

A **BL** CLASSIC

A BOY'S SWEET SORROW AND SATISFACTION



BY PETER GILBERT
& TOM HOLT

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by Peter Gilbert
& Tom Holt

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**A BOY'S SWEET SORROW
AND SATISFACTION**

Chapter One

Ben was almost asleep when he heard the sound: a slight rhythmic rustling of the sheets in the bed next to his. Roommates at school soon get to know each other's nighttime habits and it was pretty obvious what Howard was up to: he had waited until he thought Ben was asleep and had now rolled onto his back and was starting to wank, thinking, no doubt, of Mark, his absent lover.

Damn, Ben thought, why had the boy put it off until *now*? He'd asked Howard earlier if he wanted a quick pull, but all the boy had said was, "No, I'm not in the mood." Howard was like that: changeable, temperamental, sometimes happy to siphon off a little pubertal tension with a quick mutual toss, at others primly proper, like a Victorian maid "saving herself" for her beloved.

The rustling in the sheets went on. Ben could picture what was happening beneath them all too vividly: the small somewhat grubby hand wrapped around that hardened shaft which in the months they had been rooming together had grown from 2½ to four inches, moving the loose skin up and down, the tips of his first and second ink-stained schoolboy fingers pressed against the most sensitive area of the foreskin, the pink, moist cock-tip peeking out with every down-stroke and going back into hiding on every return. And beneath the covers the most delicious fragrances would start to be released: of sweet skin, the mustiness of a freshly extended boyhood cock, the dried and now quickening sweat of a youngster neither child nor adolescent but something magical in between.

Ben's nearly full-grown penis needed little stimulus to erect itself – it had, after all, been doing that for all of its fifteen years, and especially for the last four; now, listening to Howard wanking not more than a yard and a half away, it was torturing him, arguing with him: why was Ben neglecting it, his best and most faithful companion in pleasure? Didn't it deserve a stroke or two – or, better yet, why not introduce it once again to its smaller mate just across the narrow gap between their two beds?

Ben reached down and took it in his right hand. Already a little pearl of lubricant had leaked out of the eye in its head, making the travel of his fingers indescribably delicious. But how much finer it would be if there were two cocks in his right hand rather than one – and his left hand was exploring Howard's lovely, rounded bottom!

He couldn't resist: "I thought you said you weren't in the mood," he whispered.

The rhythmic rustling stopped. "I thought you were asleep," Howard said.

"How can I sleep with you shaking the whole dorm doing that?" Howard giggled. "Let's do it together, all right?"

"Your bed or mine?"

Ben rolled out from under his covers and slipped under Howard's. Howard turned towards Ben to make room for him. Their cock-tips touched, sending shivers all through Ben's body.

"Just so we can get to sleep," Howard said, lying back, letting Ben take over. "And no kissing."

Through country lanes overhung with foliage, sped a small red saloon car. Richard, the driver, looked at his watch and frowned. "Silly old fool!" he muttered, not for the first time that morning. He had driven a long way, been delayed several times, and was not in the best of tempers when he finally drew

up at a pair of large, wrought iron gates behind which stood an extraordinary mock-gothic gate house.

A young man emerged. He was carrying a baseball bat.

“You're late!” he growled.

Richard smiled. “Got held up. A prisoner's escaped from Fernhurst and they've put up road blocks,” he explained. “How's the old man?”

“He's okay.” The young man unlocked the gates and swung them back. “Just you?” he asked. There was something aggressive here that Richard didn't like.

“Well I haven't got an escaped prisoner in the back if that's what you mean.”

“I'm supposed to check. Still, you're okay and you're late already. On yer way.”

Richard smiled and waved. In the mirror he watched the young man close the gates and lock them again. The drive led past a lake. Rabbits scampered away from the road. A small flock of sheep grazed unconcernedly beneath the trees. The drive swung sharply to the right and the house came in sight. It was the ugliest building Richard knew. It had been built in the nineteenth century by a millionaire industrialist with more money than taste and was inhabited now, in Richard's opinion, by a man with a similar lack of aesthetic judgment. The battlements, the turrets and the cannons at the foot of the steps were oddly at variance with the huge stained glass windows and Greek portico.

A liveried boy servant, obviously warned of Richard's arrival, stood on the steps.

“Sir doesn't like to be kept waiting, sir,” he said as Richard climbed out of the car.

“I know!” For a moment, Richard's mask of good humor slipped. To be reprimanded by one of his employer's cast-off boyfriends after a six hour drive irritated him.

“Where is he?” he asked.

“In his sanctum, sir. Shall I bring you a drink, sir?”

“A wine and soda would go down nicely. Thanks.”

The boy opened the door for him and minced away. Richard set off down a long corridor. He paused in front of a huge rococo mirror to brush his hair and smiled at his reflection. He was an extraordinarily good-looking young man in his early twenties. That smile which seemed to radiate honesty and friendliness had been the downfall of a great many people in the past. Even the President of Furth Enterprises had been taken in by it and Richard was now, after several maneuvers of which Machiavelli would have been proud, in charge of those aspects of Mr. Furth's enterprises which did not feature in the Group's 'Annual Report to Shareholders'.

He put his comb away and knocked at a huge oak door. Without waiting for a reply, he entered what Mr. Furth delighted to call his 'sanctum': a room which only selected visitors had seen. It was a museum dedicated to boyhood. Statuettes of naked boys stood on the mantelpiece. Boys smiled down from gigantic canvasses on the walls. Even an occasional table in the corner was supported on the raised arms of four ebony boys.

“My dear Richard!” chirped his host, springing from an armchair with a vigor which belied his sixty-odd years. “We had almost given you up!”

“I'm sorry. It was a beast of a journey. A prisoner got out of Fernhurst and they've got road blocks up.” Richard flashed his candid smile.

“Nobody we know, I hope!” Mr. Furth giggled, flapping his hands which, in his elaborately embroidered waistcoat, made him look like some exotic bird.

Without waiting to be asked, Richard sat down. The servant entered again with two drinks on a silver tray. “Thank you Eric,” said Mr. Furth, resuming his place. The boy placed the tray on a table and left.

“New one?” asked Richard, sipping his drink.

“Oh no. He's been on loan to a dear friend for some time.”

“Quite pretty.”

“Oh, my dear Richard! You should have seen him when I first met him. He was the dearest little ten-year-old!” He put his glass down. “I suppose we ought to go in to luncheon. We don't want to upset the staff, do we?”

Half the trouble with the establishment, thought Richard, as he followed Mr. Furth into the dining room, was that far too much attention was paid to the staff.

“Well now,” said his host when they were seated at the table, “how is the dear Professor and how is his research?”

“Both well, I am glad to say,” Richard replied. “He's nearly ready with the results of phase two and his health is much improved. He's almost like his old self.”

“Mmm,” said Mr. Furth. “That's not the impression that I got from John.”

John was Mr. Furth's helicopter pilot and, in Richard's opinion, far too free with opinions on matters outside the field of aviation.

“John said he looked quite ill when he last went to the island.” Mr. Furth toyed with his salad. “John also said the boys are not happy.”

“They're all perfectly happy,” said Richard. “Boys always complain. It's part of their nature.”

“Perhaps you're right. We must keep them happy at all costs, Richard. How's the new boy, Simon, settling in?”

“Very well. The Professor's pleased. The boy's intelligent and, of course, to be able to speak five languages at that age makes him both of some scientific interest and useful from our point of view. He had a most successful weekend with that German guest.”

“So I heard. The youngster was found, you know, wandering in a bus station. Had an argument with his father apparently. I wouldn't have dreamed of arguing with my father when I was fifteen. How times have changed!” Mr. Furth sighed. “I just hope he'll be happy with us.”

“He will be. It took him a little time to adjust but he's become...er... quite hospitable of late.”

“Good, providing he's happy. But are you certain all this entertaining is a good idea? John said that the last two boys he flew to the mainland told him you forced them to go.”

“Utter rubbish!” Richard put down his knife and fork. “Any boy would say that in the circumstances. Nobody's going to tell a virtual stranger 'I'm looking forward to being screwed,' are they?”

“Perhaps not, but remember that two of your recruits ran away. They can't have been happy. I set up the community so that the Professor could study adolescent boys in isolation. I now find that I own a brothel.”

The sexual foibles of his fellow men had provided Richard with an income ever since he was at university and he was accustomed to hypocrisy of this sort. “Adam was a favorite boy of yours when he was little, if you remember. I traced him for you. It was your suggestion that he should join Mark on the island. It was hardly my fault that they both ran away. Is there any news of them?”

“No,” said Mr. Furth, “None at all. I think they've gone to ground with that Spencer chap. His agent says he's abroad somewhere researching for a new book. We'll not find them, I'm afraid.”

“We've got to find them. It's absolutely essential.”

“I really don't see why.”

“Simply because, if they open their mouths, you and I will be in prison,” said Richard. “Prison is not a nice place to be.”

“They won't. Eight boys have left voluntarily since the Professor started his research and none of them have said anything.”

“They are all enjoying the large incomes you promised them when they came of age. They're not likely

to talk. Adam and Mark have got sod all. We have to find them. We have to make absolutely sure that they'll keep quiet."

Mr. Furth chewed hard, a sure sign that he was coming round.

Richard repressed a smile of triumph and tried to look suitably contrite. Finding Mark and then Adam at the home of a friend; discovering that Adam had been one of Mr. Furth's boy-friends; persuading them that the Professor's community would offer sanctuary from unloving parents and a strict school regime had seemed like a brilliant maneuver. Their escape was the biggest disaster in Richard's three-year involvement with Mr. Furth.

"Perhaps you're right," said the old man. "You're young and you have modern ideas. I suppose I shall have to bow to your greater knowledge of this world."

"I'm sure I am. I'm also sure that, rather than cut the entertainment program, you should' expand it. It stops the boys from being bored. They meet interesting people who can help them in their careers later on. Have you thought about this year's Christmas party yet?"

"I'm leaving that to you, Richard my dear. The last one was such a brilliant success."

"I'd be glad to help. Now, shall we go through the accounts?"

"Not yet. I've something to show you first."

Richard's heart sank. Every time he visited his patron, a new acquisition was produced. Last time it had been an album of sepia photographs of boys in artless poses for which Mr. Furth had paid as much as two boys earned for him in a week.

They left the dining room, proceeded along the corridor and went upstairs.

"We can see them best from in here," said Mr. Furth, opening a door.

Richard followed him into the room and they stood together at the mullioned window. Below them, on the tennis court, two small boys were attempting to play tennis, laughing at their repeated failures to send the ball across the net. Despite the cool wind, they wore only the briefest of shorts.

"My little house guests," said Mr. Furth proudly. "Aren't they lovely?"

"Very nice," said Richard in his special sincere voice. "How old are they?"

"Gareth, that's the one facing us, is eleven and Alex, with his back to us, is twelve but honestly, Richard my dear, you'd never know they were in double figures. Absolute little cherubs!"

"Where did you find them?"

"Well, you know I'm chairman of a children's home?" Richard nodded. Mr. Furth held one or two such honorary positions. "They discovered asbestos in the ceilings so the place had to be closed down during construction. I offered to take these two and the authorities agreed."

"And do they like being here?"

"My dear Richard, how curious you are! I can tell you're really attracted, even though you're pretending not to be. They're having a wonderful time. We've just come back from three days on the south coast. We're going off again next week. They want to see some of these theme parks. I thought I'd use the helicopter. They'll like that. Shall I call them in so that you can meet them?"

"If you wish."

Mr. Furth chortled delightedly. "Dear Richard, I can see right through you." He opened the window. "Chicks!" he called. They stopped playing and looked up.

"Whaddya want?" the taller of the two shouted.

"Come indoors. There's somebody I'd like you to meet."

"Okay!"

They met in the hallway at the foot of the staircase. Mr. Furth introduced Richard. Neither of them shook hands. "Hi," said Alex. He was the tallest and had dark, naturally curly hair. The other boy,

Gareth, was slim and fair.

“Can we go now?” asked Gareth.

“Certainly not. We must entertain our guest. Let's move on in the lounge, shall we?”

“Can we get changed first?”

“No need. You both look delightful in your shorts. Richard can't stay long. Come along now.”

Richard followed them into the lounge where his host settled into his favorite armchair, Richard remained standing. The boys perched on the arms of Mr. Furth's chair.

“Richard asked if you like being here, chicks,” he said, stroking Gareth's milk-white thigh affectionately.

“Terrific!” said Alex.

“Great!” said Gareth.

“Did you say sorry to Eric for being cheeky to him?”

“Yeah,” they both moaned.

“You mustn't be cheeky to the servants. They're just as important as you are.”

Richard wondered how long it would be before these two were cast aside and relegated to positions below stairs.

“Can we go and play now?” said Gareth, fidgeting slightly as a gnarled hand insinuated its way upwards.

“If you wish. Don't make yourselves too tired, will you?”

“Don't worry, we won't. See yer!” They climbed down and dashed out of the room.

“Aren't they sweet?” Mr. Furth leant back his chair and smiled happily.

“Delightful. I can't help thinking that you're making a mistake though.”

“How so?”

“You're getting them accustomed to a life style they'll never enjoy again. When the children's home is ready, they'll have to go back there.”

“I know. I was thinking about that the other night.”

It occurred to Richard that the circumstances in which this thought had come into his patron's head were probably better left unsaid. “What you could do,” he suggested, “is to send them to a boarding school and have them here for the holidays and weekends. The authorities would probably allow that.”

Mr. Furth frowned. “I'm not at all sure that they would,” he said. “Just to get them here for a few weeks was a bureaucratic nightmare.”

“Of course they would. You'd be saving the taxpayer's money. The boys would get a good education and a real start in life. That school Adam and Mark went to, Combleton, is not too far away.”

“It's quite an idea. I wonder what they would think of it?”

“They'll not like the idea at first but they'll soon get used to it.” said Richard.

Mr. Furth smiled. “You wouldn't like to mention it for me, would you?” he said. “I'm afraid if I tell them, they'll think I am sending them away.”

“Sure. Shall we go over the accounts first?”

An hour or so later, and more aware than ever that his employer wasn't entirely the silly old fool that he was so often thought to be, Richard went down to the tennis court.

“Wanna game?” called Gareth.

“No thanks. I've come to have a chat with you.”

“Worrabout?”

“Come over here.”

A game of chess in which one has to win the pawns before playing them delighted Richard. He talked,

and he talked, and he gradually overcame their reluctance to being enrolled in a 'posh' school. He admitted that the British Public School system had its drawbacks and listened attentively to their account of the greater failings of the school which they now attended.

"I reckon we could give it a go," said Alex.

"I think you'd be very wise," said Richard. "I know some of the boys. There's one called Ben Hill. Make friends with him. Do you like spy stories?"

"Yea. Why?"

"Well, I'd like to know who Ben writes to and I'd like to know where he disappears to on free weekends. In fact I'd like to know as much about Ben Hill as you can find out. You're not to tell Mr. Furth. You're not to say anything to anyone. Just keep your eyes and ears open and I'll pay you for every bit of information you can dig out."

He took a notebook from his pocket, wrote a number and tore the page out.

"You can get me at this number," he said. "There's a card phone at the end of the school drive. Don't use any other telephone."

"Why are you so interested in this kid?" asked Gareth.

"I'm not, but I am very interested in two friends of his, and with your help I think Ben might lead me to them."

Chapter Two

"I'll do your breakfast. Fried eggs or cereal?" Mark asked as Simon came into the kitchen.

"You're up early," said the man, rubbing his eyes.

"Got a lot to do today. It's the weekend!" Mark imitated the radio disk jockey whose Saturday slogan was 'It's the weekend!' At fifteen, Mark was already a strikingly handsome boy. He was tall for his age and strongly built. Village gossip held that he would be a lady-killer when he was older which goes to show that the villagers didn't know him very well.

"Adam still asleep?" asked Simon.

"Need you ask? Out like a light. He won't wake up for hours. He never does on Saturdays."

"I can guess why!" said Simon laughing. "You two were really going hammer and tongs last night. I could hear you from my room. You were grunting like pigs. I thought at one time that the bed would break."

"You're only jealous. You should have come in," replied Mark, with a grin.

"No thank you. I prefer my sex to be slow and civilized. I'd have had a heart attack and I can't afford to be laid up in the middle of writing a book."

"How's it going?" Mark asked. "Did you sort out that business with the rebels?"

"Oh yes. That was the last chapter. I'm doing the really interesting bit today. The bit where the Viet Cong capture the American pilot."

"And fuck him?" said Mark, filling the kettle.

"Certainly not! You've got a one track mind."

"I would. Americans are nice. I met several on the island. Real hunks, man!"

"I know. You told me. You don't have any regrets about leaving there, do you, Mark?"

"You must be joking. Okay, our breakfast was cooked for us and we didn't have to do much housework but this is the life for me and for Adam too. Not everybody would want two big, horny teenagers living with him, especially not a famous author."

If you were to go to Hardwick St. Mary, the village where Simon lived with Mark and Adam, and ask for Simon Spencer, the best selling author of *Regiment of Blood* and numerous other quasi-military novels, you would be met with a blank stare. The villagers knew of Simon Black, an extremely rich and very generous resident who had recently bought the Grange and spent a lot of money doing it up. They would tell you, if pressed, that he lived there with his sixteen-year-old stepson Mark and his nephew Adam of similar age. His wife, it was said, had died in a terrible accident and had been considerably older than Mr. Black. The two youngsters went as day boys to the local private school.

What Mr. Black did for a living, nobody knew. Some said he was a stockbroker, others that he had no need to work. He was young – about thirty-two, they said. Since he had moved into the village he had done so much for the community that the residents were happy to respect his wish for privacy. Mrs. Swift, who ran the village store and claimed to know rather more than anyone else, said that his wife had died less than a year ago and he was still dreadfully shocked. She remembered reading about it in the papers at the time.

This was very odd, for Simon Spencer, alias Simon Black, had never been married in his life. Simon loved boys and these two boys loved Simon. Adam and Mark had come into his life, having been sent to help in his garden when he lived near their public school in the south of England. He had met Mark first. Adam had appeared later, sent by the school to assist with the gardening as a punishment. Both boys had met Richard, an acquaintance of Simon's, and both had vanished in mysterious circumstances. Mark had been presumed drowned. Adam had run away. They had been unhappy both at home and at school which made it easier for Richard to lure them away to a community of boys on a remote island where they lived as prostitutes, serving the rich and the famous.

Simon, together with his friend Lord Charles Beresford, had rescued them, and Mark and Adam had lived with the author ever since.

“You still haven't told me what you want for your breakfast,” said Mark, pouring boiling water into the teapot. “Fried eggs, cereal or something else.”

“Something else sounds nice,” said Simon.

“What then?” asked Mark. “There's not a lot in the fridge at the moment.”

“What I have in mind isn't in the fridge.”

“Cereals?”

“No.”

“Toast?”

“No.”

“Well if it isn't in the fridge and it isn't cereals or toast, you'll have to show me.” said Mark. “Hey! What are you playing at?” Simon had moved up close behind him and put his hands round his waist.

Both Adam and Mark breakfasted dressed only in shorts on Saturdays and Sundays. Simon wore his dressing gown. It all accorded with the happy, carefree life they led at the Grange. A leisurely breakfast, a quick glance at the newspapers and magazines, a spot of housework and then it was time for lunch.

“Do leave off, Simon!” said Mark laughing. “Just tell me what you want, and go and sit down.”

“I'm going to have it standing up.” Simon hugged him tight and kissed the nape of his neck.

“What for God's sake? Just show me where you keep it.”

“I don't keep it. You do. Here.”

Simon released Mark's waist and stroked the boy's firm buttocks.

“You can't do it here in the kitchen!” said Mark.

“Do you want to bet?”

“The postman will be here soon. He'll walk right past that window.”

“Who cares? He won't come till ten o'clock anyway. It's the weekend, remember?”

Mark felt a hand slide round to his front and gently massage the bulge in his shorts. The soft flesh hardened rapidly.

“You want it too, don't you?” Simon whispered.

“Guess.”

“I can feel you wanting it,” Simon whispered. The author's gentle manipulation had caused Mark's penis to become rock hard in seconds. It strained forward as if resentful of the shorts which contained it.

Gently, very gently, Simon pulled them down to the boy's ankles. Mark stepped out of them and felt the man's hands caressing his behind. There were still slight marks there of the vicious beatings he had received from his father when he was a boy. They were fading now. He wished the memories of those days would fade with them but he still had occasional nightmares.

“You're more beautiful every time I see you,” said Simon. He grasped Mark's penis. “And this seems to get bigger and more beautiful as the days go by.”

Mark reached round and groped in the front of Simon's dressing gown; it wasn't difficult to locate the huge, erect and throbbing prick. When he held it, it was difficult to imagine it going into him but it did – often – and each time it felt better than the last. Mark knew that it would hurt slightly at first, then it would feel slightly uncomfortable. After that, when the monster organ had distended his canal sufficiently to rub against his prostate: that was an experience out of this world. It was mind-blowing; it drove him wild.

“You going to put something on it?” he asked, fishing it out from between the folds of the dressing gown. It didn't really matter if Simon did or didn't. It felt nicer when it was oiled but he knew it would go in easily enough.

“Pass me an egg out of the fridge,” said Simon.

“An egg? What do you want an egg for?”

“You'll see.”

Mark gave him an egg. Deftly, Simon cracked it and, retaining the yolk in between the two halves of the shell he allowed the sticky white to fall into his cupped hand.

“Nature's special lubricant,” he said and smeared it all over his rampant prick. “You'll like this.”

“I like it anyway,” said Mark.

Mark allowed himself to be positioned against the sink. The metal felt cold against his skin. Simon put a tea towel over it. Mark parted his legs. His torso was pushed gently forward so that he was looking down into the sink.

“Oh! You're so beautiful,” breathed Simon, stroking the sides of his bottom and letting his hands brush through the faint golden fuzz on the boy's thighs. Mark felt Simon's lips against his buttocks, brushing and nuzzling against the sensitive skin. A hand played gently under his balls and made him quiver with anticipation. Simon was an expert. He knew every inch of Mark. He knew where to touch; where to tickle; where to kiss, lick and even, sometimes, to bite. Sex with Simon was totally different from sex with a client on the island. Simon did what you wanted him to do.

“Lick me, Si.” Mark gasped.

Simon kissed his right buttock and parted the boy's arse cheeks. Mark shuddered with delight as he felt the tip of Simon's tongue caressing his rosette, and the rough bristly skin of the man's cheeks in the cleft of his bum.

“Go ahead. Push it in, Si,” Mark gasped, and tried to relax. It was difficult. It always took a lot of will-power deliberately to open up and let that questing tongue in, but it felt *so good!* Mark moaned slightly. His prick was already seeping what Simon referred to 'excitement juice'. Only a few hours previously he had discharged a full load of semen into Adam and here he was, about to come again. He hoped he could hold out so that they climaxed together.

“Finger,” Mark whispered, and felt the tongue withdraw to be replaced by one of Simon's long fingers. In it slid, pushing, tickling, preparing the way.

“Yeah, that's it!” The finger touched his most sensitive spot. Instinctively he raised himself up on the balls of his feet and gripped the taps as a convulsive shudder ran through him. It was like an agreeable form of electric shock.

He didn't say anything more. He didn't have to. Simon knew him well enough. Simon knew that he was ready; quivering ecstatically and so far gone that he wasn't aware of the finger being withdrawn. He felt the pressure of the cock-head against him, pushing slightly at first, then more powerfully. You couldn't fight against it. Who would want to? He wanted to feel it right inside him...

“Oh! Oh! Oh!” he moaned as Simon's prick overpowered the sentinel muscle ring and the glistening head drove up into him.

“Mmmm, you feel so good,” Simon murmured. “So soft!” He bent down to kiss the back of the boy's neck.

“All right, do it, Si! Fuck me!” – an unnecessary command but he said it all the same. The strokes were slow at first; gentle and hesitant, as if that monster prick was not entirely confident of its welcome.

