"Why?" Adam asked.

"She could get off and come back here."

Adam shrugged. "Let her," he said. "The last person in the world I'd be afraid of is some old lady." He took a drag off his cigarette and turned away to watch the cars again.

Seth kept glancing toward the exit ramp to see if the woman in the blue Toyota had gotten off. He was really tempted to leave, but he stayed because he liked being with Adam. It made him feel good that a cool guy like Adam let him hang around.

A few minutes passed and the blue Toyota still did not appear on the exit ramp. Seth relaxed a little. He had smoked his Marlboro almost all the way down to the filter and his mouth tasted awful. Smoke kept getting in his eyes and making them water. He dropped the cigarette to the sidewalk and crushed it under his sneaker, relieved to be finished with it.

"Here's the way to do it," Adam said. He took the butt of his cigarette between his thumb and middle finger and flicked it over the side of the bridge and down into the traffic. With a burst of red sparks it hit the windshield of a black Camaro passing below. Adam turned and grinned. Seth smiled back uncomfortably. He was beginning to wonder just how far Adam would go.

Neither of them saw the black Camaro pull off onto the exit ramp and come up behind them on the bridge. Seth didn't notice it until he heard a door slam. He turned and saw three big guys getting out of the car. They were all wearing nylon sweatsuits, and they looked strong. Seth suddenly decided that it was time to go, but he quickly realized that he was surrounded.

"Uh, Adam," Seth nudged him with his elbow.

"What?" Adam turned around and looked shocked. In the meantime the three big guys were coming closer. Seth and Adam backed against the bridge wall. Seth felt his stomach tighten. His heart began to beat like a machine gun. Adam looked pretty scared too. Was it Seth's imagination, or was his friend trembling?

"Which one of you twerps flicked that butt on my car?" The question came from the husky guy with a black moustache and long black hair that curled behind his ears.

Seth and Adam glanced at each other. Seth was determined not to tell. He didn't believe in squealing on his friends. But suddenly he noticed that all three guys were staring at him. He quickly looked at Adam and saw why. Adam was pointing at him.

Before Seth could say anything, the husky guy reached forward and lifted him off the ground by the collar of his jacket. His feet kicked in the air uselessly for a second and then he was thrown against the front fender of the Camaro. He hit with a thud and lost his breath. Before he had a chance to recover, the guy grabbed him by the hair and forced his face toward the windshield.

"Lick it off," he grumbled.

Seth didn't know what he was talking about. He tried to raise his head, but the husky guy pushed his face closer to the windshield. God, he was strong.

"I said, lick it."

Lick what? Seth wanted to shout. Then he looked down at the glass and saw the little spot of grey ash where Adam's cigarette had hit. Oh, no. He stiffened. The thought made him sick. He tried to twist his head around, but the guy leaned his weight against Seth and pushed his face down again.

"Till it's clean," the guy said, pressing Seth's face down until it was only a couple of centimetres from the smooth, tinted glass. Seth stared at the little spot of ash. With the husky guy's weight on him, he could hardly breathe. The car's fender was digging into his ribs. Where was Adam?

The husky guy leaned harder against him, squeezing Seth painfully against the car. He pushed Seth's face down until it actually pressed against the cool glass. Seth could feel a spasm in his chest as his lungs cried for air. But he clamped his mouth closed. He wasn't going to give the guy the satisfaction of seeing him lick that spot.

The husky guy must have known it. Suddenly he pulled Seth up, then slammed it back down against the windshield. Wham! Seth landed backwards, his hands covering his nose and mouth. Everything felt numb, and he was certain his nose and some teeth were broken. He landed and landed in a sitting position, bending forward, his throbbing buried in his hands.

A second passed and he heard someone laugh. Looking up he saw the three guys get back into the Camaro. The car lurched away, screeching rubber.

"You're bleeding." Adam was standing over him. Seth took his hand away from his mouth and saw that it was covered with bright red