.

**I wanted it, Chris.**

Yeah, well, I know  
that now. You say  
that now. But you  
seem like you  
don't want it now.

**I want it.**

So what's the  
problem?

**What do you  
think?**

I think . . . Fuck, I  
think you kind of  
want it, but you  
don't really want it  
because I'm a  
useless piece of  
shit so it won't  
fucking mean  
anything.

**You're not.**

Bullshit. I mean  
thanks.

**Sure. Don't be  
angry.**

I need to do a shot.  
Where's my stuff?

**It's right there.**

Look, I have to say  
something.

**What?**

I'm just going to  
say this. I know  
this is pathetic, but  
... Do you love  
me or not?  
Because it seems  
like ... you're kind  
of saying you do.

**Why, what did I  
say?**

Well, you said I'm  
cute and interesting  
and . . . you don't  
want to throw me  
out and you want  
to have sex with  
me and you don't  
want me to kill  
myself.

**Yeah.**

So . . . Oh, forget it.  
I don't fucking  
care. I just want to  
get high.

**I agree that  
makes me sound  
like somebody  
who loves the  
person he's  
talking about.**

Cool.



**But I don't want  
to talk about it  
anymore.**

I don't either. Let  
me do my shot.

**I mean if I do, I  
do, and if I don't,  
I don't.**

I don't care. Hold  
on a second.

**I mean I probably  
do.**

Whatever. Look, I  
love you. I want to  
have sex with you.  
I want you to love  
me, okay? But  
you're ruining my  
high, so please shut  
the fuck up.

## 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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