“Harder! Do it harder!” Mark gasped. He groaned softly as the rest of it slid into him. The pain was momentary. His tongue hung from his open mouth. The plug-hole of the sink, upon which his eyes had focused, became a blur. The familiar full feeling and the tickling pubic hair between his buttocks told him that he had all of that gorgeous, huge penis inside him. He felt Simon reach round him and clasp his cock, so that he would experience every stroke from both front and rear. Simon really was an expert!

One massive stroke followed another. Simon began to grunt. Mark too. The tea towel slipped off the sink and Mark felt the cold metal on his skin. He grasped the taps as hard as he could but still felt himself driven up against the sink. He knew that it would do no good to ask for a pause to re-arrange himself. Who would want to pause anyway with nine inches of cock filling him? Simon, he knew, loved him and cared for him. It wasn't at all like servicing the fee-paying guests who had come to the island.

“Oh God, that's so nice!” he murmured. He felt Simon's breath rippling the hair on the back of his neck. The grip on his penis became tighter. His balls began to ache slightly. Could he hold off! It had to be soon....

Simon gave one mighty thrust forwards and stopped, gasping for breath. Mark closed his eyes. This was it! At precisely the same time as three powerful jets of his own semen landed on the side of the sink, he felt the spasms of the man's own emissions deep inside him and the tiny twitches of Simon's subsiding prick. He had done it right. He was getting quite proud of his ability to achieve a simultaneous orgasm.

“God that was good,” he said, straightening up.

“You're getting better every day,” said Simon, kissing the nape of his neck. The prick inside him could hardly be felt now. There was just a slight coolness there and the familiar empty feeling as Simon withdrew it.

Mark knelt to retrieve the tea towel and wiped the pearly rivulets of semen from the sink. “Shower first, or breakfast?” he said, still breathing heavily from their exertion.

“Oh, forget breakfast. I'll just have a cup of tea.”

“Please yourself.”

Simon chuckled. “I just have!”

By the time Adam came downstairs, they had showered, dressed and were cleaning the lounge.

Mark's looks, it has been said, were admired by the villagers. If anything, Adam was equally good looking. He was tall. Whereas Mark had developed muscle on his early trip through adolescence, Adam had grown taller – as slender and slim-hipped as an eleven-year-old. He walked with the grace of a cat; with a pert, jutting bottom and his head held high. It was probably that which caused the same villagers who admired Mark to consider Adam arrogant – which indeed he was. He needed, they said, to be taken down a peg or two. When the two boys cycled or walked through the village Mark acknowledged the stares with a cheery wave; Adam never did.

“If he were my nephew, I'd have taken something to his bottom years ago,” said Mrs. Swift. She was unaware that Mr. Black did so regularly, though what was applied was not what she had in mind.

“Morning!” Adam said. “You two had breakfast?”

“Yes thanks,” said Simon, winking at Mark. “Can you get your own?”

“No problem. You ready for coffee yet?”

“Oh, yes please,” said Simon. Adam went into the kitchen and returned after a few minutes with a tray. Simon and Mark took a cup of coffee each. Adam picked a duster from the sofa, flung it on the floor and,

balancing the tray on his long, lean legs, sat munching cornflakes.

Mark picked up the duster, placed it on a table and sat next to Simon to drink his coffee. Both of them knew from experience that Adam hated talking whilst he ate his breakfast. They sipped in silence.

“So,” said Adam at last, putting the tray on the floor, “What's the program for this weekend?”

“Same as any other weekend,” said Simon. “I've got to go into town this afternoon. You two can please yourselves.”

“I'd like to go to the disco tonight, if that's okay,” said Adam. “There's a dancing competition and I'm pretty certain to win. None of the local yokels are any good. May I order taxis, Si?”

“What's wrong with the bus?”

“I'd rather have a taxi. Especially to come home.”

“You've always used a bus before.”

“I know but there's a bloke who seems to be following me. He's been hanging round outside the disco a couple of times.”

“What sort of bloke?” Simon was alarmed.

“Middle aged. Quite smartly dressed. He asked me my name last time.”

“You didn't give it to him?”

“Course not. I told him to fuck off.”

“He didn't say anything else?”

“No, but he walked over to the station to see what bus I got on.”

“In that case,” said Simon, “you're to take a taxi both ways. I don't like the sound of him at all.”

“He's probably just randy and fancies Adam,” Mark said. “Lots of people have in the past.”

“Or,” said Simon with a frown, “he could be working for Richard. That young man must be desperate to know where you are.”

“I don't see why,” said Mark.

“Come on: you could have him in prison for years for keeping you on the island. You've both had sex with people in prominent positions. You could ruin their lives if you were to open your mouths.”

“But we wouldn't,” Adam protested.

“I know that. You know that; but Richard will never be sure. I think we shall have to be extra careful in future. I think you should leave the disco early tonight, Adam.”

“But it's Sunday tomorrow. I can lie in.”

“True, but you'll be in my bed so you won't get much sleep.”

“Why don't you screw Mark? It's ages since you two had it off.”

Mark smiled. “Because I want you,” said Simon. “And you're especially good after a disco: extra supple and sweaty. Now be so good as to take your plate and wash it up and then, perhaps, you can make a start on the upstairs.”

“Will do!” replied Adam, cheerfully. He left the room with the tray. After a short time they heard the vacuum cleaner being used upstairs.

Mark began to dust the lounge. A clatter at the back door and a cheery shout caused Adam to run downstairs again. “Postman's been,” he said, bursting into the lounge. “All for you, Si. I've done upstairs. I might as well have a go at the kitchen. I'm the only person who knows where everything goes.”

Simon opened the big brown envelope from his agent first. It contained letters which had been addressed to him by his real name and which had been forwarded. He slit the envelopes open and scanned through them.

“Anything interesting?” asked Mark.

“Not in this pile. Let's have a look at the others.”

The 'others' were letters addressed to him as Simon Black, mostly bills or notices of meetings. One, however, bore French stamps. He opened it, read it and passed it over to Mark. “Good news,” he said.

It was from Lord Charles Beresford who had been instrumental in rescuing Adam and Mark from the Island in his super-yacht, the 'Narwhal'.

The first page was full of references to people of whom Mark had never heard and of the Narwhal's recent refit. The news on the second page made him jump up from his chair with a whoop of joy. He took the letter into the kitchen to show Adam.

“From Charles,” he explained.

“You'll have to read it to me,” said Adam. My hands are wet.” He had just rinsed out the sticky tea-towel.

“Ben telephoned last week,” Mark read. “Apparently he and Howard have a half-term holiday next week and would like me to bring them down to stay with you. I've been in touch with both sets of parents and they agree. Methought to collect them from school at about three pm on Friday afternoon and that would mean arriving with you at about five pm. Hope this accords with your wishes. I'm sure it does with Adam and Mark to whom please give my love. I'll fly to London on the previous day and hire a car....”

“Hey! That's great. We're on half-term too! It's been nearly a year since I saw old Pudgy,” said Adam.

“Same for me and Howard,” said Mark. “I wonder if he's grown.”

“Bound to have done,” said Adam. “People always do. He's probably six feet with a prick like a hammer handle now!”

“I hope not!” said Mark, laughing. “He's only just fourteen. He'll be just as he always was.”

“Perfect, eh?” said Adam, laughing. “Well, I guess old Pudgy will have changed a bit. When are they getting here, did you say?”

“About five o'clock next Friday,” said Mark.

“Then Simon's going to have to look elsewhere for a Saturday bed companion. I'm going to be with Ben.”

“And I shall be with Howard,” said Mark. “I expect Simon will understand.”

Simon understood all too well. He sat at his word processor in the study that afternoon watching the boys lying on the lawn sun-bathing and wondered how to tackle the situation.

Ben and Howard had been on the Narwhal when Mark and Adam were rescued. Simon had had to remonstrate with Charles several times on the voyage up to the island. Charles had had his eye on Howard who was attractive enough but a little too young for Simon. Howard was in love with Mark, and Mark with Howard. There was no room in the relationship for another, even though Charles was a Peer of the Realm – and rich. It was hardly likely, now, that Charles was flying all the way to England from Cannes and hiring a car just to provide transport for two teenage boys. No... Charles was still after Howard, and Mark would have to be warned.

Ben's case was different. Adam and Ben had been lovers at school and were still, he knew, very fond of each other, but Ben was fond of Simon too. Indeed, Simon had been the first person actually to fuck Ben. It was strange, he thought; it had happened in the garden of his old cottage. At that time Adam had pretended total disinterest. One of the few good turns that Richard had done was to persuade Adam to agree to his wishes.

Since the rescue, everything had gone so well. Mark and Adam liked living with him. Both came from very unhappy homes and were glad to escape. Ben and little Howard were happy enough at their old school.

He missed Ben sometimes. Ben was a thoroughly nice boy with a good sense of humor – and had one of those comfortable, broad boy-bottoms which made him an admirable sex-partner.

But Simon had no complaints about his present companions. He looked out of the window again. Mark: good looking, nice long legs, a sizable prick, a chubby bottom and almost insatiable. Adam: equally handsome, slim, with long blond hair. Although Adam didn't have Mark's happy good nature and although he had to be gently persuaded, sex with Adam was always exciting. Simon knew exactly what would happen that night. Adam would pad upstairs in stockinged feet, hoping Simon might be asleep. Simon would call him in. Adam would plead a slight headache. Simon would undress him and lay him gently on the bed. Their love-making would be tender and gentle. Adam never demanded to be fucked as Mark did. Adam had to be gently turned over, lubricated and stretched a little before Simon could gain entry to his tight, silky passage. But the boy enjoyed it. That was the main thing. Simon wouldn't do it otherwise. Both boys enjoyed it in their own way; it was just part of the arrangements by which all three of them lived.

He glanced outside. There they lay, soaking up the sunshine and talking, probably, about Ben and Howard's forthcoming visit.

Chapter Three

“Damned decent of you blokes to volunteer to give a hand,” said the School Chaplain, who prided himself on his ability to converse in what he thought to be schoolboy vernacular. “Green hymn books for the staff and red ones for the boys. When you’ve put those out, you can cut along.”

It had been Ben’s idea. If one volunteered to help make the Chapel ready for the afternoon service which always preceded a half-term holiday, one could get away early; it was well worth missing a half an hour of the lunch break. Whilst the other boys were singing hymns, he and Howard would be on their way to Gloucestershire. Lord Charles Beresford was due to meet them in the lane outside the school at three o’clock.

Hurriedly, they moved along the pews, working their way towards the back of the chapel, depositing a hymn book of the appropriate color at each place. Howard paused by a plaque. It showed the profile of an extremely handsome boy and bore the legend 'IN MEMORY OF MARK LEE, MUCH LOVED PUPIL OF THIS SCHOOL'.

“Funny to think that we are going to see him,” said Howard. “I wonder if he will have changed much?”

Ben felt himself go cold. The acoustics of the chapel were such that a voice carried throughout the length of the building. So many boys’ whispered asides had been heard by members of the staff in the chapel that he was amazed Howard could be so foolish. He glanced towards the altar.

“You idiot!” he hissed. “Now you’ve done it!”

The Chaplain was at their side. “Interesting thought,” he said. “I’d forget angel’s wings and halos and all that bullshit. I think we do recognize people when we get to heaven but I don’t know how. Anyway, I hope for your sake that it’s a long time before you come face to face with Mark Lee again. You’ve both got your lives to lead. Jolly nice to find a couple of chaps with such faith, though. What you can be assured of is that Mark is happier now, where he is, than he ever was. The Lord loves young people. Anyway, I won’t keep you. You cut along and have a really great half-term hols.”

As they walked over to the dormitory block, Ben had some very strong words to say to Howard. “You are a fucking little idiot sometimes. A remark like that can give everything away. People would go to prison; Adam and Mark would have to go home to their parents, all because a fourteen-year-old kid couldn’t keep quiet!”

“Sorry Ben. I didn’t think.”

“Well, *do* before you open your mouth next time, for Christ’s sake!” They were the only boys in the school who knew that Mark was still alive. Everybody else, including the Coroner, had fallen for Richard’s carefully stage-managed ‘drowning’ story.

In the top floor room which they shared, Ben asked, “Is all your stuff packed?”

“Yes. I did it last night. You?”

“Same. We’re ready then. Let’s hit the trail.”

Ben picked up his bag. Howard did likewise and they went downstairs, down the drive and into the

lane.

“I hope he's on time. If anyone sees us get into a car they'll want to know who it was and where we went,” said Howard.

“Good thinking. Let's walk down the road a bit.”

They found a spot on a straight stretch of road and waited.

“Jolly nice to find a couple of chaps with such faith!” said Howard, mimicking the Chaplain perfectly. “And do you know Ben, the Lord loves young people. I'll bet the Chaplain doesn't know the Lord as well as we do!”

Ben laughed at the double meaning. “Hey, that's clever.”

“What's white and sticky and there's a lot of it?”

“Don't know. What?”

“The Coming of the Lord, of course. What do you say when Lord Charles has an erection?”

“Pass,” said Ben. “Tell me.”

“The Lord has risen. I shall tell him when he gets here. I'll bet he'll laugh!”

“I'd be a bit careful if I were you,” Ben counseled. “He might be religious. Here's one for you. What would you say if Lord Charles wanted to fuck you?”

Howard frowned. “No idea. What?”

“Yes please', of course!”

“Oh! That's not fair. I was trying to think of a quotation from the Bible. Anyway, I wouldn't. That sort of thing is not my scene. Mark tried it once and hurt me.”

“I know,” said Ben. He remembered the boy's scream and Mark's subsequent contrition. It had happened on the Narwhal shortly after the rescue.

They didn't notice the car until it was almost alongside them: a Mercedes, one of the latest models.

“Hallo, chaps,” said Lord Charles Beresford., “Glad you're early. One made better time than one had anticipated.” He was a tall man of about thirty. He wore a tweed country suit and a cap: everyone's image of the English country gentleman.

“We helped get the chapel ready so we were able to get out earlier than the others,” Howard explained.

“Dashed clever planning. Good for you Howard. Keeps our meeting private.”

“Actually, it was Ben's idea,” said Howard. “Good one though, all the same.”

They stowed their bags in the boot of the car. “You sit in the front with me, Howard,” said Lord Charles. “Ben will be more comfortable in the back. There's more room.” Howard admired the leather upholstery, which gave off a delightfully rich aroma, and the impressive array of dials and switches on the instrument panel. Both boys were delighted at the car's smooth acceleration. They had soon left the school well behind.

“I thought of some jokes when we were waiting for you, Charles,” said Howard. “Would you like to hear them?”

“Love to.”

Howard repeated them. Lord Charles laughed heartily.

“They're brilliant,” he said. “I must remember them to tell my friends.”

“I thought of one too,” said Ben. “I asked what Howard would say if you wanted to fuck him.”

“And what was his answer?”

Howard's delight in their escape suddenly soured. “I thought it was a silly joke,” he said. “I haven't seen Mark for some time. I wish we could go down there every weekend.”

“That wouldn't be a good idea,” Charles said. “Richard might be trying to trace Adam and Mark and your visits might be used to discover their whereabouts. Anyway, there are lots of interesting people in

this world apart from Mark. A boy of your age should have many friends....”

“But Mark's my *best* friend. I don't want another.”

“That's silly. Mark's a nice lad but you ought to have an older friend as well. At your age you need more adult company than you're getting. That's one of the problems of boarding schools. You ought to think about it. I'll stop soon and you can change places if you like.”

Howard didn't reply. They drove for some miles in silence, both boys feeling embarrassed and awkward. The holiday had not started well at all!

At a filling station, while Charles was in paying for the petrol, Howard climbed into the back seat with Ben. “I seem to have got quite a few minus points with him already,” he said.

“He'll get over it,” said Ben. “Don't worry.”

“What would you do in my position?”

“You want an honest answer?”

“Course I do.”

“I would say 'Yes' and let him do it to me. It doesn't hurt that much and he'd soon lose interest in you and start looking around for someone else. Men like him are all the same. It's a bit like when Adam and I broke into that old building opposite the school. We spent weeks planning the raid and looking forward to it. We did it. It was totally tame, so we spent the next few weeks planning something else.”

“It's just that I don't fancy doing it, especially with a man of his age,” explained Howard. “Mark's different. So are you. Anyway, Mark and I have known each other for years and years.”

“Don't forget that Charles is rich,” said Ben. “He could augment your pocket money quite considerably.”

“Ugh! That would make it worse,” said Howard vehemently. “That would be disgusting!”

“I know what you mean, but there must be loads of things you need and which your dad won't buy you. Charles would. It wouldn't seem so bad then. Watch out – he's coming back.”

Without a word, Charles got into the car and they drove off.

Charles kept glancing at the interior mirror. Neither he nor Ben said anything for a long time. As for Howard, he had fallen asleep, sprawled in a corner with his head up against the upholstery. His mouth was slightly open and his tongue rested on his lower lip. Ben knew from experience that once Howard fell asleep it was always difficult to rouse him. Sometimes he would lie in bed chattering, demanding sex and trying to persuade Ben that there was no risk. Ben would lie awake gently feeling his rigid member and waiting until he was sure that the Housemaster had gone to bed. Then he would whisper “OK Howard. Come over here.” Silence. A quick flick of the bedside lamp switch would reveal closed eyes, parted lips, the tip of a tongue and Ben was left to placate his expectant penis as best he could. On the occasions when Ben had forcibly woken him, Howard had just whined and refused him.

“Is he asleep?” asked Charles, glancing in the mirror.

“I think so.”

“Can you make sure?”

Ben reached into his pocket and produced a sweet. “Chocolate, Howard?” he asked. There was no reply. “He's asleep,” Ben said authoritatively. “Awake, he'd do anything for chocolate.”

“Remind me to stop at a sweet shop to buy their entire stock of the stuff!” said Charles.

“I don't think it would do much good,” said Ben breaking off a piece for himself and offering another to Charles. He's still in love with Mark and Mark's just as keen on him.”

“But that's so stupid! What charm does Mark possess that I don't?”

“He's another boy, and...”

“Conversely, I can offer rather more than Mark.”

“Are we talking about dimensions, experience or currency?”

Charles laughed and Ben felt himself relaxing again. “All three I imagine. I really fancy that boy. From the moment I first met him I dreamed of spending a few days with him. Now I find that instead of a bit of finesse – a few dinners out, a few nights of pleasure with me – he prefers meat loaf sandwiches and Mark Lee.”

“But he's in love with Mark. I thought you knew that.”

“Rubbish! They're both too young to know what love is. Anyway, I don't believe in it. I've got twenty-five boys in France who thoroughly enjoy being screwed – and they get well paid for their services – but I don't love any of them and they don't love me. You're not telling me that you and Adam love each other?”

“No, I don't think we do. We like each other a lot. We both like doing it so we've got the same interests. I miss him and I think he misses me.”

“He misses your bum and you miss his cock or the other way round?”

“Possibly, yes. But with Mark and Howard it's much deeper than that.”

“So what do you think I should do?”

“I'm not in a position to say. You're a man and a Lord and I'm a schoolboy.”

“Nonsense! You know him better than I do. What does he like... er... in the way of bedtime amusements?”

“Well, we just sort of play with each other occasionally.”

“So bang goes your love-argument. Is it my age or doesn't he like me?”

“Oh, I think he likes you. Age certainly has something to do with it. I still say that he's in love with Mark and, to be honest with you, I'm sure that when we do things, he shuts his eyes and pretends I'm Mark.”

“Hmmm,” said Charles. “We have a problem.” Ben assumed that the traffic had diverted his attention. For some moments, Charles was silent as he steered the car through the crowded streets of a small town.

“What would you say,” said Charles as they reached a clear road again, “to a present of a thousand pounds and a free holiday in the south of France for you and Adam?”

“How much?” said Ben, aghast.

“A thousand pounds and if you and Adam ever want a free holiday in the south of France, I'll fly you both out to my place.”

“It's a tempting offer,” said Ben. “Thank you very much. I'd like it and I think Adam would as well. I think we both like doing it with a man.”

“No. You misunderstand me, Ben. You are both far too old to appeal to me. I like my boys to be young; even younger than Howard usually. I'd be happy to leave you and Adam alone together, but if you can see some way of persuading Howard to share his adorable little bottom, the money and the holiday are yours. I promise.”

Ben thought fast. A thousand pounds! What couldn't one do with money like that? He'd have to keep it quiet from his parents but that should be easy enough. And a free holiday in a posh villa in the south of France. Just he and Adam, knocking around with a Lord and calling him by his first name and going out and eating in posh restaurants! But how to do it? That was the problem. Howard would never be persuaded, and neither would Mark. Unless....

“Leave it with me,” he said in a low voice. “I'll do what I can. Could you stop at a chemist's shop?”

“What for?”

“There's something I need.”

They had some difficulty finding Simon's house. Howard woke up as the tires crunched on the gravel

drive. Simon, Mark and Adam rushed out of the house to meet them.

There was a melee of hand shaking, affectionate bear-hugs and the chatter of people meeting after a long absence. The car stood with its doors open as six people all spoke at once in voices ranging from alto to baritone. A chorus of 'Hello!' 'Great to see you!' 'How are you?' 'You've grown.' 'You look older.' It was fully fifteen minutes before Simon could usher them all inside. Adam and Ben took the luggage out of the boot.

"Where shall we put it, Si?" asked Ben, carrying Charles elegant initialed pigskin suitcases into the house.

"I've put an extra bed in each room," Simon explained. "There's me, Adam and you in the room on the left and Charles, Mark and Howard in the one on the right. We only have two bedrooms here but don't let that worry you. Charles and I will use the single beds and put cotton wool in our ears. You won't be disturbed."

Charles smiled in apparent agreement and they all trooped into the house. It was slightly larger than Simon's old place near the school. Adam took Charles and the two younger boys around, pointing out improvements that he had suggested. Adam and Mark put their bags into their designated rooms.

Simon and Charles sat in the lounge sipping Scotch and listening to the trampling feet and youthful voices upstairs.

"And where do you suggest we eat tonight?" Charles asked. "One has to confess to a certain hunger, having not broken bread since landing this morning."

"We never go out these days," replied Simon. "I'm anxious not to draw too much attention to myself or the boys."

"Why on earth not? If I had two such charming companions, I'd want to show them off as often as possible!"

"Bloody Richard!" said Simon. "If I know that young man he won't stop searching for them. He must guess they are still at school somewhere. He'll never stop until he's traced them. I know him too well."

"Perhaps," replied Charles. "But maybe he's written them off by now once he realized they're not going to shop him."

"I don't wish to take that chance. Anyway, tonight it's steaks. Adam and I are doing them on the barbecue. Anyway, if we go out, we're bound to be back late and I imagine the lads want to get to bed as early as possible." He refilled Charles' glass. "You don't mind sleeping alone, do you Charles? It seems ungenerous of me, and of them, but they haven't seen each other for a long time."

"Not in the least. I shall be lulled to sleep by the sound of teenage sexual congress."

Mark put his head round the door. "I'm just going to show them the village, Si," he said. "Back soon."

"OK. Is Adam going with you?"

"No. He's going to get the barbecue going."

"I'll come too," said Charles, climbing out of his chair. "Stretch the old legs a bit. It will be nice to knock about rural England again for a bit."

Simon, who had never known Charles to walk anywhere, was astonished.

"I think I'll stay behind and help Adam," said Howard.

"In which case I shall forgo the walk and stay to help too." said Charles.

"We'll only be half an hour. See you soon. Don't burn yourself," replied Mark, and he and Ben left.

Ben didn't find Hardwick St. Mary very interesting. It struck him as a dead sort of place. He preferred towns and cities. Mark was enthusiastic about the village, though, and, fortified with pieces of chocolate which Ben had thoughtfully brought with him, he showed off the village with a proprietorial air. They were out for longer than the promised half hour; when they returned to the house, the barbecue was ready.

Mark began to feel ill about half way through the meal and had to rush for the toilet. He returned, pale-faced, nibbled his steak, put the plate on the ground and dashed off again. "I think I may have food poisoning, Si." he said. "Maybe those steaks aren't fresh."

"They certainly are," said Simon.

