

1 Stifled by the awkward tension in the room, Joseph gained
2 only a vague and fleeting impression of Tom Leyton — loose dark
3 clothing, large hands and solid forearms and a reddish face framed
4 by sandy hair and beard.

5 Joseph kept his head bowed and concentrated on arranging
6 his pencils and preparing a clean page in his sketchpad. His hands
7 felt large and clumsy and incapable of even the simplest tasks. He
8 fumbled with his pencils, balanced the sketchpad awkwardly on
9 his knees and accidentally tore the tissue paper that separated the
10 pages. All the time he sensed dark, unfeeling eyes coldly studying
11 his nervousness.

12 When Joseph eventually selected a pencil and sharpened it,
13 there was nothing left to do but draw. However, in order to do that,
14 he knew he would have to look into the face of the man sitting
15 only a metre away. Suddenly he felt engulfed with the same panic
16 that swept over him when he had to perform an oral at school.
17 No matter how hard he tried, he could never lift his head to
18 confront that fearful wall of faces.

19 But here there was no escape. He had come to draw Tom
20 Leyton and there was no way he could do that without looking
21 at him. With his hand poised over the empty page Joseph forced
22 himself to raise his eyes. When he did, he discovered no dark stare
23 confronting him. Tom Leyton had his head tilted up as if he knew
24 that Joseph needed to see his face, yet his eyes remained focused
25 on the carpet. He sat rigidly and self-consciously in the lounge
26 chair. His only movement was an occasional hand that flew to
27 his beard, fingered it lightly and dropped to his lap. Although he
28 knew the man before him was probably somewhere in his fifties, at
29 that moment he reminded Joseph of a young boy — someone like

30 himself, feeling uncertain and awkward and hoping that no one
31 would notice.

32 For the first time Joseph had the opportunity to really observe
33 Tom Leyton. After all the wild rumours he had heard about
34 disfigurement and deformity, it was quite a shock to see that Tom
35 Leyton's face was strong and engaging, although it invited no
36 communication. It might even have been a handsome face once,
37 and perhaps still was, but it looked as if it had seen too much and
38 didn't care to see any more. Joseph looked more closely at his
39 subject. Tom Leyton's hair was long and fell in sandy waves over
40 his ears. A full beard fanned out in streaks of grey below his mouth
41 but elsewhere showed patches of reddish-brown, like tea stains.
42 Slight bags formed small semi-circles of flesh below the eyes,
43 making them seem smaller and narrower than his sister's, and a
44 tinge of red was visible in his complexion.

45 Joseph was lost in his observations when Tom Leyton
46 unexpectedly glanced up. For a second the man and the boy locked
47 eyes before they both hurriedly looked down, Tom Leyton to his
48 old spot on the faded carpet and Joseph to his sketchpad, where his
49 pencil scratched haphazardly on the paper.

50 So Joseph began his drawing of Tom Leyton, but his thoughts
51 never strayed far from that first brief contact. As he peered into the
52 dark caves of Tom Leyton's eyes, a flash of emotion had blazed
53 momentarily before coldness and shadow swamped it. If it had
54 been a fire of hatred or anger or even some simmering unnamed
55 evil that he had seen, at least he would have been better prepared.
56 But it was something very different. Tom Leyton's eyes had shown
57 fear, and Joseph, fidgeting nervously before him, realised with
58 amazement that he was the cause.