"You seem to be the only person affected," said Adam.

"It wouldn't have worked that quickly anyway," said Simon. It must be something else. What's the trouble?"

"I've got the runs really badly. Oh! Excuse me again!"

"He doesn't look well," said Howard. "Do you think we should call a doctor?"

"Not yet," said Simon. "I wonder what it is."

Mark re-appeared and announced his intention of going to bed. "I'll be nearer the toilet up there."

"What bad luck!" said Ben.

It was good of Ben to sympathize, thought Mark as he made his way upstairs. It would have to happen to him on that night of all nights. Everything had been so carefully prepared. He'd been into the town twice; suffered the embarrassment of asking young female shop assistants for the most embarrassing items:

Contraceptives, anesthetic anal ointment, ("For my grandfather's piles") surgical lubricant ("For an experiment we're doing at school"). One look at Howard as the younger boy climbed out of the Mercedes had hardened both his resolve and his penis. Howard had grown slightly taller and thinner but his bottom was, if anything, plumper and more delectable than ever.

"Oh well, there's always tomorrow," he muttered to himself.

His face felt cold and damp; his hands were trembling and his stomach was rumbling ominously. He had eaten a hamburger in the town earlier. It must have been that.

Charles' suitcases lay on the single bed. He wondered what he should do. It would be unfair to Howard if he were to sleep in the double bed. Besides, there was the distinct possibility that he would stain the sheets. His stomach rumbled again. He only just managed to make the toilet in time. When he emerged, Howard was in the room, placing a jug and a glass on the bedside cabinet. "Simon said you ought to take as much fluid as possible," he said. "I've made this up for you and Simon says you're to take these tablets. How do you feel?"

"Pretty dreadful. I think. I'll sleep in the single bed." "Must you? That means I shall be with Charles."

"I know. You'll be all right."

"Did you know he fancies me?"

"No, I didn't. How do you know?"

"He as good as said so. You don't think this is a plot and he's poisoned you?"

"You've been reading too many of Simon's stories!" said Mark, forcing a laugh. "No. I had a hamburger in town. I think. It's that. I'll be OK tomorrow. You'll see. If Charles tries anything, just you call out and I'll hammer the blighter. You're *my* friend, not his."

Mark undressed. Howard put Charles' suitcases next to the double bed.

"Sure you'll be OK?"

"Yes. I'll have a good night's sleep."

Howard reached down and took Mark's penis between his finger and thumb. "Don't do anything tonight, Mark," he said. "Save it for me tomorrow."

"I certainly will."

Mark slipped down between the sheets. Howard bent down and kissed his forehead. "Till tomorrow," he said.

“Till tomorrow.”

“Shall I stay with you?” asked Howard.

“No... I'm better on my own. Go down and join the others.”

“Sure?”

“Sure. Thanks for the offer, though. You're a super bloke!” He lay in the slowly darkening room listening to his protesting intestine. From downstairs came the sound of conversation. They had obviously come in from the patio. He tried to think. About Howard and what the boy had told him about Charles. It was inevitable, he thought. It was natural enough that anyone would be attracted to a boy so good-looking.

He closed his eyes and thought hard about Howard. He often did this when he was in bed. Indeed, on the nights Adam spent with Simon, he found it a very good way of getting to sleep. Sometimes, thinking about Howard inspired some very enjoyable dreams. Even during the week, when Simon never asked for their company, he sometimes thought about Howard whilst curled up against Adam. The smooth skin of Adam's thighs could be transformed, with a stretch of the imagination and a feather-light touch, into Howard. He would wonder if Howard had changed much. He might be taller. Had that golden fuzz on his legs been transformed into hair? Had the silky bush round the stubby, youthful prick become more wiry? And what of his prick? That must have grown. Mind you... it was pretty big when he last saw it, which was on Charles' yacht after the rescue.

He felt his own prick. He must, indeed, be ill. Thoughts of Howard usually resulted in an immediate erection. It was limp. Should he? No... better not. Save it for Howard. He'd be better tomorrow. What better way of celebrating his recovery than actually screwing Howard for the very first time. It was a lovely thought....

Somebody turned on the light. He must have fallen asleep.

He kept his eyes closed against the glare. He felt Howard's young breath on his face.

“He's fast asleep,” the boy whispered.

“Don't wake him up then,” Charles replied. “Get undressed as fast as you can and then turn the light out.”

Mark, alarmed, almost spoke. Howard beat him to it. “I think I'll sleep on the floor,” he said.

“What on earth for?”

“It's better that way. I don't want to hurt your feelings, Charles, but there is no way I am going to do it with you. Mark's my friend. He's different.”

Mark heard the springs of the big bed creak. “I wouldn't dream of it,” said Charles. “Believe it or not, I respect you for your devotion to Mark and I respect your courage in saying what you just said. I'm not the sort of man who makes unwelcome advances, so put the light off, get into bed and go to sleep.”

“You're sure?”

“I'm sure.”

“You promise?”

“I promise.”

“OK... but if you try anything I'll tell Mark and I'll tell Simon. I don't think he would be very happy.”

The springs creaked again. “Your side of the bed ends here.” said Howard.

“Kick me if I stray accidentally.” There was a note of irritation in Charles' voice. “Good night, Howard.”

“Good night, Charles. Do you think Mark will be better tomorrow?”

“We'll have to wait and see, won't we? You'll have to give me a report.”

It was a peculiar thing to say. Neither Howard nor Mark understood what he meant.

Chapter Four

Howard couldn't sleep. He never could in a strange bed. Worse still, Charles lay only inches from him, breathing softly. Howard could hear Mark's abdominal rumbles coming from the spare bed. Poor old Mark. It was a shame, and unfair. Tonight of all nights.

He wondered if he ought to have been so direct to Charles. The more he thought about what he had said, the more rude it seemed. Charles was a Lord. Howard was sure that Ben would be furious when he heard. But his speech seemed to have achieved the desired effect. Charles was keeping to his own side of the bed.

He regretted getting into bed so quickly, though. It would have been interesting to see Charles' tool. He wondered how big it was. His was four inches long when stiff; Mark's was six and a half inches. Mark was nearly two years older than he was. So did they grow two and a half inches in two years? Charles was about thirty. No. That was ludicrous. Nobody could have one that long. He couldn't remember what Charles wore in bed. Not the silk pajamas he had expected, certainly. Charles hadn't opened his cases at all. A pair of mauve Y-fronts lay on the chair near the bed. So he was naked. Howard pulled the covers over his head and tried to peer down but he could see nothing in the darkness.

His heart started to beat more strongly as it always did when he thought about pricks. He felt a stirring at his groin. Oh no! Surely it wasn't going to.... Yes it was. Damn! A wet dream that night would be an utter disaster.

"Bloody hell!" It was Mark's voice. Howard thought he was asleep.

"What's up, Mark?" he whispered.

"Nothing. Got to go to the bog again!"

He heard Mark get out of bed. The door opened and closed. Howard sat up in bed.

"What's the matter?" asked Charles. So he was awake too. "I think I'll see if Mark needs anything."

He put one foot on the floor.

An arm, a strong and rather hairy arm, clasped him round his middle.

"Don't be silly. What can you possibly do to help a chap who's locked in a lavatory? You'll only make him feel even more embarrassed."

Howard wriggled free. Charles had a point. There really was nothing he could do.

"It's just that I feel so sorry for him," he said.

"Of course you do." Charles sat up and began absent mindedly to stroke Howard's hair. That felt reassuring. He'd been worried when the man had restrained him.

"Those tablets Simon found should work soon, shouldn't they?" Howard said.

"Yes, I should think so." Charles' fingers were playing on the nape of his neck now. That felt rather nice.

"Charles, I hope I didn't offend you with what I said before we went to bed."

"Of course you didn't. I meant what I said. I respect you for saying it."

"It's just that I don't fancy doing it with a man."

"Of course." The man's fingers described little circles in the short hair on the back of Howard's neck. He felt Charles' fingernails against his skin and shivered slightly.

"Not cold, are you?" Charles asked.

"Not really. I just can't stop thinking about Mark."

"Of course you can't. It's natural enough." The fingers had moved down and were gently massaging the skin between his shoulder blades.

"What are you doing?" Howard meant it to sound angry but, somehow, it didn't come out that way.

"Relaxing you. You're all tensed up," Charles whispered.

"I'm thinking about Mark. That's why."

"I know you are. Do you want me to stop?" Gentle, caring fingers traced the edges of his shoulder-blades, slid up on to his shoulders, touched his collar bone and moved over the top of his nipples to his arm pits.

"I think you should."

"One is said to be quite good at this," said Charles, continuing the gentle stroking, "why don't you get back into bed?"

Howard slid down beneath the sheets and lay with his back towards Charles so that he could see Mark return.

"You've got a perfect rib structure." Charles slid the palms of both hands up and down the boy's sides.

"Have I?"

"Beautiful skin too." Charles was whispering now.

Howard's heart was beating so hard that he was sure Charles could feel it. Far from relaxing him, the man's gentle massage was making him more tense by the second. He wanted to say 'Stop!' but the word wouldn't come, not yet anyway. What Charles was doing wasn't really sex. Besides, it felt nice.

"Gorgeous!" breathed Charles. His thumbs traced the line of Howard's spine and the palms of his hands slid up and down the sides of the boy's heaving chest. He paused at the end of an upward stroke in Howard's armpits.

"Ah!" he whispered, as he felt the sparse axillary hair. Howard failed to detect the disappointed intonation. Howard had two worries on his mind. The first was a slight dampness in the projecting front of his boxer shorts. The second was the imminent return of Mark who would certainly doubt Charles' intentions.

Charles' hands slid down again until his fingers overlapped the waistband of the shorts. They stayed there. Any minute now, thought Howard, they would stray to his front. If that happened, he knew he wouldn't be able to stop. He flung himself over on to his front. It was a mistake. As he did so, his stiff penis brushed against the palm of the man's hand.

"Hmm!" whispered Charles. There was no disappointment now.

"What happens if Mark comes in?" asked Howard breathlessly.

"We'll hear the toilet flush." Charles began to knead the boy's buttocks through his shorts. It was a lovely feeling. Ben did it, but not as well as Charles, who seemed to know exactly where to put every finger.

"Oh yes!" whispered Charles. "You really are gorgeous! Such a nice little bottom. Nice and firm and strong. Let's take these off, shall we?"

Howard said nothing. He buried his face in the pillow. He knew he was blushing. He could feel sweat forming on his forehead. He felt the shorts being slid down his legs, over his calves to his ankles. He kicked them off. It was the final act of surrender. He had betrayed Mark. He knew that and blushed

even more. It was too late now.

The lavatory cistern flushed.

“Don't move!” Charles whispered. The bed creaked as he moved back to his own side.

The door opened. “You asleep, Howard?” Mark asked.

Howard made no answer. He heard Mark grope for his bed and the rustle of the sheets. Silence.

Something warm touched his thigh. Surely it couldn't be... No, it was a hand. It touched the hollow of his right knee and slid up his thigh onto to his behind. He didn't move. The kneading began again, first on his right buttock, then the left. It actually did feel very relaxing. Perhaps his fears had been groundless after all. Charles had made no attempt to touch him anywhere else.

The bed-springs groaned as Charles moved nearer and both hands massaged Howard's rump. The boy lay quite still, feeling pleasantly submissive. Charles stroked and kneaded his buttocks. Howard parted his legs slightly and reached beneath him to arrange his rigid prick so that it pointed forward. Charles' powerful massaging caused it to rub against the sheet. He exhaled as deeply as he could.

Suddenly, Charles spoke. Howard almost jumped out of his skin.

“How do you feel, Mark?” he asked.

“A bit better thanks,” came the answer from the spare bed. “Good. Howard was quite worried about you.”

“I know. Is he asleep?”

“Yes. He dropped off ages ago.”

Howard was far from being asleep. Only one hand was at work on him now. Starting from the small of his back, it moved down very slowly, into the cleft of his bottom until a finger-tip, gentle as a feather, came to rest on his anus and stopped. He tensed again, clenching the cheeks of his bottom together to prevent it reaming into him. It didn't, but the muscular spasm pushed his penis forward. That felt nice.

He relaxed again. The finger didn't move. Was Charles, perhaps, waiting for him to say something? Surely not. Mark would hear. He lay quiescent and waiting. The finger moved again, downwards to the sensitive skin between his balls and anus. He felt a fingernail scratching gently. That felt really good. In an attempt to imprison it there, he clenched his gluteal muscles again. His prick, iron hard and weeping the the salty-sweet juice of pubertal stimulation, drove forward again. He relaxed and tightened again.

Charles finger continued its relentless gentle massage. From anus to scrotum it caressed, fondled and tickled. Howard began to breathe heavily. He knew he couldn't hold back much longer. His prick was throbbing, pressed against the bed sheet by his own weight and driven forward by the instinctive spasms of his bottom. He wanted to tell Charles to stop – or did he? His bottom began to rise and fall regularly now and the finger seemed to have a little more power behind it, almost as if it were forcing him forward and downwards. He bit the pillow and grasped it with both hands. He had never experienced anything like this before. Rivulets of perspiration ran down his forehead on to the pillow. His heart beat as if it would burst. It was going to happen. There was nothing he could do. All conscious thought had gone now. He was a machine, a writhing, heaving machine which would only stop when the finger was removed from the button.

But the finger stayed there, pressing now even more firmly than before, sometimes straying a little, but never relaxing.

Howard's heart pumped harder. His buttocks clamped hard together. He gave just one convulsive shudder – and came. He felt it spurting out of him. Yes, spurting. Just like Mark. This was not one of Howard's usual dribbling emissions. He felt its warm dampness on his belly as he lay, gasping and exhausted. Charles removed his finger and patted the boy's flaccid rump in congratulation.

Physically exhausted: outwardly at peace, Howard's mind was in turmoil. He had betrayed Mark. Or

had he? Not really. Charles hadn't done anything actually sexual. It was hardly Charles' fault if a massage designed to be relaxing had caused him to go off like that. Charles had never even touched his cock and he hadn't even seen Charles', let alone touch it. It wasn't really the fault of either of them. He hadn't known that he was so sensitive down there. Mark had never touched him there. Not with his fingers anyway. There had been occasions when the older boy's cock head had brushed down there. That had felt nice but there was always the thought that Mark had something else in mind so Howard had always asked him to stop.

He could have said 'Stop!' to Charles. Or could he? Not really. Charles had told Mark he was asleep. That was probably to stop the two of them chattering into the night. Anyway, even if Charles had stopped, Howard wouldn't have been able to.

He shifted slightly, away from the rapidly cooling pool of semen. There was an awful lot of it. More than he had ever produced before. He must be really grown up now. And he had shot it out too; just like Mark. Mark would be interested to know that. Or would he? No, better say nothing. He could tell Ben, though. Indeed, he ought to warn Ben, otherwise the next time they did it at school would be a very messy affair. Ben usually caught it for him in a tissue. It would take more than one tissue now he was so grown up....

“Asleep yet, Mark?” Charles' voice shattered the darkness again.

There was no answer.

“Asleep yet Mark?” the man repeated.

“I think he must be,” Howard whispered. “That's a good sign, isn't it?”

“A very good sign.” Charles' voice was so low that Howard hardly heard him. He shifted over and felt Charles' hairy chest against his shoulder.

“All right?” asked the man.

Howard nodded.

“Have a rest” Charles stroked his hair.

“You are so gorgeous!” he said. “I'm in love with you. Did you know that?”

“Don't be daft.”

“I'm not. It's perfectly normal for a man to fall in love with a boy. That's what I meant in the car. You need an adult friend to look after you and give you occasional treats and presents. You could still see Mark. What do you think?”

Charles slid his hand under the boy and pressed his bare bottom affectionately.

“I'll sleep on it and tell you in the morning,” said Howard. “Good night Charles.”

Chapter Five

An unseen observer, passing from the room occupied by Mark, Howard and Charles, into the opposite bedroom would have noticed the difference in atmosphere immediately.

Here, there were no affectionate caresses; no whispered endearments. In the single bed, instead of a pallid youth sleeping off the effects of ten times the normal dose of laxative chocolate, there lay a man; a famous author. Had our observer carried a torch he would have noticed that, although the man's eyes were closed as in sleep, he was grinning.

The two sources of his amusement occupied the big double bed; the bed normally occupied by the author. No sleep, either feigned or otherwise, was taking place there. Adam and Ben were occupied in enjoyments of a far more violent nature. The bed-springs creaked, the occupants gasped and moaned. The covers had been flung aside and the acrid smell of semen already filled the room.

“Oh God! I love your pudgy arse!” said Adam.

In other circumstances, had he not been sprawled face down with legs akimbo and muffled by a pillow, Ben would have disputed the adjective. So, indeed would Simon who lay listening to every word. Ben's ass was comfortable and accommodating but certainly not pudgy. But Adam had coined the sobriquet for his friend and seemed to derive pleasure from a plumpness only he could detect. And, thought Ben, if it gave Adam pleasure, so what?

Once already that night, Adam had mounted him. He still felt delightfully full. The bite marks on his buttocks burned. The back of his throat ached from his attempts to lubricate the stake which, a few moments after being taken from his mouth, had impaled him. He could still taste Adam's pre-cum on the back of his teeth. He still had the essence of Adam inside him. Adam had taken a shower afterwards but he had gone straight to sleep.

They had slept for a short time, curled up in each other's arms.

“A lovely arse!” Adam breathed. Two fingers of his right hand were buried deep inside his companion, massaging the sensitive acorn-like prostate through the thin intestinal wall.

Ben writhed and moaned.

“That's right. You're looking forward to it, aren't you? You like my prick in you? Oh God, are you going to get screwed tonight! I'm going to screw you so many times! Turn over.”

Ben obeyed. His thick penis stood up like a ship's mast from the sticky, semen-matted pubic hair at its base.

Adam knelt over him, his legs straddling Ben with an ease which belied any hint of obesity.

“Lick it, Pudgy. Get it nice and wet,” Adam commanded. Ben would have done so anyway. The very sight of Adam's stiff prick, swaying slightly from side to side, and inches from his face made his mouth

water. Propping himself up on his elbows, he cupped Adam's balls in one hand and licked the smooth, purple head, letting his tongue run down over the ridge. It tasted of soap. It was just as well that Adam had taken that shower, thought Ben.

“Oh yes! You're doing that well!” said Adam. Ben redoubled his efforts, lapping all along the rigid veined shaft until his lips touched Adam's wiry pubic bush and back again. He put his lips to the head as though kissing it and flickered the tip of his tongue against the slit.

Adam began to breathe heavily. “Now suck it!” he gasped. Ben parted his lips slightly and it slid past his teeth and into his mouth. He gagged slightly as it cannoned against the back of his throat. The trouble with Adam was that he was so big – and so strong. Ben moved his head back slightly, closed his lips onto the shaft and sucked.

“Mmmm! You're good at that!” said Adam. “You like it, too?”

Unable to reply, or even to nod, Ben continued to suck. He tasted a droplet of Adam's own lubricant on his tongue.

“Yes, this is *so nice!*” Adam continued, breathlessly. “It's almost as good as having it your arse.” He lunged forward and Ben choked again.

“It's big isn't it, Pudge? Just think, I'm going to stick it up you, right to the hilt. God! I'm going to make you squirm tonight.”

Simon lay quite still in the spare bed. Adam, he thought, was a strange lad. When he had been persuaded into the double bed by Simon, he was an affectionate, compliant and very satisfying partner. The sadistic tendencies he was exhibiting that night came as a surprise. Being a prisoner on the island must have had something to do with it, he thought. It was apparently no surprise to Ben. If the frantic slurping noises he was making were anything to go by, Ben was enjoying every moment!

“That's enough!” Adam commanded. Simon would have liked to watch, but he knew that, even if he were to open his eyes, the room was too dark. He would have to rely on sound. A phrase he had once heard and had often repeated, came back to him. “The sound of a boy being screwed is like a symphony.” He settled back, with a slight and artificial snore, to enjoy the concert!

It started, like all concerts, with a rustling; not of programs, but of sheets as Ben turned over again.

“Hang on a minute,” he said. There was more rustling. “Spread your legs a bit wider,” said Adam. “That's it. That's how I like you. You're always better the second time. Still tight but more slippery. Ready?”

Ben's reply was a muffled grunt.

The bed creaked again as Adam got into position.

Simon, who had an intimate knowledge of both boys, pictured their facial expressions. Ben's face would be screwed up in anticipation of penetration. Adam, on the other hand would have a look of triumph and was almost certainly licking his lips at the prospect.

“I'm going to screw you so bloody hard....” Adam didn't finish the sentence. Ben gave a long, sustained gasp. “There!” Adam cried triumphantly. “You love that, don't you? My cock's right up your ass. Tighten up now. Really grip it. I want you tight.”

“It hurts, Adam,” Ben whimpered.

“It's not doing you any good if it doesn't hurt! Tighten up!”

A resounding slap rang through the room. “That's better! That's how I like it – tight as a nail in oak!”

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The bed creaked again, and then again. Adam exhaled heavily, in time with the protesting springs. Ben moaned softly, softly at first and then more loudly. Their bodies slapped together. Simon reached down and played idly with his own erect member and listened, with delight, to the sound of his two former

apprentices; one whimpering and moaning, the other breathless from exertion. It was a pleasant, satisfying sound. He waited for the final crescendo, knowing that, as this was their second time that night, it would take longer.

The bed had stopped creaking rhythmically now. Indeed, it was if the springs were playing a different and continuous tune as Ben writhed and squirmed, pushing his backside up against Adam.

“Do it harder!” he groaned. “Oh! Oh!”

“Oh that's so good! You're so bloody tight! You're.... Aaaah!”

The bed stopped groaning and the only sound in the room was of two teenage boys panting, trying to catch their breath. Both had come. Indeed, Simon could smell it, warm and sweet, in the stuffy room.

“Don't take it out yet,” Ben whispered.

“I'm not going to.”

There was a long silence, and then Ben spoke again. “Wonder how Mark is,” he said, dreamily.

“Dunno. Better, I should think. Have you heard him going out to the bog?”

“I wasn't really listening.”

Adam chuckled. “Nor was I,” he said. “Tomorrow he'll be up and about again – or, to be more exact, up Howard. He said he's going to do it this holiday. He's been waiting for long enough, God knows. I wouldn't. I'd have screwed him long before this.”

“I wanted to talk to you about that,” said Ben. “There's something you ought to know.”

“Tell me tomorrow. I must go and get cleaned up. Ready for the out?”

“If you must.”

The bed creaked again. “I really love your arse,” said Adam.

Ben cried out again. “I wish you wouldn't do that!” he said. “It hurts.”

“I like biting you. You know that. You'll have a mark on each cheek now.”

“Somebody might see.”

“There's only Simon and he'll understand. Perhaps he'll add some more.”

“Simon isn't like you,” said Ben, dreamily. “Simon is nice and considerate. I wonder if he'll want me this holiday.”

“He'd be a fool if he didn't.” Adam climbed out of bed. “Some of the blokes I met on the island would pay thousands to fuck an arse like yours.”

“How much do you think they'd pay for Howard?” asked Ben.

“You're not thinking of pimping for Howard? Mark would go mad. So would Simon!”

“Course not. I just wondered.”

“I should stop wondering then. Mark really loves that boy. I wouldn't do anything to upset him. Back in a minute. You going to clean up?”

“Later.”

Predictably, Simon and Mark were the first to get up on the following morning. Mark said he felt much better.

“Howard still asleep?” asked Simon.

“Yes. A bit too close to Charles for my liking. You should see them, Si – they're practically in each others' arms.”

“I wouldn't worry about that. It's natural enough when you're asleep to move together.”

“I hope you're right. I'd kill Charles if he tried it on with Howard!”

“Course he wouldn't. It was only because you were ill that they slept together. Do you want any breakfast?”

Mark chose a plate of cereal and was washing up the bowl when first Adam and Ben, and then Howard and Charles came downstairs.

“So... what are we all doing today?” asked Mark, having reassured them all that he had recovered.

“Resting!” said Ben.

“Charles is taking me into town,” said Howard. I want to show him a CD player.”

“He can see CD players in France,” said Mark.

“No... this is a special one. It's the one I'm saving up for.”

“I thought we could go out together. Just the two of us,” said Mark.

“No... I specially want to show Charles. We won't be long.”

“Why don't you go with them?” Simon suggested. “That seems to be the most sensible thing to do.”

“I go through the bloody town every day on the way to school and every weekend for the shopping,” said the disgruntled Mark. “I'm damned if I want to go there on holiday.”

“You're very welcome,” said Charles.

“No thanks. I'll stay and do some of my holiday assignment.”

Charles and Howard were away for the whole day. Even the normally placid Simon was irritated. They missed lunch and arrived back just as the others were laying the table for the evening meal. Mark followed Howard into the hall.

“So... what's going on?” he demanded.

“What are you talking about?”

“Why were you so long?”

“We couldn't find a shop that had the CD I wanted so we had to go into Cheltenham.”

“And that took all day? In a Mercedes?”

“We stopped for lunch out. That's all.”

“And what did Charles do?”

“How do you mean?”

“To you.”

“Not what you're thinking. No way. You know that.”

“I'm not sure that I believe you.”

Howard turned round to face him.

“Mark,” he said, “Charles hasn't touched my prick. I haven't touched his. In fact I haven't even seen it although I was in the same bed with him last night. I swear that's true.”

“And he hasn't bought you any expensive presents? A CD player for example?”

“Certainly not! I just showed him the one I wanted and we got the man in the shop to demonstrate it.”

Considerably relieved, Mark was able to enjoy his dinner and the accompanying banter. It was amazing how many innuendos could be worked on the theme of stuffed pork followed by cream horns.

He was even more delighted when Howard asked the company to excuse him as he wished to go to bed as early as possible.

For the sake of decency, Mark allowed about fifteen minutes before he, too, pleaded tiredness and went upstairs.

To his amazement, Howard was in the spare bed.

“Hey! What do you think you're doing? That's Charles' bed for tonight,” he said.

Howard yawned. “I really do feel tired, Mark,” he said. “I'll sleep better here.”

“It's not sleep I was thinking of,” replied Mark. “Come on. Out you come!” He swept the duvet aside.

“Couldn't it wait?” Howard protested. “We're here tomorrow night too.”

“No, it can't. I've been waiting for this for a long, long time.” Still protesting, Howard changed beds.

Mark re-made the small one for Charles, undressed as rapidly as possible and crouched naked to rummage in his bag.

“What are you looking for?” asked a sleepy voice from the bed.

“I’ve got some special stuff to lubricate you, so it won’t hurt,” he explained.

“I don’t want you to do that, Mark. I don’t think I’m old enough yet.”

“That’s bullshit! Of course you are. That business on the Narwhal was ages ago. You’ve grown up a lot since then. I won’t hurt you, honestly. It’s a really nice feeling. There were boys on the island who had been fucked when they were really young.”

“Well, I’m not going to be one,” said Howard, “so you can leave your rotten stuff where it is. One knows instinctively when one wants to do that.”

“Who told you such rubbish?” asked Mark. It was a strange speech for a boy of fourteen and a half.

“Nobody. I just know.”

“You were talking like Charles talks. ‘One knows’ indeed!”

Disappointed, he left the bag and climbed into the bed.

Howard lay on his back with his hands on the pillow behind his head. Mark ran his hand down the boy’s smooth front, thrilling to the firm feel of the muscles.

“You could have taken your shorts off,” he whispered.

Howard reached down, lowered them, kicked them off, and replaced his hands behind his head.

“Just think,” said Mark, “it’s been ages since we were in bed together.”

“I know.”

“Aren’t you going to feel it? You always used to. Come on.” Reluctantly, Howard took his left hand from behind his head and reached down into the bed.

“That’s it. That’s just like the old days,” Mark whispered. “It doesn’t seem to have grown,” said Howard.

“They don’t after you’ve reached a certain age. I’ll bet yours has though.”

He reached out, felt Howard’s navel, and slid his hand down a little further.

“You’ve got more hair there,” he said. “I thought you would have. It’s nice.”

“I’m thinking of shaving it off,” said Howard. “I don’t like it.”

“Don’t be so daft. It’s nice. Nice and bristly. If you shave it it’ll be agonizingly prickly when it grows again. Speaking of growing, this really has, hasn’t it?”

His hand was on it at last. He had known Howard’s penis since the boy was about ten. He hadn’t touched it then. He hadn’t dared to. When Howard bathed naked in the pool, he would sit on the water’s edge gazing longingly at its tiny perfection. In those days it had come to a point. Now it was stubby and of almost equal thickness. It felt rubbery and resilient. Mark’s mouth began to water.

“Get it stiff for you, eh?” he said, and began, slowly to slide the boy’s foreskin up and down over the perfectly rounded helmet.

He felt Howard’s hand grip his own rigid member firmly and masturbate him so fast that he would have come in seconds.

He grabbed the boy’s wrist. “Hang on, Howard!” he gasped. “We’ve got all night. Make it nice and slow like you used to.”

Howard released the throbbing penis. It sprang back against Mark’s belly.

“You could suck it if you like,” said Mark, encouragingly.

“No thanks.”

“I can’t think what’s got into you, Howard.” As Mark uttered those words, they took on a dreadful significance.

"I told you. I'm tired."

"You slept last night and all you've done today is ride about in a car."

"I'm still tired. Do you know what I would really like you to do?"

"No, what?"

"Just sort of massage me. I like that."

"How do you mean?"

"I'll show you. Turn over."

Mark turned on to his front. He felt Howard's small, cool hands on his behind. They began to knead the underlying muscles with surprising vigor. He felt Howard's fingertips in the scars his father had inflicted so many years ago.

"Spread your legs out." Mark did so. A finger reached in between his ass cheeks and touched the sensitive perineum. "That's the best bit of all," said Howard. Mark didn't like to tell him that he knew all about erogenous zones. He even knew the Latin names. His own perineum, and more, had been stimulated so many times by so many people.

"See?" said Howard. It was extraordinary how their roles had reversed. Mark had looked forward to coaxing the boy through a variety of pleasures, culminating in the surrender of his pert schoolboy bottom to Mark's prick. Now the pupil had turned teacher; it was time to restore the status quo.

"OK," Mark said. "Turn over." He pulled back the sheet. Howard was, if anything, more beautiful than the last time he had seen him. His long legs, still hairless, culminated in a bottom which was a delight to the eye. Two faultless, ivory-white hemispheres parted now as the boy opened his legs.

He knelt over Howard's legs and began to rub and knead the soft flesh, relishing in the silky texture of the smooth skin.

"That's it," muttered Howard. "That's nice. Keep on. Don't stop."

Mark felt the muscles tighten under his patient manipulation; a small drop of viscous liquid oozed from the tiny eye of his prick and landed on Howard's back. He wondered if he dare.... The boy's legs were parted. Slyly, as if part of the massage, he pushed his thumbs down and parted the cheeks. There it was: a tiny, tightly pursed orifice. It did look small though. Perhaps Howard was right. He certainly had no wish to hurt the boy. He continued the massage. To his surprise, Howard began to squirm around, breathing heavily; surely he couldn't be nearing a climax already?

He put his hand between the boy's thighs and with a finger felt forwards. Howard gasped as Mark's finger touched the right spot. He could feel Howard's tight little ball sack. He tickled the skin.

"Oh God, that's good!" Howard was squirming wildly now, his bottom rising and falling with increasing speed and vigor. "Lick me!" he gasped. His voice was muffled by a pillow. Mark heard only the last part of the command. So... Howard was ready for it after all!

"I'll just get the stuff," he said.

"No. Lick me. Lick round my... ooooooh!" Like a fish trapped in the bottom of a fishing boat Howard's frantic writhings ended suddenly. He lay flat, gasping for breath. Amazed, Mark turned the boy over. Howard's eyes were closed. His chest was heaving. Sticky, pearl white semen flowed from his prick-head down into his pubic hair. He opened his eyes and smiled. "Mmmmm. That was nice."

Mark covered him with the sheet, got into bed and cuddled the smaller boy protectively. "Your turn!" he said.

"Eh?"

"It's your turn. What do you want to do with me? I don't mind."

"I think I'll sleep now," replied Howard. "Like I said, I'm tired."

"But..."

“Maybe tomorrow,” said Howard. “Good night.”

Ben's conscience rarely troubled him. It gave him only the slightest twinge the following morning when, just before breakfast, Charles slipped him a brown envelope containing a check for five hundred pounds and a note: “Half way there; half fee on account.” Ben smiled and tucked it into his wallet.

But breakfast was not the jolly meal he had anticipated. Mark hardly spoke to Howard. Simon and Charles had started the morning with some sort of disagreement in the study. As far as the eavesdropping boys could understand, Simon had something to sell but was reluctant to sell it to Charles. Ben presumed that they were talking about the film rights to a book or something like that.

“If you insist,” Simon had said, “I can't stop you buying it but it must be done through the agent and my name mustn't be mentioned.”

Business, thought Ben, was a bore, although the half-term holiday had been both pleasant and profitable for him. Everything seemed to have worked out well. Mark's laxative-induced illness had allowed Charles a night with Howard. It was a pity about the 'half way' business; a thousand pounds would have paid for the new computer he wanted, but five hundred pounds would go a long way towards it. As for Mark and Howard, everything should be back to normal: they'd shared the same bed on the previous night: their lack of conversation was hardly to be wondered at. Howard was an energetic boy.

As for himself, he was happy enough. His behind was painful, though. Adam *would* insist on this silly biting business. Ben found the stretched feeling of his anus quite nice but the bite marks simply hurt. Never mind. Adam was a nice person and it amused Ben to play up to him. But tonight would be turn-about: tonight it would be Ben's very substantial cock in Adam's tight, muscular arse. His penis twitched with anticipation.

Charles and Howard were going into town and Ben begged a lift with them. Both Mark and Adam had their school assignments to finish and stayed at home.

“Will it be all right, Ben, if we leave you in the village and pick you up on the way back?” Charles asked.

“Yes, sure. How long will you be?”

Charles caught his eye in the interior mirror and smiled. “Well, I don't want to rush things.”

They arranged to meet two hours later in a cafe in the center of the town. Ben paid in his check. He hadn't told Adam about it – or about the promised holiday. It hadn't seemed appropriate to mention it yet.

Two hours was quite a long time. He looked in shop windows and bought some batteries for his Walkman. Gray clouds began to roll in from the west, making the village look even more gloomy. A sign pointed to the museum. Museums, he knew, were good time-wasters. He found the museum on the first floor of the public library and consisted of a few finger-marked glass cases containing prehistoric bones and the usual bric-a-brac which a small town collects over the centuries. There were old tiles, clay pots, fragments of china, bullets and rusty weapons. A small boy, the only other person in there, sat by a showcase drawing something. In another were the medals and regalia of a former mayor. He pushed through the narrow gap to get a closer look at the medals which were the only things he was interested in. As far as he could remember, his father had nothing like any of them.

He had already drunk three Cokes and eaten two scones when Charles and Howard arrived, more than half an hour later than the pre-arranged time. “I'd almost given you up,” he said.

“Dreadfully sorry. One had a spot of business to attend to which took longer than one anticipated, as business tends to,” said Charles.

“You'll never guess what he's done!” said Howard.

Ben smiled. Howard's face was flushed with excitement and there were bits of leaf in his hair.

"I think I can guess." Ben wondered if Charles was going to write out a check there and then.

"He's bought Simon's cottage!" Howard continued, "Where's Simon going to live then?"

"No. The old one, silly. The one by the school. He sent a fax off to London and we had to wait for the answer. It's his now. Isn't that smashing news?"

Suddenly Ben had a premonition of the calamity he was helping to bring about. He'd had no qualms about accepting money for Charles to have a fling with Howard; that was nothing. A permanent relationship was something else. "I thought you lived in France," he said.

"One does, but the lure of the old country, you know. You can't beat it."

The lure of a certain fourteen-year-old schoolboy was nearer the truth, thought Ben.

"Charles wants me to visit him as often as I can," Howard babbled. "He's going to write to my parents to get them to agree. It might even be possible for me to live with him and go to school as a day-boy."

This was turning into a total disaster. Ben was furious, both with himself and with Charles. He felt he had been tricked.

"You can always pop in when you're in the village," said Howard, aware somehow of the tension emanating from the other side of the table.

"So what else did you do, apart from buying the cottage?" Ben asked.

"Oh, we had a great time, didn't we, Charles?"

"I can see that," said Ben. "You've got grass and leaves in your hair. If I were you, I'd pop into the cloakroom and tidy up. I think Mark might not be too pleased to see you in your present state."

"Oh, don't worry about him. He's still very immature – Charles said so, didn't you Charles?"

"It's not a remark which I think should be bandied around," said Charles. "Ben has a point. Go and beautify yourself."

When Howard had dutifully left them, Charles said, helping himself to another cup of tea, "You don't approve?"

"No, I don't. I think you've played a dirty trick on me. I thought you just wanted to screw him and that would be that. You said yourself that he was getting too old for you."

"Keep your voice down."

"Well, I'm angry, bloody angry. How's Mark going to take it? You don't seem to have considered him."

"Or you?" Charles smiled. "I am aware of your little sessions in the small hours of the morning when the Housemaster has gone to bed." Ben blushed. "The truth is, I find Howard very attractive. He's a nice boy. I'd like to be around to watch him grow up and give the occasional helping hand."

"Not just a hand."

"That's a coarse remark which doesn't become you. As for Mark, he's got Adam for company. Adam's got you. I don't think you can begrudge me Howard. He seems to find my company congenial."

"Your money, more like it. Remember what he said to you in the car coming down here?"

"Boys of that age change their minds very quickly."

"Let's hope so!" replied Ben.

Chapter Six

Ben dumped his bag upon his bed and sat down. For the first time in his school life he felt glad to be back. It had been a traumatic holiday. Simon and Lord Charles had fallen out over Charles' intended purchase of the cottage. From the way Mark had moped about, Ben guessed that he hadn't achieved all that he wanted with Howard. Neither for that matter had Charles, and there was five hundred pounds at stake there. He was very glad that he hadn't told Adam about the thousand pounds or the promised holiday. He decided to say nothing about the money. After all, he had earned it and it was his. The holiday could be announced later when the tension had slackened a bit.

Howard, he could see, was going to be a problem. The boy was besotted by Charles and the man was equally keen on the boy. But it was pretty obvious that Howard had refused to be fucked. Or had he? There was no way of telling. Could it be that Charles was cheating him?

It had been nice to see Adam again though, even nicer to lie in Simon's big double bed and feel Adam's warm, strong body next to him. He shifted his position slightly. His backside still ached a bit. It had been fun to take on the role of passive partner, and even more fun to get one's own back. He smiled at the memory. Adam had laughed at him and called him "Pudgy". The laughs had turned to sighs and pillow-smothered groans as Ben reamed into him. Despite everything, it was obvious that Adam still loved to be screwed by his old school-friend. Adam still had that agreeable habit of reaching behind him, claspng Ben's buttocks and pulling Ben deeper into him. Adam was still amazingly tight. There was something to be said for all the body-building and exercise Adam went in for.

There was a knock at the door. It was Whitaker, the Sixth Form prefect from the floor just below. "Thought I heard you on the stairs," he said. "Have a good half term?"

"Fine thanks. You?"

"Bloody great! Did you get your leg over?"

Ben smiled. The usual lines. It was like taking part in a long running soap opera.

"That's my business. I guess *you* did."

"Did I ever! Smashing girl. She's a dental nurse. Every night without fail. She couldn't get enough!"

"You do look a bit shattered," said Ben who had his own ideas as to whether a dental nurse – indeed anybody – would want to be screwed by Whitaker even once.

"So do you, you dirty old sod! Where's your tiny roommate?"

"Not back yet. He'll probably be on tonight's train. He has to come via London." All of which was true. Charles had said it would be inadvisable to drop them both off near the school on a day when so many boys would be returning, so Ben had been delivered to a station not far away and Howard had gone on with Charles to London and would catch the train from there.

"Beats me why you put up with a kid of that age as a roommate," said Whitaker. "It's all wrong. I reckon you ought to have words about it."

"I may. We'll see how things work out this term," replied Ben, truthfully. "I'm going to get that new computer soon and I could use his bed-space for that."

"You lucky sod. How the hell can you afford it? I mean, without any disrespect, your dad's a Flight Sergeant and mine's a Commander but he couldn't afford to buy me one."

“It's a sort of trust fund,” said Ben vaguely. “Any gossip yet?”

“Is there ever! Alky's left! They say he had a heart attack.”

“Alky” – derived from 'alcohol' – was the nickname of their Housemaster. He had been at the school for many years. Several boys testified to his brilliance in their fathers' days, but now he was clearly in decline. It was said that Mark's 'death', followed by Adam's disappearance and the subsequent police investigations, had taken their toll, as had his consumption of Scotch.

“So who have we got now?” asked Ben.

“New chap. Mr. Walker. Seems OK. Says we should be treated more like adults. No more room inspections and no more checks after lights out.”

“That's great!” Now Ben wouldn't have to wait until the early hours of the morning for a session with Howard.

“Don't know what will happen as far as you are concerned though. He'll probably look into the situation in this room.” For a moment, Ben wondered if Alky, as a parting gift, had released the story of how he had caught Adam and himself *in flagrante* one night, many years ago.

“I guess he'll want to check on the kid,” Whitaker explained. “I would certainly move heaven and earth to get rid of him. He's going to be a real pain.”

Just how much of a pain began to be apparent that evening. Howard talked non-stop about Charles. They had got to London early so they had gone to Charles' Mayfair flat. It was huge. Howard had never seen a place so vast. Howard wondered if they could get permission from the school to paint one of their walls black; Charles had said black was fashionable. And Charles actually had a servant. Howard hadn't seen him; Charles had given him the day off. He had seen the servant's quarters, though. They were bigger than an average flat! Ben, he was sure, would have been impressed with Charles' computer – it had all the latest video games!

“And what did you actually do in this luxurious penthouse?” asked Ben as they undressed for bed.

“Nothing much. Why?”

“One wonders why he took you there and why he gave his servant the day off. If I had a servant and was due back from a holiday, I'd want him there to make me a cup of tea and run my bath like they do in films.”

“I never asked,” said Howard.

“Perhaps you were too busy.”

“How do you mean?”

“Oh, nothing. Did you know we had a new Housemaster?”

“Mr. Walker. Yes. I called at the house to say I was back and he said there was no need. He seems OK.”

“Well, you'd better get into bed,” said Ben. “He's bound to do rounds and it's well after time.”

Howard, he noted with approval, wasn't wearing his ghastly striped pajamas. Howard was wearing nothing at all! One sight of those long legs, stubby prick and sparse pubic hair was enough to make him suppress any thought of asking for Howard's removal!

Howard took a book from his bag, climbed into bed and sat reading it.

“What's the book?” asked Ben.

“Oh, it's about the Mediterranean. Charles and I are thinking of cruising next summer. I've got to choose the places we stop at.”

“Your folks will never let you go,” said Ben.

“Charles is going to write to them. Now do shut up Ben. I'm trying to concentrate.”

“What about Mark? Have you asked what he will think? He's bound to want to see you.”

"It's sod all to do with him."

There was a tap on the door. "Who the hell is it?" Ben shouted.

"Jim Walker. Housemaster. May I come in?"

"Christ!" whispered Howard. "Now you've done it!"

"Sorry, sir," said Ben, aghast. "Of course!" Jim Walker, as Whitaker had said, was quite young. Ben guessed him to be about thirty.

"I must apologize, sir," said Ben. "Mr. Henderson just used to come in without knocking."

"So I hear. Very rude. You must have some privacy." Mr. Walker consulted a clip board. "Now, you must be Ben," he said.

"Yes sir. Hill sir."

"Do you prefer to be called Mr. Hill or Ben?"

"Mr. Henderson just said Hill, sir."

"I am not Mr. Henderson. I happen to believe in respect for the individual."

"Ben then, if that's all right with you, sir."

"Perfectly. I hope we shall get on very well." He shook Ben's hand and crossed to the younger boy's bed. "And we've already met. You're Howard. Well, I won't disturb you further. Please forgive this intrusion. You won't be seeing me in here again."

"Er... what about room inspection, sir?" said Ben. He thought it better to ask.

"Not for a boy of your age. I wouldn't dream of it."

"But Howard's only fourteen, sir."

"Good God! I've got better things to do than look for dirty books under boys' mattresses. I'm sure you can keep an eye on him. Good night."

"Goodnight, sir," they replied in chorus.

"Jim' to you, Ben. 'Sir' to Howard. Okay?" Jim Walker grinned and left, closing the door firmly behind him.

"Well!" said Howard. "Talk about laid back!"

"Laid Back Walker. L B W," said Ben, unknowingly giving the man a nickname which would stick with him for the next fifteen years. "I like him."

"Seems nice enough." Howard continued to read his book.

"Great that he won't do rounds," said Ben.

"Mmmm?" Howard put his book aside, turned off the reading light and snuggled down into bed. Ben turned off his light. Howard made no sound. Ben wondered if he might possibly come over but the boy showed no sign of doing so.

"You still awake?" he whispered, after some minutes.

"Not much chance of getting to sleep if you keep talking," Howard replied. "I am a bit tired, Ben."

"Result of last night with Mark, eh?" said Ben.

"Could be."

"Did you let him go all the way?"

"You've got a nasty inquisitive mind. For your information, the answer is no. I said all along I wouldn't let him."

"You should. It's nice."

"So why are you lying on your side? And why did you keep fidgeting in the car? I watched you in the mirror. Charles noticed it too."

"It's not painful. It's a nice' feeling."

"That's what Mark said. I still say no."

Ben lay silent for a few minutes. There had to be a way. “What about Charles?” he asked. “I bet you let him do it.”

“Ugh! Certainly not. It's a disgusting idea. I told you.”

“You're daft,” Ben replied. “I mean to say... you like him a lot. He's been good to you. The least you can do is be good to him.”

“Just because I like a man, doesn't mean I'll let him do that. Now can I please get some sleep?”

“What did you let him do?” Ben persisted. He had to know.

“Enough.”

“He tossed you off?”

“It's nothing to do with you. Shut up!”

“Do you feel like a session now. Jim won't be round. He said so.”

“No thanks.”

“Come on. It's ages since we did it.”

“I said, no thank you. I'm going to ask to be moved out of this room if you're going to carry on like this.”

Ben lay silent and disappointed. His prick sank back on his thigh.

“Can I say one last thing?”

“If it really is the last, yes.”

“In my opinion, it would be a good idea to let Charles screw you just once. He'd be very gentle. Then forget him. I don't suppose he's that interested in your personality. If you don't let him do it, he'll lose interest in you.”

“No he won't. He likes me a lot and I like him. We're really close friends. He said so this afternoon.”

“Until somebody younger comes along,” said Ben.

Chapter Seven

Mark and Adam sat at the adjacent writing desks they used for homework. A radio at Adam's side provided the music which they found a help to concentration.

"Did the Romans have glass windows?" asked Mark suddenly.

"Search me. Why do you ask?"

"This story I'm doing for English. I can't have the mob breaking the villa windows if there weren't any."

"Ask Si. He might know."

Mark extracted his long legs from under the desk, got up and went downstairs to the room Simon used as a study. Simon was hard at work at his word processor. Mark: put his question to him.

"Out of my period. No idea. Instinct says no, but they must have had something to keep the cold out. What's your plot?"

"Well, there's this mob of Britons, see, and they're fed up with the Roman occupation so they storm the villa and I want them to throw stones at the windows."

"Couldn't you have them toss burning torches into the villa and set it alight?"

Later, Mark didn't understand what had come over him in that instant. Perhaps it was the fact that Simon wasn't looking at him and appeared to be only half concentrating on his question, but he knew there must have been more to it than that.

"I'd still need to know if there was glass in the fucking windows, wouldn't I?" he shouted.

Simon started. He'd never known Mark to swear before. There the boy stood, red faced, clenching and unclenching his fists, obviously close to tears.

"Okay, okay. Calm down. What's upset you?"

"Nothing. Nothing. I just want a simple answer to a simple question. That's all."

"And I'm afraid I can't answer it. I would if I could."

"You're just not interested, are you? All you care about is the rubbish you chum out."

"That's not true and you know it," replied the author. "Now let's be practical. I don't think we've any reference books in the house which will help you. I gave my encyclopedias to your old school when we moved here. Why don't you pop into town and go to the library? Better still, go to that museum and ask the curator. He's an expert on Romans. Ring for a taxi if you want and get yourself a snack. Here, take this." He handed Mark a five pound note.

"I don't want your bloody money! I'll go on my bike!" Mark shouted. He stormed out of the room and ran upstairs.

"What was that all about?" asked Adam. "Sod all to do with you. I'm going out."

"Where?"

"To the sodding town if you must know."

"Pity you didn't decide earlier," said Adam. He was totally unprepared for what happened next. His papers, his radio, his books were all swept on to the floor.

"Hey! What the...?" he shouted but, Mark had gone.

The girl in the library wasn't a lot of help. She produced several books with pictures of Roman villas

but none showed clearly whether or not the windows were glazed. Mark thanked her as politely as he felt able to do, being aware that a complaint to the school from the library would have rather nastier repercussions than the session he knew he would have to have with Simon.

He climbed the stairs to the library. A door on the landing was marked 'Curator'. He knocked. A voice called "Come in," and he entered. The curator, who seemed surprisingly young to be an expert on anything ancient, sat behind a desk looking at a parchment map of some sort. "Yes, young man?" he said. "What can I do for you?"

"I wanted to know if Roman villas had glass windows."

"Later ones, yes. Lot of lead content so the glass is pale green. It's instantly recognizable as Roman glass. You're from the school aren't you?"

"Yes," Mark replied, glad that his temper had cooled.

"Thought so. I must have seen you in school uniform. Young Colin Stoker is in the museum at the moment. He's your man on Roman remains. Go and have a chat with him. It will make his day."

"Thank you very much," said Mark, "I will."

Wondering what he should ask the mysterious Mr. Stoker, now that he had an answer to his question, Mark left the curator to his map, crossed the landing and pushed open the swing doors which led to the museum. He looked around. There was only one other person in there: a small boy who sat by a showcase, apparently drawing a picture of one of the many clay pots it contained.

"You the only person here?" asked Mark.

"As usual," said the boy.

"I was looking for a Mr. Stoker."

"I'm Colin Stoker. Is it me you want?"

Mark looked at him. He was small. He had brown mousy hair. His nose was hardly more than a button. He wore glasses but there was something about the eyes behind those glasses....

"Expert on Romans?" Mark asked.

"No expert. I'm keen on them, though. Are you?"

"Well... er ... yes and no. I was just with the curator."

"Doctor Sawyer? He's terrific, isn't he? He's written three books, you know."

Simon, Mark knew, had written fifty eight books but Dr. Sawyer's historical achievement seemed the greater.

"Wow!" he said. "Has he really?"

"*Roman Settlements in South West Britain, Monasticism in Gloucester and Aspects of the Industrial Revolution.*" Colin reeled off the titles. "I've only read the first one. He gave me a first edition and he signed it for me."

"That's quite something," said Mark, and he meant it, despite having signed copies of seven of Simon's books himself. "I was asking him about Roman villas; about the windows and that sort of thing." He suspected that Colin, despite his youth, probably knew all about Roman windows and might laugh at the simplicity of his question.

"What period?" asked Colin. "I like the later ones best, don't you?"

"Oh yes. Much better," said Mark, apprehensive that he might be trapped into giving a date.

"Right at the end of the occupation," said Colin, "when they had clerestories."

"Absolutely right." Mark wondered why this disease or whatever it was had never been mentioned in school history lessons. "What I was actually talking to Dr. Sawyer about was the glass they used. You know, that pale green stuff; typically Roman."

"I've got a piece at home. I found it up on the common after they'd put the new drains in. Dr. Sawyer

thinks there may have been a villa there. He's trying to get permission to excavate it. I'm making a collection of Roman things. Would you like to see it?"

All the time the boy had been talking, Mark had been gazing at him, transfixed. He didn't know why. Colin wasn't pretty but there was something compelling about him. It wasn't his face. It wasn't his clothes. His shirt was neat enough but his jeans were horribly scruffy and his sneakers even more so. But his fingers, and the way they held the pencil so delicately; the way he waved it in the air whilst he talked so enthusiastically – it all drew Mark like a magnet.

"Would you like to see it?" repeated Colin.

"Very much. Very much indeed."

"I live a bike ride from here,"

"I've got my bike outside. You sure it's okay? I mean, your folks won't mind?"

"They're at work. I've got a key. I'd better say goodbye to Dr. Sawyer."

"Sure. Don't be long."

"I won't."

"I'll wait for you outside, shall I?" Mark's heart had begun to beat rather strangely. It seemed to be going faster than usual.

"Okay. What's your name by the way?"

"Mark."

"See you outside, Mark."

He had just unlocked his bike when Colin joined him. Colin bent down to undo the lock of his much older bicycle, presenting Mark with a view of the most delightful bottom imaginable. It was small and compact and the jeans enclosing them looked as though they had been molded onto his skin. To the left of the label, the midline threatened to burst open like a ripe nutshell to reveal the tender white flesh inside.

"What time did your mum say you had to be back?" asked Colin as he mounted the saddle.

"I live with my step-father and it doesn't matter."

As they pedalled their way through the town, Mark told Colin about Simon – or as much about Simon as he felt he ought to tell. Colin, in turn, told Mark about himself. He was a pupil at the local comprehensive school. He was twelve. He had no real friends but he didn't mind that because his love for Roman history occupied all his spare time. Mark, who spent most of his time thinking about himself or Howard and himself, was fascinated.

"I've never talked to anyone from your school before," said Colin. "You don't talk all that posh, do you?"

"I hope not!" Mark laughed.

"And you're not stuck up, either."

A thought flashed through Mark's mind. He suppressed it instantly. "No reason why I should be," he said, and meant it.

"Down here," said Colin. "Our house is the third on the left." They were in the industrial part of the town where streets alternated with small factories; where rusty cars lay abandoned in alleyways and litter from fast-food shops swirled in the breeze.

They parked their bikes in the front garden of a row house and locked them carefully, something Mark had never thought of doing in Hardwick St. Mary. Colin opened the front door. The house was surprisingly neat inside and spotlessly clean.

"My stuff's upstairs," said Colin. "Would you like something to drink first?"

"No thanks," said Mark. "Lead on."

Colin occupied a bedroom at the back of the house. The view from the window was of a factory yard where pieces of machinery lay rusting. His bed, covered with a brightly colored duvet, lay along one wall. There was a desk piled with books and a large, glass-fronted bookcase which contained various artifacts, each one neatly labeled. Colin slid back one of the doors, reached inside and produced a triangular shard of green glass. "There you are," he said, triumphantly. "Clearly Roman. About two hundred A.D., Dr. Sawyer says."

It felt surprisingly heavy. It was also much thicker along one edge. Mark commented upon the fact.

"Shows it was in place a long time. Glass is really a super-sticky liquid, see? It settles like that."

"I never knew that," said Mark, admiringly. He turned it over in his hands. "So this could have been part of a villa window?"

"That's what we think, yes."

"I wonder what broke it," said Mark, trying to conjure up the scene.

"There's no way of telling," said Colin.

"Could have been an angry mob of Brits, fed up with the hated invaders," said Mark.

"They were hardly invaders. They'd been here for two hundred and fifty years when that glass was made."

"Hmm." Mark reached past Colin and replaced the glass on its shelf. His eye lighted on a small piece of metal. He picked it up and brought it out. "What's this?" he asked. There appeared to be some letters round one edge but it was too large and the wrong shape to be a coin.

"It's part of a manumission badge," said Colin. I found that on the common too."

"What's a manumission?" Mark asked.

For a moment Colin looked at him strangely. "It's the badge they gave to an ex slave to show he was free."

"That's it then, isn't it?" said Mark. "They treated him badly and when he was free at last, the first thing he did was throw a stone through the window."

Colin laughed, but there was something forced about his laughter. Mark remembered the Chaplain at his old school who so desperately tried to be one of the boys and who had laughed in just such a way when boys made anti-religious jokes.

"I think he was sorry to go," Colin said, taking the badge from Mark. "Do you want to hear my theory?"

"Of course."

Colin sat on his bed and gazed at the fragment of corroded metal. "I think he was employed to look after a boy and the boy grew up and there was no need for him any more so he had to go. I think he was sad to go. I think the boy didn't want him to go, either. I sort of feel it. Are you interested in slaves?"

"I've never really given them a lot of thought," said Mark. It was an idea, though. His English project began to take on a new aspect.

"I am," said Colin. "I wish we still had them."

"To wake you up with a cup of tea, run your bath and do your homework for you?" said Mark.

Colin lay back on his bed and closed his eyes. "Much more than that," he said.

"Like what?"

"Well, you know," said Colin, without opening his eyes.

"No, I'm afraid I don't. Not these days with washing machines, washing up machines, vacuum cleaners and things like that. I don't think they'd be fully employed."

"Yes, but a slave would have to do everything you told him, wouldn't he?"

"Yes, I suppose so. The problem is, what would you tell him to do?"

Colin opened his eyes and smiled. "Well... er... sort of personal things," he said.

Mark laughed. "If you're hinting about what I think you're on about, you'll need a beautiful female slave."

"Not necessarily."

Mark felt a very slight stirring at his groin.

"Romans were different from us," said Colin. "They didn't think there was anything wrong in that sort of thing. There's a book in the library. Men had boy friends and boys had men friends and slaves."

"And if you had a slave," said Mark, aware of yet another twitch against his thigh, "what would you want him to do?"

Colin sat up again. "Oh, nothing. It's daft really. Forget it."

"No. It's interesting. I've never thought about it before. Tell me."

"You'd only laugh. You'll go back to your posh school and say, 'I met this dirty minded little kid,' and everybody will laugh."

"I promise not to say anything at all and I am genuinely interested. There's nothing wrong in having sexual fantasies, for God's sake. Everyone has them."

"You sound like a psychiatrist!" Colin lay back down again. A slight blush had appeared on his pale cheeks.

"So," said Mark. He put his hand into his trouser pocket to restrain his awakened organ. "First of all, how old is your slave?"

"Oh, I don't know. Older than me but not too old."

"About fifteen or sixteen?" said Mark.

"Yes."

"What's his name?"

"Doesn't matter."

"How about Marcus?"

"Yes. Okay. That wouldn't be his real name. It's a Latin name I have given him."

Mark walked over to the bed. "You sent for me, master?" he said. "I am Marcus, your new slave."

Colin giggled. "Oh, don't be daft," he said.

"I'm not."

"Well, this pillow needs to be turned over. It's uncomfortable."

"Yes, master." Colin raised his head and Mark turned the pillow. A rather grubby handkerchief lay underneath it. "Will that be all, master?" he asked.

"I think so."

"I will do anything you tell me, master," said Mark.

"Anything?"

"Of course. I am your slave. I must."

"Are you sure?"

"Certain."

"Well... er... take your jacket and shirt off then."

"Yes, master." In order to do so, Mark had to remove his hand from his pocket. He felt the cloth spring forwards. He looked down. There was no disguising that bulge. But Colin had closed his eyes again and, furthermore, there was a distinct but tiny swelling under his fly.

"Have you done that?" Colin asked.

"Yes, master."

Colin opened his eyes. "You look pretty strong. Do you do weight training at your school?"

“Am I still a slave?”

“If you like.”

“My last master made me practice. He liked strong slaves.”

“So do I. Can I look at your legs?”

“Of course. Shall I take my trousers off?”

“Are you sure you don't mind?”

“I'm your slave. I'm not allowed to mind.” He undid his belt, opened his flies and let his trousers drop to his ankles. He stepped out of them and folded them neatly before placing them on top of Colin's 'museum'. The bulge in his Y-fronts was enormous. Colin's smaller protuberance jerked slightly.

“Hmm. They're really nice,” Colin said, staring at a point above the limbs he was supposed to be admiring. Without waiting for further orders, knowing that it would cause the younger boy embarrassment, Mark slid the shorts down and off.

“Wow!” said the ancient but young Roman. “It's enormous!”

“So I've been told. When are your parents due home?”

“Oh, not for ages. They don't stop work till five.”

“Then we've got time,” said Mark.

“For what?” asked Colin breathlessly.

“Whatever you want. Your slave awaits your command.”

“Come and sit on the bed.”

Mark settled on the edge of the bed. Colin moved towards him. He felt the denim of the boy's jeans on his thigh.

“It's really big. Can I touch it?”

“Sure.”

A tiny hand reached out, touched it, held it delicately between thumb and forefinger and grasped it firmly. “I can feel your pulse,” said Colin – and he giggled. “What shall we do now?” he asked, releasing his grip.

“Well, I think the young master might like a massage,” said Mark, glad of the chance to seize the initiative.

“Could do, I suppose. Shall I get undressed?”

“No, the slave must undress you. You mustn't tire yourself. Sit up.”

Untying the laces of Colin's trainers and removing them, together with his socks, was easy enough, even to Mark's trembling fingers. Undoing the shirt buttons seemed to take ages. Mark peeled it back over the boy's shoulders.

“My tits aren't nearly as big as yours, are they?” said Colin apologetically.

“They're super!” whispered Mark. He touched one of them. The tiny pimple felt rubbery and warm.

“Now the rest,” Colin demanded.

Mark undid the boy's belt, found the big button at the top of the flies and, with some difficulty, undid it. The tight waistband flew apart. As each successive button was released, the triangle became wider, revealing pale blue undershorts.

“Lift your bum a bit,” said Mark. “That's it. Now they'll come off.” Which indeed they did but with difficulty. Colin seemed disinclined to help. The jeans were so tight that Mark had first to tug them from the knees and then slide them down the boy's slender, white legs.

Now he folded the jeans, placed them at the end of the bed and then turned his full attention to his young “master”. Gently, he removed the boy's spectacles and placed them on a bedside table.

Colin screwed up his tiny nose. “I can't see very well without them,” he protested.

“No matter. You can feel.”

Mark gazed at the boy's slightly apprehensive face, then ran his eyes down the heaving rib-cage, narrow hips, slender white thighs – and stopped at the little conical projection in his shorts. “Ready?” he breathed.

Colin nodded. Mark gripped the waistband and pulled the shorts down, revealing a groin with no hair at all – just ivory-white flesh. The boy's penis stood up, tiny and proud, slightly pointed and with a crinkled tip like a glove from which a finger had been half withdrawn. His scrotum, like a small ripe peach, was somehow even more attractive.

“You're beautiful!” whispered Mark.

“So are you,” said Colin and Mark felt the boy's hand slide along his thigh until his delicate fingers closed around Mark's rampant penis. “Shall I toss you off?” he asked.

“Not yet. I want to feel you first.”

“How do you mean?”

“You'll see. Move over a bit.”

“I'm not sure that slaves would be allowed on the master's bed,” said Colin, smiling.

“This one is. Open your legs a bit. Bit more.”

“Like this?” asked Colin, but Mark couldn't answer because his mouth was full of more than words.

Colin jumped, as though his little body had been galvanized by a high-voltage current. “Eee gads!” he cried. Had the kid been reading Shakespeare? Mark wondered. He sucked on the delightful little penis, delighting in its perky stiffness, moving the loose skin around with the tip of his tongue, licking, wetting, lubricating. He felt the cool skin of the boy's belly touch his nose, and then he opened his mouth wider to include the entire small scrotum.

“Do it more on my cock,” Colin pleaded. “Oh, that's great. Here I go – oh, oh, oh!” The small body beneath Mark's face writhed and gave three great convulsive upward thrusts, then sank back sweating.

Mark got off the bed, wiped his lips with the back of his hand and grinned. There was a lot to be said for the dry orgasms of the very young. In two minutes Colin would be ready for more.

In fact, it was more like five minutes. The third session had to be delayed whilst Mark rested and Colin, fascinated, dipped his fingers in the pool of semen that had collected on Mark's abdomen. The little boy tested it with his nose and tongue and drew out viscous threads of it, before wiping his fifteen-year-old slave dry with a handkerchief.

“When can I see you again?” Colin asked, as Mark mounted his bike for the journey back to the Grange. It was already after four o'clock.

“Soon as possible. How about tomorrow afternoon?”

“I was going out with my metal detector then.”

“Why don't we go together? I've never seen one of those things working.”

“Okay. Shall I call for you or will you call for me?”

“I'll come here,” Mark said. “Quite often,” he murmured as he cycled off.

Chapter Eight

As the weeks of that term went by, Ben realized more and more what a mistake he had made by encouraging Charles. He began to feel sorry for Mark. On the few occasions when Mark's name was mentioned in the privacy of their bedroom, Howard was disparaging. He even claimed, once, never to have liked Mark and Ben knew that was untrue.

Charles moved in to the cottage. Howard went down to talk about decorations and alterations. Howard was there when the removal vans turned up. He talked incessantly about Charles.

Jim Walker was quite happy to let the boy go down to the village at any time when he didn't have lessons. No written permission was necessary now. There was no more queuing up for an 'exeat' paper and no book to sign when one returned. Soon, Howard was leaving messages with the kitchen staff to say that he would be out to dinner. He arrived in time for lights out, often so tired that he went straight to sleep without reading. That tiredness to Ben was most suspicious. He thought it odd, and very rude, that Charles had made no attempt to contact him. He had, after all, done a lot for the man.

Once, as he plodded up the hill from the bus stop to the school, Charles' car passed him. Charles waved. He could have stopped and offered Ben a lift. He would have done so for Howard, even though it was only about fifty yards. No, there was something strange going on, and Ben didn't know what it was.

He hadn't had sex of any sort with Howard since they had come back. That was particularly infuriating now that rounds had been abolished. There was even a sixth former who was said to have taken one of the village girls to his room for the night. Howard said that Charles had advised him against sex at school: rumors might get around. In vain Ben pointed out that they had had sex on several occasions when Mr. Henderson was Housemaster. Now, when there was so little chance of them being found out, was a funny time to be so concerned. Howard still refused.

And then, one night in November, everything became clear. Ben cursed his own stupidity for not realizing what had been going on. Howard had gone down to see Charles. The bedroom was bitterly cold. He had had supper, finished his prep, his eyes aching from hours in front of the computer, and bed seemed the best place to be. With Howard away, too, it was the ideal opportunity for a really slow, deluxe wank.

He got out the cold cream jar and the tissues, stripped and climbed, shivering, between the sheets. He rubbed a liberal dollop of cream into the palm of his hand and reached down to grasp his penis which was already standing up in anticipation of pleasure.

He put out the light and lay looking at the stars through the skylight. Who should it be tonight? Howard: if he couldn't have him in reality he'd have him in imagination. This time he would be the hidden spy and watch Charles and Howard.

Where were they? In Charles's bedroom. Howard was lying naked on the bed with his legs in the air. Charles was undressing and smiling down at the boy. What was he saying?

Ben released his throbbing penis suddenly and lay staring through the skylight. How could he have been so dumb? It was all so bloody obvious: he was being taken for a ride by both of them. He could just imagine the conversation: "I promised Ben a thousand pounds if I could have you. I won't pay him that much, of course. I'll give him half and you can have the rest. And I'll buy Simon's cottage so that you can come and see me whenever you're free. Ben's so naive he'll never find out."

The more he thought about it, the more obvious it became. When Howard first moved in with him, he was always hitting him for small loans. He hadn't asked Ben for money for a long time. Of course not. What fourteen-year-old would, if he had loads of money in the bank?

There had also been one or two nights when heavy breathing and the rustling sheets had been a clear enough indication of what Howard was doing. That hadn't happened for ages, either. Of course not. He was being pumped dry down at the cottage.

It would be easy enough to check on Howard's financial situation. He almost certainly kept his savings book in his personal drawer. Ben was on the point of getting out of bed when he heard the boy's footsteps on the stairs.

“How was Charles this evening?” he asked as the door opened.

“Okay. I thought you'd be asleep.”

“It's time you were, that's for sure. In the old days you'd never have been allowed to stay out as late as this. What's the time?”

“Half past nine. We went out to dinner.”

“To celebrate something?”

“No. We just had a lot to talk about.”

“Oh.” Ben wondered how often his name had been mentioned over the steak or whatever they had eaten: “Ben's so stupid; he hasn't got a clue what's going on.” “Here's some more money for you, Howard. Be careful that Ben doesn't find it and don't let him touch you again, will you? And forget Mark. Mark's a long way away. Best forgotten.”

Howard undressed and got into bed. “Night Ben,” he said.

But Ben was too deep in thought to answer. His brain was spinning. He had ordered the new computer and sent off the check, using Charles' money and everything else he possessed. In fact the total sum had overdrawn his bank account slightly. He had to get the other five hundred pounds. But how?

It seemed an insoluble problem. Charles was hardly likely to pay for something which was taken away from him, and yet Howard had to be rescued and somehow reunited with Mark but – Ben smiled to himself – not wholly. Mark's bed was a long way away; Ben's was much more conveniently located.

There was, he thought, something very attractive about small boys. He'd noticed one or two from the Lower School and marked them down as possible good catches for the next Tiddler-Trapping Night – the one night of the year when, by ancient tradition, Senior School and Lower School boys mixed and enjoyed pleasures which, during the rest of the year, were described as “pretty filthy” and “loathsome behavior”.

Howard had been caught that way, he remembered – caught by Adam. Howard was Senior School now. Good old Adam – there was nothing quite like being screwed by Adam. The feel of it, pushing like a steel rod and then sliding up into you... Ben's penis twitched happily at the thought. But Adam was a long way away too. If only Howard could be persuaded to allow Ben to screw him. He'd be pretty good; Ben knew that. Ben's penis began to take a definite interest in the idea. He reached down and held it.

That was better. He grasped it tightly. That's how Howard would feel, even though rotten Charles had almost certainly bugged him regularly. A younger, less experienced boy would feel even better. There was that nice little fair-haired one with a Dutch name. He was pretty. And another whose name Ben didn't know: lovely, shapely stocking-covered legs and little gray flannel shorts. They'd come down easily enough. His breathing became quicker and the bed cover began to move and then, suddenly, stop.

The idea had come into his head all at once. It was so simple. He wondered why he hadn't thought of it before. Charles had paid five hundred pounds for one boy. There were over eight hundred boys in the school of whom at least three hundred were in the Lower School. Simon had once said that ten per cent of the adult male population was gay – and half the kids around puberty would “do it” with anyone who

would take an interest in them. That meant there were between thirty and one hundred and fifty small boys in the school who could be persuaded to do it with Charles. Thirty times five hundred. A hundred and fifty times five hundred. Ben whistled. Just two or three would do, at least to start with. His problems would be over!

But first to get Howard away from Charles – how to achieve that? Charles wouldn't take any notice of anything he said, but maybe Howard would. Suppose Ben could somehow do a little detective work and then confront Howard with definite evidence? That would frighten Howard badly. Howard would leave Charles and return to Ben's bed... and Mark's, of course. There would remain the problem of recruiting Howard's successors, but that shouldn't be too difficult...

One wintry afternoon, Howard left after lunch to go down to the cottage. Charles wanted him to decide about Christmas decorations. A likely story, Ben thought. He gave his roommate an hour's start and then walked slowly down the hill into the village. He felt the big back door key in his pocket. Simon had given it to him one afternoon and he had forgotten to return it. He hoped Charles hadn't changed the locks.

There was no sign of life in the cottage. He guessed they would be upstairs. That bedroom had seen some action! Ben and Simon, Simon and Adam, Ben and Adam – God knows who else. And now it was Charles and Howard. No doubt about it. Well, he'd catch them at it and have it out with Charles. Possibly he could even persuade the man to leave the village altogether. He'd have to think about that.

He opened the gate as quietly as he could, walked on the grass rather than the path and tapped lightly on the door. He waited. There was no sound. Good. Dodging under the windows, he skirted the house. The back garden looked familiar enough. It was a pity that the undergrowth he and Adam had hacked away was beginning to grow back. The famous lawn on which Simon had screwed him one summer's day would soon be swallowed up by nettles.

The key fitted and he slipped inside. The kitchen looked much the same. In Simon's day it always smelt of food but Howard had said that Charles ate out a lot. He put his head against the door leading to the lounge. There was no sound. Gently, he pushed the door open. The lounge was a shock. Simon's comfortable leather chairs had been replaced by monstrosities of chrome, black steel tubing and wicker-work. The television set was huge and much too big for a small lounge. A rack, which seemed more suitable for a shop display, held several hundred compact disks. It was all pure showing off, calculated, no doubt, to impress a youngster like Howard.

They weren't in there. So... it was as he expected. They must be upstairs. Very carefully, and keeping to the edge – he knew which stairs creaked – he went up to the landing.

The big bedroom was at the front of the house. He listened at its keyhole. They were making no sound. Perhaps they had finished and were lying, as he had with Simon, curled up together. For a moment, he wondered if he was doing the right thing. He decided that he was. With Simon it had been different.

He opened the door as quietly as he could. There was nobody in there! But... he noted with satisfaction, the bed was unmade and untidy. He had obviously missed them. They had finished and were probably in town now having tea in the George. Simon had never liked the George. He said it was over-priced and presumptuous. It was just the sort of place to which Charles would take an impressionable kid like Howard. A huge picture of Charles's yacht, the Narwhal, hung on the wall. Another cheap trick, obviously: "What's that boat, Charles?" "That? Oh, that's my private yacht. If you're a good boy and do what I want, I'll take you on a cruise."

Ben tried all the rooms. There was no sign of them. Simon's comfortable study was now a modem office. There wasn't a single sheet of paper on the desk, though. Typical. It was obvious that Charles didn't use it. It was just for show.

They must have gone further than the town, he thought. More noisily than he had entered the house, he left it and locked the back door behind him. The garage was closed. He'd been past the house often enough to notice that Charles left it open when he was out in his car. So, Ben thought, he would just have to come back another time, leaving the school immediately after Howard. That way he'd be sure to catch them.

Dusk was settling fast on the sleepy little village. Plumes of smoke rose from ancient chimneys into the still air. Ben had just reached the gate when he heard a click and a bar of light appeared at the foot of the garage door. So that's where they were! Doing it in a car! Of course! He should have known. They'd been out in it in Gloucestershire and he had wondered then where they actually got it on. He'd always assumed they'd gone to a hotel.

Silently, he approached the garage and put his face against the cold steel of the door. Unfortunately there wasn't a window. Simon had installed a skylight, but climbing onto the roof in the fading light was really not on. Besides, if they were doing it in the car, he wouldn't see anything.

But he could hear every word – not that either said much.

They were too breathless!

“That's right.” – Charles' voice. “Use both hands. It's better if you do it slowly.”

“Like this?”

“Oh yes! You're very good at it.”

“It's good fun really, isn't it?” Howard was breathing heavily. “How often do you have to do it?”

“The more the better. You're much better at it than the boy in France. Move down a bit. That's it.”

For some minutes, neither of them spoke, only panted like a couple of racehorses.

“Hey! Be careful,” said Howard suddenly. “Some of that went in my hair!”

“No matter. You can have a shower when we go inside. Packing up time, do you think?”

“Okay.”

Ben heard a car door being shut, and left hurriedly.

As he had anticipated, Howard didn't return to school for about another two hours. Ben waited until they were both in bed. “Have a good time at the cottage this afternoon?” he asked, casually.

“Pretty good.”

“I noticed you didn't have a shower tonight.”

“I had one down at Charles'.” Howard shut his book with a snap. “What the hell business is it of yours if I take a shower or not?” he asked, angrily.

“Just wondered. Seems a funny thing to do to have a shower there and then come back to school. Unless, of course, you got dirty down there. That's the truth isn't it Howard? You got dirty down there? You get dirty every time you go there. Spunk in your hair must take quite a lot of getting out!”

The book missed him by inches.

“You spying, dirty minded bastard!” Howard shouted. “You were listening, weren't you? And you went in the cottage. You left mud on the stairs. Shall I tell you exactly what we did this afternoon? Would it help your perverted, horrible mind? Shall I tell you every tiny detail?”

“You might as well.”

“I bloody will! We were wax-polishing the car. We do a bit every day. I was working on the bottom of the door and Charles was doing the top. Some of the polish dropped onto my head. That, believe it or not, is the Gospel truth. Don't speak to me again. I'm getting out of this room as soon as I can. I've had enough. I don't mind gays. Charles is one, but he's not a hypocrite like you. One minute you tell me to let Charles screw me and the next you're going wild because you think he has. You ought to get yourself

sorted out. Good night!”

Chapter Nine

Howard was still in a bad temper on the following morning. He refused to speak to Ben and, that afternoon, went straight to the cottage. It was a hobbies afternoon. Ben went for a walk to think things over. The spying had been a disaster. He couldn't afford to make mistakes like that. He sat on a raised hillock and watched a tanker, far out to sea, as it disappeared over the ill-defined horizon.

"Excuse me. Would you mind if I sat up there?" said a young, unbroken voice. It was one of the Lower School boys: a kid of about eleven.

"Plenty of room for us both," said Ben, "but why this particular spot?"

"I'm doing a picture of the chapel. You get a better view of it from up there."

"Come on up, then." Ben reached down, grasped the tiny cold hand and pulled the lad up. "Where's your camera?" he asked.

"I draw," said the boy. "Here." From his duffel coat he drew a sketch pad and flicked over some pages. "That's as far as I've got with the chapel." The drawing was surprisingly good. Ben knew nothing about art but he could see that the boy had talent.

"I only do buildings," said the little lad, sitting and placing the pad on his knee. "I like buildings." For some minutes he sketched away. Ben was amazed at his ability to achieve a straight line without a ruler.

"Do you do paintings too?" Ben asked.

"I'd like to but I've only got a kid's water color set."

"Surely you could borrow paints and brushes from the art room? It is a hobby after all. The school is supposed to supply things for hobbies."

"Lower School boys can't borrow stuff. I asked. I'll just have to save up."

"I could borrow it for you, though, couldn't I?"

"Would you?"

"If you like."

"I'd do the painting part indoors," said the boy. His face dropped.

"What's the matter?"

"I don't think that would work. The Lower School hobbies room is so crowded. Somebody would start mucking about with the paints and then you'd get into trouble."

The idea which flashed through Ben's mind at that moment was so revolutionary that it almost took him by surprise.

"Supposing," he said, "I was to get permission for you to use my room. It's got quite good light. It has a skylight."

"They'd never allow it," said the boy. "It's jolly nice of you to suggest it but we'd get into trouble if they even saw us sitting here together. You know what they're like."

Ben knew very well. The taboo against boys from the Lower School mixing with Upper School boys was one of the strongest of the many school traditions.

"I know," he said. "But we've got a new Housemaster. I think he might see sense. I'll ask. It does no harm to ask. What's your name?"

"Timothy Ledbury."

"I'm Ben Hill."

They exchanged a few more words but it soon became obvious that Timothy preferred to draw in silence. Ben left him and went in search of Mr. Walker.

That surprising gentleman was in his kitchen with his wife, baking a cake. Ben had never been invited further than the study in the days of Mr. Walker's predecessor. To his surprise and pleasure, he found himself perched on a stool with a mug of tea in his hands, and talking about computers to Mrs. Walker who seemed to know an awful lot about them.

"I shall come over to see it and drool with envy," she said, after he had told her about his proposed purchase. "I don't suppose I should be allowed, though."

"If Ben invites you, of course you can," said her husband. "Some of these stupid rules will have to be changed."

"It's about rules that I've come to see you," said Ben. He told his housemaster about Timothy.

"Sounds a good idea to me," said Jim Walker, slurping the contents of a mixing bowl into a cake tin. "We're trying to forge stronger links with the Lower School. This seems to be just the sort of thing which should be going on. What about your roommate. What does he think?"

"He's out most of the time," Ben replied, "but he won't mind. It's the Headmaster that I am concerned about."

Jim laughed. "I know what you mean. He'll see a thousand and one snags and moral dangers. Leave him to me. That's what I'm paid for. In the meantime, you run along to Headmaster, Lower School and tell him you've got my support, and get the lad all he needs from the art department. If they moan, refer them to me. Come back and tell me what happened. Just come in through the back door, and, Ben..."

"Yes, sir?" The 'sir' slipped out.

"I think it's terrific of you to have taken such an interest in the lad. Well done."

Seated in the Head of Lower School's study, Ben wondered if he would ever get away. He laughed dutifully at the anecdotes he had heard hundreds of times before when he had been a pupil there. The issue of Timothy's painting was soon lost in rambling reminiscences of other peoples' inefficiency.

"I shall always remember his face," said Ramburton, leaning back in his chair. 'If you say so, sir,' he said. I was a Colonel then. 'I do say so,' I replied, so of course he had to do it. Must have saved an awful lot of lives. That's how it works, you see, Hill. Got to get to grips with a problem and tackle it. What did you come to see me about actually?"

"Timothy Ledbury, sir."

"Ah yes, Ledbury. His father was at school here. Did you know that?"

"No sir, I didn't."

"Be interesting to have a look at his father's old reports. I keep them all filed, you know. That's the way I run things. Must have hundred per cent efficiency."

There was nothing for it but to wait whilst he found the appropriate file.

"Four and a half minutes!" he said, triumphantly, slapping it on his desk. How's that?"

"Most impressive, sir," Ben replied. A computer, he thought, would have done the job in half that number of seconds! He wondered how Mr. Ledbury, senior, would react if he knew that his confidential school records were being shown to a stranger.

Another flood of anecdotes and reminiscences; this time of the teachers who had written the various notes, all of whom, according to the Head of Lower School, were appallingly inefficient. An hour and a half later, Ben managed to obtain approval for his idea. It was an approval limited and modified by innumerable sub-clauses and riders. It was interspersed with even more reminiscences, but it was an approval. Timothy could use Ben's room on hobby afternoons providing that Mr. Walker took full responsibility for him and providing that Ben was with him during the whole time he was there.

The art teacher was no problem. He liked Mr. Walker. Mrs. Walker shared his interest in the French Impressionists so Ben came away with an easel over his shoulder, a plastic bag of brushes and a very superior water color set. He took them straight to his room. The easel fitted nicely into his wardrobe. He hid the paint brushes at the back of a drawer. There seemed no point in mentioning the idea to Howard. The situation between Howard and himself was difficult enough already.

He went downstairs, crossed the road and, as instructed, tapped on Mr. Walker's kitchen door. Both were there. The kitchen was delightfully warm, as were the Walkers themselves. He liked Mrs. Walker particularly. He liked her bright red trousers. He liked the way she teased her husband, and he liked being able to talk about computers to somebody who actually understood them.

Jim went into his study and emerged a few minutes later with a memorandum for the Headmaster detailing the plan he and Ben had hatched and accepting full responsibility.

He showed it to Ben a few days later with the Headmaster's APPROVED annotation scrawled at the top. Ben lost no time in finding Timothy and telling him.

"Wow! That's absolutely terrific!" said the boy. "When can I come?"

"Next hobby afternoon. That's tomorrow. It's room eighteen right on the top floor. Come to think of it, I had better meet you outside or somebody might throw you out. Say straight after lunch?"

At the appointed hour, Ben stood outside the front door to his dormitory building. He watched the file of Lower School boys as they left their refectory and marched back across the road. In their dark blazers and gray shorts and socks he thought they looked like a giant dark centipede. He had hated wearing shorts when he had been a "Tiddler". School tradition decreed that only Upper School boys could wear long trousers.

He waited. Timothy emerged from a side door of the Lower School carrying his drawing book. Ben waved. He came over. "Are you sure it's all right?" he asked, nervously.

"Course it is. Come on up."

"What about your roommate?"

"He's down in the village. He won't be back till dinner time at the earliest."

Timothy didn't seem impressed by the array of expensive electronic gear on Ben's side of the room. Ben had thought it might be difficult to drag him away from the stereo or the computer; especially the miniature television, which, although banned by the school, he had placed carefully on the bed. "Shall I put some music on?" he asked.

"I'd rather not, if you don't mind. It puts me off."

Ben got out the easel, the paints and the brushes. Timothy examined each item and nodded approvingly.

"This is good stuff, Ben. Thanks a lot!"

"Think nothing of it. Where do you want to work?"

"I think it would be best right under the skylight. If I put the pencil sketch on the chest of drawers I can see it whilst I paint. What are you going to do?"

"I think I'll just lie down and watch TV. It's got an earphone so it won't disturb you."

Timothy made no comment; perhaps he assumed that all senior boys owned such luxurious items. He pulled up a chair, filled a pot with water at the wash basin and began to paint. Ben lay on his bed and turned on the television. For the first half an hour it was interesting; an educational program about computers in medicine. After that, he lost interest. There was nothing to appeal to him on any channel. He sat up, looked over at the easel. "Hey! That's really good!" he said. The school chapel seemed to jut out from the paper. It was amazing to see how a few blobs of color, added apparently haphazardly, suddenly became masters and boys.

"It's coming along," said Timothy. "Is it my imagination or is it hot in here?"

"It's hot," said Ben. "It's the skylight that does it. Up here we bake during the day and freeze at night."

"Would you mind awfully if I were to take my blazer off?"

"Not at all. Take your tie off as well if you like."

"We're supposed to wear ties at all times," said Howard.

"I know. I was in Lower School once. Don't worry. Nobody will see you."

Howard took off his blazer and tie and laid them carefully on Howard's bed. Then he returned to the easel and continued to paint. The atmosphere seemed heavy and oppressive. Ben, bored, wondered if this had been a good idea after all. The afternoon had not begun well.

He reached over and took the longest of the paintbrushes from the bundle on the bedside table. He ran the bristles over the back of his hand and then over his cheek. It was a gentle, luxurious sensation. Holding the brush by the end of the handle, he touched the nape of Tim's neck with the bristles. The boy continued to paint. Ben moved the bristles upwards from the neckband of Tim's shirt to his hair-line.

"What're you doing?" Tim didn't even turn round.

"Tickling your neck. Like it?"

"Not much."

Ben brushed again, as if spreading a blob of paint all over the boy's narrow neck.

"Most people like being tickled there," he insisted.

"Well I don't. Could I please get on with this?"

"Perhaps you're sensitive somewhere else," Ben suggested. The mention of those words "somewhere else" seemed to make his heart beat slightly faster.

Tim didn't reply. Although he had his back to Ben, his left leg was outside the easel support. Ben touched the back of his knee with the bristles. Surprisingly, Tim said nothing but continued to paint. Ben stroked the two prominent sinews back there. There was still no response. Tim continued to paint as if he felt nothing. Ben turned onto his side so he could see better what he was doing. With deliberate strokes he brushed the tendons, inside the hollow and then down the boy's smooth calf to the top of his sock.

"Does that feel better?" he asked. Tim made no reply. Concentrating on the exposed section of calf, Ben continued to brush.

Suddenly, and without saying anything, Tim thrust his leg further out. It was an obvious invitation to continue. Ben moved towards the edge of the bed. Tim's leg was only a few inches from his face. There was, Ben thought, something very attractive about it. It looked so smooth. Where the shorts had ridden up there was a distinct line separating the honey color of the lower leg from the milk white thigh. Ben moved his fingers down to the middle of the brush and pretended to paint upwards from the sock to that fascinating demarcation line. It was as though he were applying, instantly, what the summer sun had done over a period of several weeks. It was a pity that the whole leg could not be the same beautiful amber color. If only the brush were loaded with suitable paint. He would paint it in bands, starting where the sunburn stopped. Just there. Then another band on top of that. The bristles vanished into Tim's shorts. A shame not to be able to see where he was painting but it was easy to guess. The bristles were about two centimeters across.... The metal binding vanished from his view....

Timothy stopped painting and put his brush down. The leg stayed quite still.

"Okay?" Ben asked, hoping his voice sounded suitably casual. "As much as I can do this afternoon," said the boy. "Can it stay here overnight until it's dry?"

"Sure." Ben continued to 'paint'.

"I like this room. It's an ideal atelier," said Tim.

"I suppose it is," said Ben, not really sure what an atelier was. The whole brush head was at last

inside Timothy's shorts and still the boy hadn't protested. Surely he would have by now....

Then it happened. Tim stood up and stretched his arms above his head. Ben was left lying on his side and clasping a paintbrush.

"I'd better go back," said the boy.

"What's the hurry?" asked Ben.

"I expect you've got a load of things to do."

"Not really."

It was a lie. There was one thing which screamed out for Ben's attention. He couldn't take his eyes off it. As Tim stood up and stretched, a bulge in the front of his shorts which hadn't been there when he'd entered the bedroom was very obvious indeed!

"Stay as long as you like," said Ben. "Sit down here on the bed. You'll get a better view of your picture." It was the best reason he could think of. It worked. He swung his legs on to the floor and Tim sat beside him.

"I see what you mean," said the boy. "It seems to stand out more, doesn't it?"

"Like this, you mean?" said Ben. He touched the bulge delicately with the brush. Tim said nothing. Ben shifted to the end of the bed.

"Why don't you lie down?" he said. Tim looked up at the skylight, glanced towards the door, looked down at Ben, gazed at the skylight again. Ben lay quite still and held his breath. Unsmiling and silent, Tim put a foot on his chair and removed one shoe; then the other. Then he lay on the bed.

Again, Ben traced round the line where suntan ceased. He could see more of it now. Tim brought his feet towards him so that his knees pointed upwards. Deep down in the shorts, creamy thigh gave way to mysterious darkness. Ben insinuated the brush down into the shorts. Tim continued to stare up at the skylight.

"Okay?" Ben asked again. There was no reply.

Ben removed the brush and dropped it onto the floor. He put his hand on the raised knee which felt cool to the touch. He slid his hand downwards into the shorts. Tim's skin was so smooth and so cool. The bulge in his shorts moved slightly. Ben touched it with his free hand, thrilling to the feel of its tiny jerks. Now for it. He took his hand out of the shorts and unbuckled the colored Lower School belt. Tim still said nothing. Ben opened the top button, then the next, then the next two, and parted the cloth to reveal a swollen triangle of snow-white linen. He pulled the shirt out of the shorts and then, grabbing the shorts at the leg openings, he hauled them down.

"That's quite a hard-on you've got," he said, and placed his hand on it. Tim continued to gaze at the skylight.

"A nice one," Ben continued. He kneaded it through the boy's underpants. "Ever been wanked before?" he asked. Tim said nothing.

"It's a great feeling," Ben persisted. "Shall I wank you?"

No reply. Silent assent. Ben reached forward and pulled the pants down. "Nice!" he said. Indeed it was. Very nice. A substantial cock for a youngster; a downy patch of light pubic hair and a pear-shaped scrotum hanging loosely and almost touching the bedspread.

He took Tim's penis between his fingers. It felt as hard as steel. Gently, he retracted the foreskin to reveal the shiny glans and the slit, like a little eye peering, as were Tim's real eyes, up at the skylight.

"You can do it to me if you like," said Ben, encouragingly. Tim didn't reply.

"Go on. It's better that way." He took Tim's hand and placed it on his crotch. Tim took it away again.

"Please yourself," said Ben. He started slowly, moving the foreskin up and down over the steel-hard shaft. Tim made no sound. Ben speeded up. That had some effect but not much: little trembles rippled

up and down Tim's chest. Soon Ben's wrist began to ache. He changed hands. Tim's balls danced up and down between his soft creamy white thighs. Minutes passed. Ben's fingers began to ache. He changed hands again.

"Okay?" he asked, yet again. This time Tim nodded and closed his eyes.

"Tell me when..." Ben didn't finish the sentence. Tim gave a convulsive heave upwards. A drop of milk-and-water semen emerged from the slit, coated the glans like liquid icing and dribbled down the shaft.

"There!" said Ben. He flexed his aching fingers. "Stay still. I'll get a tissue." He would have preferred to lick the boy clean but something held him back. He got a Kleenex out of a drawer and lovingly wiped the now-sagging member.

"Like it?" he asked. Tim didn't answer but got off the bed, retrieved his pants and trousers and put them on again. "It's nearly dry already," he said, touching his painting with a finger.

"More than I am!" said Ben. "Why don't you give me a wank? We've got loads of time."

"No thanks. I'd better wash these brushes out. You'll get into trouble if I don't." Tim took the brushes over to the basin and rinsed them under the tap. "They're good brushes," he said. "I wish I had my own set."

"How much would a set cost?" asked Ben.

"Depends. Sable are best but they're terribly expensive."

"I know how you could get some," said Ben.

"How?"

"Have you heard of Lord Charles Beresford?"

"No. Who's he?"

"You know the cottage in the village nearly opposite the butcher's shop?"

"Course I do. Late eighteenth century. I did a picture of it. I'd love to see inside."

"That's easy. I can fix that for you. Lord Charles lives there and he's a mate of mine."

"Get away!"

"Truly. I know him very well. You know what we just did?" Tim nodded.

"Well, he likes doing that sort of thing too. You could get the best paint set on the market."

"Get away!" said Tim again. "I don't believe you!"

"How do you think I got all this stuff?" said Ben. "How many boys do you know who've got a CD player like that, a television like this? And next week I'm getting a new computer. It's a top of the range PC."

"Just for letting him play with your thing?"

"Course. That and a few other things."

"What other things?" Tim asked, suspiciously.

"Oh, nothing much. And you don't have to do anything you don't want to do."

"You sure?"

"Quite sure." No angler likes to let a fish get away. This particular fish was nibbling. The bait had to be made more attractive.

"You'd get an easel too – and a set of paints. If he likes you he'll give you anything you want."

"They'd never let me go down there," said Tim.

"Course they would. You're under Mr. Walker's jurisdiction when you're painting. He'd be glad to let you go there."

Tim wrinkled his nose, looked up at the skylight again, and then smiled. "I suppose I could," he said.

"Nobody'd know, would they? Apart from you and him, I mean."

“Course not. I've been going down there for years. It's good fun, honestly. You'll enjoy it.”

“I don't think I will.”

“You enjoyed it with me, didn't you?”

“It was all right.”

“You'll enjoy it much more with him. He's really nice. I'll take you down there next week, shall I?”

Tim looked up at the skylight again. “Ummm.. All right,” he said.

The fish had been caught.

After Tim had gone, Ben lay on his bed, delighted with himself. Charles' hold over Howard would be broken at last. The man would certainly pay well for a boy like Timothy. Ben's financial problems were over. Why, he might even be able to get that sailing dinghy he coveted.

Chapter Ten

In the event, it was to be three weeks before Ben saw Lord Charles. Howard arrived back at school on the evening of Tim's visit with the surprising information that Lord Charles was flying to France that night. Howard was not pleased.

"What's he gone back so soon for?" asked Ben.

"To see an interior decorator," said Howard flinging himself onto his bed, "What's with the easel then? Taken up painting, have you?"

"One of the tiddlers has been up here to paint."

"Nothing like a risky life, is there? You realize you'll get expelled if they find out."

Ben explained the arrangement, sanctioned by the Headmaster and Jim Walker. "It's all part of the new policy towards the Lower School. We're going to integrate more closely."

"And no doubt you've been integrating pretty hard," said Howard.

"For your information, he came up here to paint. He painted, and he left. You don't really think I'd be daft enough to try anything – even if I wanted to."

"Doesn't seem to deter you from pestering me," replied Howard sulkily. "Anyway, I think you ought to have mentioned it to me. It's my room as well, even if you are older than me."

"I was going to," Ben replied. "How long will Charles be away?"

"Three weeks."

"It doesn't take three weeks to see a decorator. Anyway they're not in short supply in Britain. Why can't he use one here?"

"It's an ambitious project," said Howard, proudly. "Charles prefers to employ the man who did his villa. He knows what Charles likes."

"But not as well as you, I'll bet," said Ben.

"And what is that supposed to mean?"

They were off again! For almost an hour insults and accusations were hurled across the room. Both undressed in sulky silence and went to bed.

The next day saw no improvement. Ben, in fact, was even angrier. Mr. Walker had made arrangements for senior boys to supervise the Lower School boys' Prep to relieve their teachers. Everybody knew that the Lower School teachers had a soft life. They didn't have to teach for external examinations. Indeed, most of them seemed to spend an inordinate amount of time doing the most extraordinary things during lesson time. Classes had been observed making rubbings of tree bark and catching shrimps in the rock pools on the shore. To relieve them from one of the few duties which actually required them to be in the classroom was too much! Everybody protested but Mr. Walker was adamant that it was good thing. It would help them to assume responsibility in later life, he said. It would further help the two sections of the school to integrate.

In the event, it turned out not to be too bad. The duty only came round once a fortnight and all one had to do was sit on the teacher's raised dais and do one's own work. The Lower School boys were a well disciplined lot and gave no trouble. Except for two. They were new boys. Apparently they had come to the school from some sort of children's home. They weren't bad kids; it was just that they weren't used to Public School traditions.

"Got a pencil I can borrow?" asked one on Ben's first evening with them.

"The word is borrow. Where is your own pencil?"

"I lent it to Jonesy and he never give it back."

Patiently, Ben explained that it was a breach of tradition to implicate another boy by name. "You should have said, 'I lent it to another boy who failed to return it.'"

"Oh sorry. I lent it to another boy and he never give it back." Ben sighed and lent the lad a pencil. Silence fell again and he returned to reading the instruction manual for some new software.

One of the first to admire his new computer was one of the new boys. With the Headmaster's permission, they had taken upon themselves the duty of distributing mail to the senior dormitories. Mr. Walker was delighted: yet another barrier dividing the two departments of the school had been removed. The seniors were pleased. Hitherto, all mail had been put out on a table in the refectory and the daily scramble for their letters was like a rugby scrum.

The boy had knocked politely at the door. "Letter for you," he said, placing it next to the computer keyboard. "I can't read the postmark so I don't know where it's from."

Ben took the envelope from him. "It's from my dad. He's in Germany."

"It ain't from Germany. It's got a British stamp on it."

"British forces send letters by British Forces' Post Office," Ben explained. "They use British stamps."

"So how do you know it's from your dad? It could be from anyone."

"I can recognize my dad's writing. I've been getting letters from him for the last twelve years."

The boy put the letter down. "Smashing computer," he said. "Your old man rich, is he?"

"My family's financial status is of no concern to you," said Ben, at the same time wondering how on earth he was going to explain the computer on his parents' next visit.

"Got a postcard for your roommate as well," said the boy. "Thought I might as well bring it up with yours. It's from France. Is he around?"

"He's got classes. Anyway, he should get his own mail." Ben turned from the computer. "Though, on second thoughts, it would be a good idea if you could let me have it. Letters do get lost sometimes."

"Yea. Okay." The lad handed over the card. "Ere! Is that a pocket TV on your bed?"

"It is and you haven't seen it."

The lad grinned. "Trust me. I won't let on. 'Ow did you manage to get one of them?"

"It was a present. Now buzz off and let me do some work."

The moment the boy left the room, Ben pounced on the postcard. It was a view of a harbor. White yachts on a rather too blue sea:

Discussions going well. No problems with bedroom. See you soon. C.

Ben put it on Howard's bed and returned to his desk. 'No problems with bedroom.' A code perhaps? The whole thing was fishy – a French decorator, Charles' sudden departure. What was going on?

When Howard returned, he read the card and tossed it into the waste paper basket.

"From your folks?" asked Ben. He was still trying to master his new computer.

"From Charles actually. He says everything is fine."

"Oh good. Does he say when he's coming back?"

"No."

"Will you be writing to him?"

"I may. Why? What's it got to do with you whom I write to?"

"Okay, okay! I just wondered. If you do, you could give him a message from me."

"What message?"

"Oh, just that I have a project which would appeal to him and I'd like to talk to him about it as soon as

possible.”

“What sort of project?”

“Now who's getting nosy? A computer project, as a matter of fact.”

“But Charles isn't that interested in computers.”

“It's to do with his business interests.”

“He never said anything to me about computer projects.”

“He doesn't have to confide in you about everything, Howard, unless of course your relationship with him is closer than you let on.”

That did it. They raged and stormed at each other for the rest of the day. It couldn't, Ben decided, go on like this. He would have to have a word with Jim Walker about it. Life in the little attic room was becoming intolerable.

By the following morning, he had decided to give Howard one last chance. After all, Charles would have Tim soon and would lose all interest in Howard and things would get back to normal.

“What are your plans for this afternoon?” he asked as Howard dressed.

“What's it got to do with you?”

Struggling to keep his temper, Ben replied, “It's only that young Tim is due to come up and finish his picture.”

“And you don't want me around. Is that it?”

“Not at all. I can cancel him if you wish. It's just that you normally go to Charles when he's at home.”

“Well, I can't go today so I shall probably stay in. Does that upset your plans?”

“Of course it doesn't. It's your room as much as mine. Do you mind Tim being here?”

“You should have asked me that before he started.”

“Yes, I suppose I should. I'm sorry.” It was extremely difficult to keep one's temper when dealing with Howard.

“Let him come up if he wants. He won't disturb me. He'd better not!”

In fact, when Tim arrived that afternoon, Howard was asleep and snoring lightly. Ben was at his computer console.

The little lad looked at the unfinished picture, still on its easel and still undamaged despite having been knocked over twice by missiles thrown from one side of the room to the other. He filled his water pot at the basin and sat down to paint. The atmosphere became oppressively quiet – just little clicks as Ben's fingers moved over the keyboard and Howard's occasional snuffles and grunts.

“Ben,” said Tim, suddenly.

“Yes?”

“You know what you were talking about the other day. You know. About that man.”

Ben glanced across at Howard. He seemed to be fast asleep but one could never be absolutely sure.

“Oh! You mean my friend?” he said.

“Yes. I've decided I don't want to go after all.”

“That's a rash decision. What about the paintbrushes you need?”

“I'll save up or get them for Christmas. You don't mind, do you?”

Ben minded very much. Another project seemed doomed to failure.

“I'm sure you'd enjoy it,” he said. “Why not sleep on it and tell me when you next come up here?”

“That's another thing. I shan't be coming again.”

“Why not?”

“Mrs. Robinson has found a space for me to paint in the sick bay.”

“But you like this room. You said so yourself.”

“Yes... but I think it would be better in the sick bay. Anyway, I'll finish this bit and then go back.”

Ben turned to the mysteries of the computer to console his disappointment and anger. Tim painted for another thirty minutes.

“Is it okay if I hang on to the brushes and stuff, Ben?” he asked. “Mrs. Robinson says she'll lock them away.”

“I suppose so. I can't change your mind, I suppose?”

“Not really, no. But thanks a lot, Ben.”

“Don't mention it.”

With difficulty, Tim managed to get the easel across his shoulder, and with the brushes and paints in a carrier bag, he left the room, closing the door quietly behind him.

“Fuck!” said Ben.

“But you didn't!” said a voice from the other bed.

“How long have you been awake?” Ben asked.

“All the time. Who's the mysterious friend he doesn't want to see?”

It was all Ben could do not to lose his temper completely. Only at the last moment, when he was half way across the floor, did he realize the awful consequences of hitting Howard. Expulsion would almost certainly have resulted.

“A friend of my dad's. An artist. He lives in London. I said he'd almost certainly have some old brushes that Tim could use.”

“Oh.”

Ben would have liked to know if Howard believed him. He sat on his bed with his head in his hands. Everything was going wrong: first the spying disaster, then a nasty letter from the bank. Now this. Howard was still devoted to Charles. The boat was a just a dream again!

The next two weeks were the most miserable Ben had ever spent at the school. Charles' absence meant that Howard spent more time in the school and the boy seemed to become more and more argumentative and awkward every day. He seemed to take the most casual remarks as insults. Ben's attempts at reconciliation were taken as sexual overtures. Ben spent more and more time with Jim Walker and his wife. Anything to get away from Howard!

And somebody, it seemed, was spreading rumors. A certain amount of good-natured teasing and banter is part of every schoolboy's life, but this seemed rather more malicious and earnest.

“Had any pretty boys up in your room for a spot of painting recently?” asked one boy.

“No,” said Ben.

“Found somewhere else, have you? A nice lonely spot?”

“For your information,” Ben replied hotly, “There was one boy from the Lower School who, with the Head's permission, came up to my room on two occasions to finish a painting. My room happens to have a skylight and he needed the light. If you say one more word on the subject I shall have no hesitation in reporting you to the Head and you can repeat your dirty little aspersions to him!”

The boy said no more. Ben went straight to Howard who strongly denied saying anything and went into a sulk which lasted for two days. He saw Tim at Lower School Prep; he, too, denied saying anything.

A letter arrived from a boatyard to say that they had a dinghy in stock which fitted Ben's specifications. They could deliver it on receipt of his check. He threw the letter away.

The two little messengers brought Howard a postcard from Charles almost every day. The boy read them and they, too, ended up in the waste paper basket, whence they were recovered and read by Ben, who was certain that, despite the seeming innocence of the messages, something was going on.

He bumped into Atkinson one evening on his way over to the Lower School to supervise Prep.

Atkinson, as usual, was covered in mud, from his hair down to his rugby boots. "Been training the Lower School Fifteen," he explained. "Some quite good little players there. Fancy a pizza later? Jim Walker's taking some of us down to that new Italian restaurant."

"I've got to supervise Lower School Prep," said Ben. The thought of a meal with Mr. Walker was very tempting.

"We shan't be going till about eight o'clock," said Atkinson. "I've got an essay to write and I've got to have a shower first."

"Yes, I see what you mean. You can hardly write an essay like that, let alone go to a restaurant. I'll tell you what. If it's all right with Jim, I'll join you down there."

"Why don't you let them get on with it? Their teachers used to."

"No, I can't do that. Some of them need individual attention."

"Oh yea? Well, don't strain your wrist. You need it to hold a knife."

"And what's that supposed to mean?" Ben flung the computer manual he was carrying onto the wet grass.

"Okay, keep your hair on! It's just that you do seem to be taking quite an interest in the tiddlers lately."

"You know bloody well why. You're as involved with them as I am. You train their rugby team. All I do is supervise their Prep. I suppose you supervise them in the showers afterwards?"

"Course I do – part of the job with kids of that age. Oh shit!"

"What's up?"

"There are three of them still out. I'd forgotten them. They're as likely as not to turn up to your Prep session caked with mud. I gave them an extra half an hour."

Ben picked up his book and looked at his watch. Well," he said, "providing you make no more disgusting insinuations, I'll pop into the showers on the way to the prep room and chivvy them up for you."

"Would you? Thanks a lot. I'll buy you a Coke for that." Atkinson clumped off, leaving a trail of pieces of mud behind him.

Ben reported to the duty master and went straight to the showers. Three were in use. High pitched, excited voices mingled with the noise of the water.

"Are you the three rugby players?" he called.

"Yes. Who's that?" answered one boy.

"Ben Hill. Hurry up or you'll be late for Prep."

"Will do!" said the boy. "Is Atkinson with you?"

"No. He's writing an essay."

"Oh. We'll be out in a minute. You go up. We'll be all right."

"Okay then," said Ben. "Just make sure you're not late. You've only got ten minutes."

He was half way out of the door when he changed his mind. It seemed a bit irresponsible just to leave them. They were only kids; anything could happen. He sat down on the hard wooden bench which ran along the wall and opened his book. The boys continued to shout at each other over the roar of water. He couldn't tell what they were saying.

The torrential splashing ceased suddenly. Ben remembered that the Lower School showers were on a five minute time switch.

"Well I hate the bloody place," said an easily identifiable voice. It was one of the new boys; one of the postal messengers.

"It's not too bad actually," replied another boy in a more cultured tone. "You soon get used to it."

"Ha! Bloody ha!"

"I fail to see what's so funny, I've been here two years now and I've got used to it all right."

“Nuffink. It's just that a bloke we know said it to Alex and me not so long ago. That's all. He meant summink else though.”

“What?”

“None of your business.”

“E was right, though,” said the other new boy. “That first time was a pain in the arse!”

They both fell into uncontrollable giggling. Ben was about to shout at them when the well-spoken of the three said, “I do wish you'd tell me what it's all about, and you really shouldn't use expressions like that. It's frightfully bad form.”

“Expressions like what?”

“That word you just used. The rude word for bottom.”

“Oh fuck off!”

Suddenly aware that if his presence was discovered, a minor incident of swearing would have to be blown up into a full-scale Lower School drama involving written reports and possible suspension of the pupils, Ben dashed soundlessly across the room into the master's cubicle. Fortunately, the curtain was closed and, even more fortunately, it wasn't occupied.

“You'd get into the most fearful trouble if a prefect or a master heard you swear like that,” said the well-spoken boy. “I wish you'd tell a chap what the joke is, though.”

“There ain't nuffink to tell. It was just a joke.”

“Oh yes. We must have our little bit of fun,” said the other messenger, but he said it in a peculiar quavering, rather effeminate tone. It was obviously an imitation of somebody for it set his companion off into another fit of giggling.

“Brilliant!” said his friend, when he was able to get his breath back. “It's just like 'im. Do it again!”

“What a lovely little bottom you have, Nicholas my dear. I can tell you've been fattened up nicely. You'll be ready for stuffing soon, I shouldn't be surprised.” All three were giggling now. Ben looked at his watch. Prep should have started but this was rather more interesting.

“I do wish you'd let a chap know what the joke is,” said their well-spoken companion.

“Oh, it's no joke, Nicholas my dear,” the mimic continued. “Such a dear little bottom and so responsive. We shall have a lovely party afterwards, my dear. Lots of people will be there and they'll be so glad to hear the news.”

“But what news? Do tell me!”

“Promise you won't tell?”

“Oh, absolutely. God's honor.”

“The news that you've been fucked.”

“How do you mean?”

“Christ! You are thick, Nicholas. Isn't your old man a professor of something?”

“Professor of medieval European literature. What's that got to do with it?”

“Nuffink. It's just that you're so thick. Shall we tell him, Gareth?”

“Providing he keeps his mouth shut.”

“Oh I will, I promise a hundred per cent!”

“Well,” said one of the postal messengers, “we know this bloke, see. He's quite old but he's loaded. Well, first of all he plays with your dick and he sort of rubs your bum. Then he starts putting his finger in your arse. Then after a few weeks when he thinks you're ready, he has a big party. All men and a few boys, and then he takes you in the bedroom and fucks you up your arse and you come out and they all cheer like mad.”

“And make jokes about 'ow you won't want to sit down,” interrupted the other post boy.

“And they all give you money and make a fuss of you. And that's it.”

“Golly! And this happened to both of you?”

“Yea.”

“But doesn't it hurt?”

“A bit, just at first. After that it's nice.”

“Gosh! Nothing like that ever happened to me.”

“What about this famous Tiddler Trapping Night? I 'eard that the Upper School boys catch us and 'ave a bit of fun.”

“They do but I always get Atkinson and he only wants me to do it to him. In fact I'll tell you a secret if you promise to keep it. He'd kill me if he knew I'd told anybody.”

“Sure.”

“I go over there once a week now. There's a new housemaster and he doesn't do rounds. I give Atkinson a wank after every game. He says it relaxes him. Last week he asked me to suck it. I wouldn't, though.”

“You should've. You lucky sod. Is it big?”

“Enormous! The only reason I'm in the team is so I can toss him off after a game.”

“And doesn't he do anything to you?”

“No. I wish he would. It must be nice to have someone else do it for you.”

“It is. What are you doing tonight after Prep?”

“Nothing much. Television, I suppose, though there's nothing much on.”

“How about having a bit of fun with Alex and me?”

“Where?”

“We could go over to the thicket. I've got a torch.”

“Okay. But none of that fucking, eh?”

“No. I fancy Atkinson though. When you see him next, drop the hint that there's two randy boys who like having a nice big sweaty prick up them.”

“Golly! I dare not. He'd kill me if he knew I talked about him behind his back. Anyway, we'd better hurry. We're late for Prep and Hill's on duty. He makes you work.”

“I wouldn't mind him either,” said one of the post boys. “I'll bet he's got a good one....”

Ben just had time to slip out of the cubicle and race upstairs.

He reprimanded the three boys when they arrived. It amused him to make them do an extra ten minutes Prep to make up for the time they had wasted. It amused him even more when, as he left the dormitory block on his way to the restaurant, he met all three skulking along the side wall of the chapel on the way to the thicket.

“Late night nature ramble?” he called.

“Oh! Er... yea,” said one.

“Well, have a good time. I won't tell anybody. You'd be much better in bed though.”

Ben smiled happily all the way to the village. His problem was about to be resolved.

Ben managed to draw Jim Walker aside after the meal whilst Atkinson and the other rugby 'toughs' attempted to chat up a waitress.

“Jim,” said Ben. “I want to tell you something in confidence.”

“Sure,” said the Housemaster. “Shall I get you a drink?”

“No thanks. There are two new boys in the Lower School. They're from some sort of children's home.”

“That's right. Headmaster Lower School told me about them.”

“Well, they're not fitting in. They speak appallingly badly and they've picked up some silly sex habits.”

“Oh, have they? I'm not surprised. Those places are pretty awful. Do you want me to tell their Head?”

“No. When I was younger I got caught doing much the same thing with my roommate – the chap who disappeared.”

“Oh yes. I heard about him.”

“Well, Mr. Henderson had this bright idea for which I shall always be thankful. He sent us both down to Simon Spencer's house to help with the gardening. He was a famous author and he lived in the village.

He's the chap who paid for the sports hall and the swimming pool”

“Yes, I've heard of him too.”

“Well, that was terrific, Jim. Just being able to talk to another grown-up outside the school. It sorted us both out.”

“Yes, but Mr. Spencer's not there now.”

“No, but I know the chap who bought the house. Lord Charles Beresford.”

“Do you indeed? How on earth did you come to meet him?”

“He came down one weekend to visit Simon Spencer. They are old buddies. What I was going to suggest, to save these poor little devils getting into big trouble, is that I approach Lord Charles and ask him if they can help him with the garden. It's in a terrible mess again. And by mixing with him, I think they'd learn to speak properly.”

Jim Walker picked up his glass, sipped his beer reflectively, put it down again and smiled.

“I don't know what profession you have in mind, Ben, but you'd make a superb teacher. I think that's a terrific idea. You see your friend as soon as possible. If he agrees, I'll contact Headmaster Lower School and tell him that it's community service. We mustn't let them think they are being punished. We'd better join the others now or that poor girl will be raped. But I'll say one thing before we do so.”

“What's that?”

“Just that I admire your courage in telling me about you and that other chap and I much admire and appreciate your interest in the Lower School.”

Ben smiled modestly and spent the rest of the evening chatting and imagining...

Atkinson's cock and a boat of his own. Both were attractive propositions and both seemed within his grasp.

Chapter Eleven

Charles arrived back in the village at two o'clock on a Tuesday morning. As in all small communities, the news traveled fast. One of the refectory girls; the one they called Garrulous Gertie, told Howard at breakfast time.

Ben found Howard's excitement rather juvenile. He was lying on his bed when Howard rushed in after lunch, slung his books on to his desk and began, feverishly to undress.

"What's the panic?" Ben asked.

"Charles is back. Haven't you heard?"

"Naturally. Shooting off again, is he?"

"I shouldn't think so, no. It's just that I'm dying to see the decoration plan. I hope he brought it back. I think I'll have a shower first though."

"Why not?" said Ben. He watched Howard step out of his underpants. So it was all going to start up again. It would be Charles this and Charles that from morning to night. Something had to be done.

"Are you going to see him today?" Howard asked.

"Why should I?"

"You asked me when he was due back. I thought you wanted to see him."

"I was concerned for your welfare. I knew how much you missed him."

"That's nice of you. He wrote that he missed me."

"Did he now?" said Ben. "Perhaps his French boys aren't as good as you."

"They wouldn't be. They don't know the cottage like I do. See you in a minute."

With a towel wrapped round his waist like a sarong, Howard left the room and Ben smiled again. Howard never took a shower for his parents' visits to the school. It was all so obvious. The boy's previous bad temper seemed to have evaporated, too. Ben looked at his watch. It was two o'clock. Within the hour, Howard would be sprawled on Charles' bed, moaning happily whilst being filled with aristocratic sperms. It was an amusing thought on one hand and an annoying one on the other. Five hundred pounds was hardly fair compensation for Mark's disappointment and the worry Ben had suffered.

"You can use some of my splash-on lotion of you like," he said when Howard returned. "And if you want to use my hair dryer, it's in the cupboard."

"Thanks very much, Ben. You're being very decent all of a sudden." Howard started rummaging in the cupboard.

"Merely trying to help. Must have you looking your best and smelling nice for Charles."

"I don't suppose he'll notice, actually." Howard switched on the hair dryer.

After Howard had gone, Ben put the dryer away, recovered his expensive toiletries from Howard's desk and sat on his bed. He took the bank manager's letter out again and read it for third time. His check for the new computer had been honored but the overdraft had to be paid off in full within seven days. His father wouldn't help; that was for sure. His father would go mad. How was he to get that amount of money together and how was he to live for the rest of the school year? He cursed Charles and cursed Howard.

He looked at his watch. Three o'clock. He wondered what they were doing, not that it needed much wondering. It was difficult to judge which of the two had acted most immorally: Charles, who at that

very moment was probably barging into a place already reserved for Mark, or Howard for letting him do it and for lying about it.

He lay back on the bed and let the letter fall to the floor. Howard was very young, of course; that was a mitigating factor. He was horribly selfish, though. Even though he was being screwed by Charles, he could at least have let his roommate have something occasionally. Just a wank would do. He closed his eyes. Wanking Howard used to be fun. Ben liked the way the boy writhed around just before he came. Then he used to lift his bottom right off the bed, gasp and then lie back as it streamed out over Ben's hand.

Now, at that very moment, down in the cottage Howard would be sprawled on Charles' bed, not being wanked but being screwed! Ben's penis jerked, and his behind began to itch pleasantly at the thought.

He got up off the bed, locked the door and undressed. It was better that way. Tissues? Ready on the bedside table. He rummaged in the drawer. A good splodge of cold cream on the hand. Back on the bed. Eyes closed. Picture? Howard of course. Place? A dungeon of some sort:

“Which one will you have today, Sir?” the guard asks.

“How many have we got?”

“I've lost count, sir. We've sold a lot in your absence. They're going like hot cakes, sir. There's Howard, sir, if I may make a suggestion. Cage number fifty seven.”

“Oh yes. I remember. A nice boy. I'll have him.”

Howard is lying on a sofa. In a cage? No... Howard is lying on a bench. That is better. A hard wooden bench. He is naked. Ben beckons to him. He smiles and approaches the bars. Ben reaches into his pocket and produces a piece of chocolate. He puts it into the boy's mouth. Howard munches and swallows voraciously. Ben gives him another piece. He reaches down and feels Howard's prick. It's as hard as ivory.

“He can't wait for it, sir, I can tell you,” says the guard. “When he heard that you were coming back he couldn't contain himself, sir! He even had a shower.”

A shower? In a dungeon? Oh well, let that pass. The guard opens the cage. Howard steps out.

“And what a lovely little bum he's got sir! You can certainly choose them!”

He reaches down and feels the cool skin of Howard's buttocks.

“Lovely that is, sir. Just ripe but not over ripe, if you know what I mean.”

There is something in the guard's voice which reminds Ben of someone....

“Mind you, I've always said that you've got the nicest arse.

Big and padded, like a velvet cushion.” Hands reach round his waist. Adam!

“Oh! I'm going to fuck you, Ben. I'm going to fuck your brains out!”

This was better! The thought of doing it with Adam was somehow more realistic. Ben lay back and imagined Adam's body. First there was Adam's fair hair, over which Adam had spent hour after hour in front of the mirror, brushing and combing it, experimenting with different styles. Then there were Adam's startling blue eyes and thick red lips. When Adam had been at the school, a lot of boys had accused him (behind his back) of painting them but Ben knew that he didn't. They were naturally that color. He had such powerful shoulders and arms too! Body building was one of Adam's passions. Ben reached down and touched his thick prick. It was already slightly damp. Thinking about Adam had that effect.

Adam had the most attractive nipples Ben had ever seen. The big pectoral muscles and the light brown aureole around each one set them off to perfection.

Then there was the narrow waist and the long legs with their honey-colored hairs. Like the trees in one

of the paintings Ben had studied in art appreciation classes, Adam's legs seemed to draw your attention to his equipment.

“Mmmm!” Ben murmured. His eyes were tightly closed. His hand enclosed his penis and he lay there picturing Adam's nicest attribute. His mouth began to water at the thought of that long, straight tool with its glowing circumcised head and the beautiful, crinkled ball bag almost hidden under the tufts of blond, wiry hair. Howard had lots of good points, but Adam... well, Adam was perfect.

What would Adam say? Well that was easy:

“I'm going to fuck you silly, Pudgy. Turn over, Pudgy.” He turns over and reaches behind his back. Being fucked by Adam is a strange sensation – that pushing sensation at his anus which was uncomfortable with Simon is delightful with Adam. He gasps as his sphincter opens. When Adam fucks him he can feel every centimeter of gristle sliding into him, pushing against the soft tissues as it forges ahead.

It is a gorgeous feeling, but Adam doesn't like it when Ben makes appreciative sounds. He has to yell out, whimper piteously.

“Hurting is it, Pudge? Good. You need it. Here's a bit more for you,” and Ben whimpers as the last centimeter slides into him and he feels Adam's brassy hairs on the cheeks of his behind.

And now Adam's beautiful tight bottom contracts with the first stroke. Ben groans. It is nice to reach round and feel the muscles contracting and slackening; even having having his ears and neck bitten is nice. Now his teeth are drawing blood – not much but excitingly enough.

Thump, thump, creak, creak, thump, creak. The pace gets faster and faster. The bed springs rattle. Oh, Adam! Oh! Oh! Aaaah!”

He was just in time to catch it in a tissue. Then he lay face down on his school bed, panting. He sniffed the second finger of his right hand and wrinkled his nose. Better have a shower.

It was after six o' clock when Howard returned.

“Did you have a good time?”

“Yes thanks. Do you want to see the decorating plan?”

“If you like.”

Howard opened a large folder. “This is the lounge,” he said. “By taking down that false ceiling, it will have the original beams.”

“Hmm. That's not bad.”

One by one, Howard produced detailed water-color sketches of the house as it would be.

“How much is all this going to cost?” Ben asked. “I just hope Charles can afford it.”

“Oh it'll be expensive but he's not worried about that. He says it will add value to the cottage and he might get a government grant for bringing the place back to it's original condition.”

Ben was relieved. “What's in the box?” he asked, looking at a package on Howard's bed.

“I was waiting for you to ask that. Look!” Howard unwrapped it carefully to reveal a very expensive radio-controlled model car. They were all the rage at the school but Ben knew, just by looking at it, that this was better than any of the others. “Lucky lad!” he murmured.

“He gave me this too.” Howard produced a package from his blazer pocket. “It's a new computer game. It's American and you can't get it over here yet. He telephoned America and they sent it. It's a flight simulation. I wondered if I could play with it on your computer. You'd have to show me how to work it. I'd be ever so careful. Honest.”

Ben took the package, opened it and scanned through the instruction book. “Don't see why not. I could always go for a walk.”

“You could play too.” said Howard.

“No. You're better off on your own until you get thoroughly used to it. It's a nice evening. I'll toddle down to the village.”

It took ages to set the computer up. Ben rarely used the joysticks and had to search for them in the bottom of his cupboard. But Howard proved an adept learner and was soon confronted by an array of aircraft instruments and a very realistic view of a runway at night. Ben was actually tempted to stay behind, but he had business to transact with Charles.

Chapter Twelve

In all the years he had been at the school, Ben had never walked to the village late at night. It was a scary experience. The trees threw sombre, moving shadows onto the road. An owl hooted. From somewhere down in the village a cow mooed and dog barked an impatient reply.

He was glad to reach the cottage and even more glad to see that the light was still on in the lounge. He rang the doorbell and waited. The chain was undone, the bolt pulled back and he stood illuminated by a wedge of bright light as the door opened.

“Ben! My dear old chap! This is a surprise. Come in.”

“I'm sorry to call so late, Charles,” said the boy, “but there's something I'd like to talk to you about and I didn't want Howard to be here.”

“Something pretty personal then? A beer?”

“I'd love one. Thanks.”

He sat in one of the chairs next to the fireplace. Charles went into the kitchen and re-emerged with two bottles of beer and a couple of glasses.

“So... what's up?” Charles asked.

“It's about Howard. I know it's really none of my business. You're a man and an aristocrat and I'm only a boy and you're bound to think I'm jealous but I'm not. The presents and everything. It's Mark I'm thinking of, honestly.”

“What are you talking about?” asked Charles, sitting opposite him.

“You know. Whatever it is you and Howard get up to down here.”

“What has Howard told you?”

“Nothing. Nothing at all. He says he comes down to help with your decorating plan.”

“That's the truth, dear Ben. The total and absolute truth. That's all he does.”

“What about the weekend at Simon's? What about the money you gave me to fix it for you?”

“That is a thing I prefer to forget. I was stupid. I regret it bitterly. When one is in my position one sometimes thinks that money can buy anything. It probably can, but only to the detriment of the purchaser. I have already apologized to Howard. He has seen fit to forget the matter. He now assists very capably with my project to restore this place to its original state. A man who loves boys can simply want to be in the *company* of a youngster he finds attractive; that doesn't mean he feels compelled to bring him to bed, and so it is, now, with Howard and me. Howard comes here, we work and then he goes back to school. Like you, I think he should consider Mark. I only wish I had.”

Ben sat stupefied. There seemed no doubt that Charles was telling the truth. His story accorded exactly with Howard's and he must have known that Ben could, if necessary, drag the truth out of the younger boy.

“I, er, I don't know what to say,” Ben stammered. “It was just... well, you know.”

“Putting two and two together and making five,” said Charles with a smile. “It's four, Ben. On my solemn oath, since we came back from Simon's absolutely nothing like that has happened. On the other hand, Howard tells me that you have a very pretty little boy at the moment,” he said. “Lucky old you!”

“Now it's my turn,” Ben laughed. “No way. He refused after the first time. Two and two make four. I'll have to have a word with Howard. Somebody else at school had the same idea. It's obviously Howard spreading rumors.”

“Better let me have a word with him. You might not believe this but I stopped him when he started telling me. A man's sex life is his own business; not for general consumption. Howard was suspicious because apparently you went to a great deal of trouble to get permission for the boy to come up to your room.”

“That's true. I did. The absolute truth is that I was trying to get him for you.”

“For me? What on earth do you mean?”

“Well, as a replacement for Howard if you know what I mean. So that Howard could go back to being Mark's friend.”

“I am quite able to look after myself, Ben, and I don't think it would be terribly wise to have boys from the school. A wise man admires the flowers in his neighbor's garden; he doesn't pick them.”

“Speaking of gardens, you know why Adam and I first came to this cottage?”

“Yes, you told me. The housemaster found you practicing something or other and you were sent here as a punishment – and Simon and Richard continued your education.”

Ben nodded and took another swallow of beer. “Well, there are two more boys in the Lower School and they are in the same position. I was talking to Jim Walker – he's our new Housemaster – and we wondered if you could use them.. if you know what I mean.”

“As gardeners?”

“Any way you want. They're quite experienced.”

“As gardeners?”

“Not exactly.” Ben related the conversation he had overheard. “Did they mention the name of the man?” Charles asked.

“No. Definitely not.”

“Or give any indication of where he lived?”

“No. Why do you ask?”

“Just curious.” Charles contemplated his hands.

“What do you think?” asked Ben after a short time.

“What do I think? I don't know what I think. In many ways I'd rather not even see them, but curiosity gets the better of me. Can you send them down tomorrow? I'll see them. I certainly want to get the garden tidied up if nothing else. Oh blast!”

“What?”

“Howard said he would visit tomorrow. He wants to prod the ceiling to see if he can find the line of the old beams. I suppose he'll be asleep by the time you get back?”

“No way!” said Ben laughing. “He's flying an F-18 on my computer, thanks to you!”

“I didn't mean him to use your computer. He said there was a computer lab at school.”

“There is but he can't use it at night and he was very keen to see how it worked. I don't mind. Those joy-sticks are pretty robust machines, especially this one. It's a pretty good computer, too.”

“Dare one ask how much it cost?” asked Charles.

Ben told him. Charles whistled. “That must have left you pretty low in funds,” he said.

“It has.”

“I think that if Howard is going to make use of it to play his flying game I ought to contribute towards it,” said Charles. “Would that offend you?”

“Well, no. In fact I'd be grateful. It has, as you say, left me a bit short.” Which was the understatement

of all time.

Charles got up and crossed the room to an old-fashioned roll-top bureau. From a drawer he took his check book and sat down to write a check which he waved in the air to dry and then handed to Ben.

"But this is the whole price!" Ben exclaimed. "That's what it cost."

"Think of it as a gift, Ben. Just that. It is definitely not for anything else. It's a token of my esteem for you. I hope that it may in some measure compensate for my earlier lapse in giving you money for an ulterior motive. Will you let Howard continue to use it?"

"Yes of course. I can hardly refuse."

"Has it got a word processing program?"

"Word Perfect Six, with in-built dictionary, thesaurus, everything."

"Teach Howard to use it and make him write to Mark regularly, would you?"

"*Make* Howard do something?" Ben grinned. "I'll suggest it, or maybe I'll let him think up the idea all by himself. Charles..."

"Mmm?"

"I'm very sorry I thought so badly of you."

"Let's learn from our mistakes, shall we? Let's just be good friends and let each other get on with living. Now, I'd better run you back to school or even this new Housemaster of whom Howard speaks so highly will start to have misgivings about our intentions. One other thing. Perhaps you'd put Howard off coming tomorrow. It might be embarrassing to have three of them here."

Ben smiled. "I understand," he said.

* * *

The school gate was closed. Ben had to climb over the wall. Howard was still awake and sitting at the computer console.

"Where have you been?" he asked. "This is a terrific game."

"Oh, nowhere much."

"Did you see Charles?"

"I just popped in to say welcome home."

"Oh. That was decent of you. Do you want to have a go on this?"

"No thanks. I wouldn't mind a go on something else though."

"What?"

"Your joy-stick."

"Sod off!"

"I let you use my hair drier and my splash-on lotion and you've been using my computer for hours."

"If I'd known there were strings attached, I wouldn't have used them." Howard removed the disk and switched off the computer. "There!" he said. "I won't ever ask you a favor again. You're weird."

"You're so suspicious! I'll bet my bottom dollar that you'll have a wank tonight in bed. You always do."

"So what? It's my life and my cock."

"So what's the difference if I do it for you. Less effort for you. No spunk on your sheets. Matron will think what a clean-living lad you are. You never used to complain."

"I was younger then. All boys go through that stage. Mr. Walker told us. Then you go normal and get married."

Ben lay back on his bed. This was going to take time, but he had to find out if Charles had really told

the truth. "Not all boys," he said. "There's me and Adam and Mark to name only three."

"Leave Mark out of it."

"Why?"

"He's only that way because Adam got at him."

"Utter balls! Adam didn't get to know him properly until they were on the island. Mark had the hots for you years before that."

"I expect he was going through a stage, like Mr. Walker said."

"Well, if you're going through a stage, you might as well enjoy it."

"It's still not normal, is it?" The question tag seemed a hopeful sign: Howard's resolution was wavering.

"No more abnormal than blowing your nose. Didn't your mother ever hold the handkerchief for you when you were young?"

Howard stood up. He looked down at Ben for some moments, then finally said, "Just a wank then?"

"Just a wank. I promise." Ben swung his feet on to the floor, sat up and took off his tie."

"No. Don't get undressed – I know what you're like," said Howard firmly.

"I didn't think I was that repulsive."

"That's not what I meant. If you're undressed you'll want more. This is just going to be a wank. Like you said, it will save me the trouble later on. Your bed?"

Ben nodded. "It's long after lights out so you might as well get undressed, too."

Howard sat on Ben's bed and reached down to untie his shoe laces. "You promise you won't try any tricks?"

"Promise." Ben opened his bedside cabinet and brought out the Cold Cream and tissues. He tried, without much success, to re-arrange his penis so that the erection was less noticeable. His all-too-evident excitement gave the lie to his clinical nose-blowing argument. When he turned to Howard again, the boy had already removed his shirt and was undoing his trousers. Ben reached out and touched the nape of Howard's neck.

"Stop that!" said Howard, leaping to his feet. His trousers fell, crumpled about his ankles.

"Sorry," said Ben. "Ready?"

Howard sat down again. He extricated his feet from the trousers which he folded carefully and placed on the end of the bed. Ben got up. Howard lay down and put his hands behind his head. "Ready," he said.

In the last few months, Ben had become a connoisseur of boy-beauty. Nearly every boy in the school had some feature upon which Ben's masturbatory fantasies could focus. Wilkinson's massive weapon offset the spots on his face. Edsall's tight bubble-bottom more than made up for the immaturity of his genitalia. And what did it matter if Lawrence's bum was covered in spots? It was worth hanging around in the showers just to catch a glimpse of his wonderfully sculpted chest and broadening shoulders.

Howard was flawless. A picture. Golden hair against the white pillow. Honey-colored torso and legs with just a faint gold fuzz which gleamed under the light. His eyes were closed slightly more tightly than they were when he slept. The image was marred at the moment by a pair of garish boxer shorts. Ben sat on the edge of the bed. He placed a finger on the front of the shorts and pressed gently downwards. It was soft and yielding. He touched Howard's left thigh. The flesh felt delightfully warm to his touch. "Imagine I'm Mark," he whispered and slid his hand up and into the leg of the shorts.

"Mmmm! That's nice. Do it on the other leg too," said Howard. "Oh, yes!"

Something stirred under the shorts. Ben slid his hands up and down and watched as the brightly colored material tightened around Howard's rapidly swelling penis. It was rather like watching a time-

lapse film loop of a maturing vegetable marrow. This, however, was no vegetable: this was a penis, a juicy, succulent, boy-penis! He touched it; felt it throbbing between his finger tips. Howard raised his bottom from the bed. Ben slid the shorts down. The penis sprang up and flung a tiny bead of moisture on to the boy's firm belly.

Ben took the penis in his hand, wrapping his fingers round its shaft. Up. Down. The crinkly pubic hair tickled his hand. Up. Down. He could feel the veins throbbing. He increased the pace. Howard groaned slightly. Faster now. There was no point in holding the boy back. If only he'd allow himself to be fucked. Maybe he would. Ben insinuated his left hand under Howard's scrotum in an attempt to touch the tightly puckered anus, but it was no good. He felt his hand gripped between the boy's sweating thighs.

"Just... a... wank!" said Howard between gasps.

Ben's hand flew up and down. "Tell me when," he said. Howard nodded.

Ben's prick strained against his trousers. It felt damp and sticky. It was no good – he'd have to do something or he would shoot in his pants.

"Do you want to do me?" he whispered. Howard shook his head. Ben slid his zip down, reached in and brought out his prick. It was wet already and aching with frustration. He let go of Howard, reached for a tissue and clamped it over his shiny purple cock-head.

"Keep going!" Howard commanded. Ben obeyed. There was no doubt about it: Howard must have done it with Charles that afternoon. Nobody could last this long.

"Now!"

The box fell on the floor as Ben pulled out a wadge of tissues. Too late. A jet of semen shot several inches into the air and cascaded down onto Howard, the bed and Ben. Successive waves were caught in time. The tissues became a warm spongy mass. Ben threw it on to the floor, bent over the panting boy and took the still-flowing prick into his mouth, gulping down the salty, slightly chloritic ejaculate as Howard arched upwards against his gullet and then sank back. He sat up again and rubbed his lips.

"There," he said. "Okay?"

"Pretty good." Howard opened his eyes and smiled. "Can I use your computer again tomorrow? Usual fee, if you know what I mean."

Ben laughed. "I think you're beginning to see reason again. Sure. Use it tomorrow afternoon if you like. I'm going out."

"So am I. I'm going down to see Charles."

"Ah! Sorry. I meant to tell you. Charles said to tell you not to come."

"Why?"

"He's got these two juniors going down to help make a kitchen garden."

"That doesn't matter. We'll be in the house."

"It's a question of relationships," Ben said, trying to be as tactful as he could. "Charles has probably got to be pretty strict with those two. You're different. You're a special friend and he feels he can't be friendly with you and strict with them at the same time. Know what I mean?"

Howard bit his lip and nodded. "I suppose so, yes. A bit like you and Mr. Walker and me and Mr. Walker, you mean?"

"Exactly. He's mates with us seniors. With you he has to be a housemaster."

Howard got off the bed, wiped himself with a tissue, crossed to his own bed and got between the sheets. "I wish he'd told me he wanted a kitchen garden," Howard said a little sadly. "I could have done that for him."

"You do enough for him already." Ben undressed. He wondered whether to take a shower and then decided that it would be much more sensible to postpone it till morning. Howard should get to sleep

pretty quickly. He could release the tension then. He reached down and picked up the congealed tissues. Obviously this heavy load of semen had been accumulating in Howard for more than a few hours: Ben's suspicions had been unfounded.

“Ben,” said Howard after a short silence.

“Yes?”

“Just in case that remark was meant to infer something, I don't fool around with Charles. We haven't done anything like that since we got back from Gloucester.”

“I know. Now go to sleep.”

Ben threw the wet wadge into the waste-paper bin – there would be another one beside it pretty soon.

Chapter Thirteen

Ben's first errand the next afternoon was to go to the bank where he paid in Charles' check. He asked to see the manager to apologize for his overdraft but the manager was still out at lunch. The clerk offered to have the manager telephone the school if Ben wished make an appointment, but Ben didn't: a call to the school from a bank manager might be disastrous.

When he returned, he went in search of Alex and Gareth. They were not on the rugby field. Neither were they in the hobbies room. He ran them to earth in their dormitory where they were engaged in a forbidden game of cards with two other boys. "Hello, hello. What are you lot up to?" he asked.

"Nothing, Hill. Honestly, Hill. We were just talking," said one of the boys from whose short trousers the nine of clubs protruded.

"Yea. Nuffink. Can't you even 'ave a chat in this place?" said Gareth as he removed the fingers of his right hand from his left sleeve.

Ben smiled. "I was a tiddler once myself. There's not a lot that I don't know. Whose cards are they?"

"What cards?" "We found them." Two contradictory voices spoke at once.

"Keep them in a rolled up sock," Ben advised. "They'll never think of looking there. Anyway, I want a word with you two."

"What for?"

"Come with me and you'll find out won't you? Make sure the cards don't drop out of your sleeve."

They followed him outside. "Now look," said Ben. "How do you feel about a bit of social service?"

"What's that?" asked Gareth. He was the smaller of the two. "There's a gentleman in the village – a Lord, as a matter of fact – who wants a bit of help with his garden."

"Sod that. Do we have to?" asked Alex.

"In a word, yes. You're to go down now and see him to arrange days."

"Does that mean that we have to miss games?" asked Alex.

"Not necessarily. I'll leave it to you to arrange to go when you want. You can't miss lessons but you can miss anything else."

"Like Prep?"

"Like Prep or choir practices or junior school pantomime auditions. It's up to you."

"Oh! That doesn't sound too bad then. Did you say 'e was a Lord?"

"I did. Lord Charles Beresford is his name. He lives in the big cottage on the right near the shop."

"The one with the red Merc?"

"That's it. You know it?"

"Seen 'im driving about. Young geezer. Youngish anyway. Wears an 'at."

"That's him," said Ben. Charles always wore a cap when driving. He said it was the proper gear for driving in the country.

"Dunno much about gardening," said Alex.

"He'll show you. You'll enjoy it when you get used to it."

He watched their faces carefully. There wasn't a flicker of embarrassment or recognition of the phrase on either of them.

“What do we 'ave to call 'im?” said Gareth.

“Just 'Sir'. I wouldn't be surprised if you aren't on first name terms pretty soon. Off you go now. Get smartened up first.”

“Okay.” They ran off, leaving a playing card on the floor.

“Now for Atkinson,” said Ben, talking to himself as he crossed the drive back to the senior school.

That young gentleman was in the study he was privileged to occupy alone in consequence of his advanced status as prefect and Captain of Rugby. The smell of 'Dubbin' pervaded the hallway outside and the usual pair of muddy boots lay on the floor.

“Come in!” Atkinson shouted, in response to Ben's knock. “Christ,” he added, when Ben was inside, “what brings you here? You're surely not going to sign up for a trial?” He was lying in a muddy training suit on his bed. He wasn't too bad, thought Ben. His curly hair was quite attractive and he had a nice face; a nice, sturdy-looking body, too and, if that slight bulge was anything to go by, the most important part of him was, to say the least, substantial. “Well, what can I do for you?” he said, interrupting Ben's reverie.

“It's a bit delicate actually, Atkinson. I thought you ought to know something.”

“If it's about Jones smoking a fag on the way back from St. Matthew's, I've dealt with it. If it's about the dirty songs we sang in the train, the Headman has seen me about it, and if it's about Simons being on drugs, it's balls. We searched his stuff.”

“It's about you actually,” said Ben.

“Me?” Atkinson was as incredulous as any deity would be when addressed by a mere mortal in such a manner.

“You. There's a rumor floating round the Junior School that one of the boys in their team is a sort of favorite of yours, if you know what I mean.”

“No,” said Atkinson, blushing. “What do you mean?”

“If you want it in four letter words, after a match he comes up here and gives you a wank. I thought you ought to know. It's done the round of the Junior School. It'll cross the drive any time and then you know what will happen. The Headman will hear about it and then it'll be a note in the oak casket – *Pray come to see me*, and then you'll be out – fast!”

“It's a load of balls! Who told you about it? I'll kill the bastard.”

“I overheard the boy in question telling some others,” said Ben truthfully. I think he's got a foreign sounding name. His first name is Nicholas. His father is a professor of something. Fair hair. Tallish. About twelve years old. Freckles on his face. Ring a bell?”

“Van Eekelen,” said Atkinson. He's never been up here in his life!”

“He was able to give a pretty accurate description of your room,” said Ben hoping that none of the items were new. “The alarm clock on the shelf; your rugby cups over there on the chest of drawers; that map of places where you've played; not to mention the horrible smell. He was pretty graphic about your personal attributes too.” He hoped that Atkinson would not ask him to elaborate.

“The little bastard!” Atkinson growled. “I only let him because he wanted to. You know what kids are like.”

“Everybody's the same,” said Ben. “It's not just his age. We're all shut up in this place like prisoners. It's quite normal, It's just important that you choose someone who can keep his mouth shut when your cock isn't in it.”

“I've never done anything like that!” said Atkinson. “If he said I did, he's a bloody liar!”

“He said you asked him to but that he refused. A silly lad. A mouth beats a hand any day.”

Atkinson sat up. “I suppose I'd better go over and find the little sod and deal with him.”

“No, I wouldn't do that. It would only make things worse. If you hit him you'll certainly be expelled. If you make a scene, that will get reported. I've got a better idea. This happens after you've played a match, right?”

“Right.” Atkinson kind of collapsed. He was no longer the proud, confident Captain of the Team; he was just another Senior, crushed and worried. “It started off with him massaging my back and my legs. One thing sort of led to another.”

“So I will come here after every match in future. I will also swear that I have been coming up here for the last year and that nobody else, least of all a Junior School boy, has been here. Then, if it comes to the crunch, it's our word against his and they'll believe two seniors.”

“Would you? It'd be bloody decent of you, especially considering that you're not a rugby man.”

“I just don't want a decent bloke like you and the finest rugby player the school has ever had to get into trouble.”

“Oh, there have been better Captains than me,” said Atkinson, recovering fast. He smiled in a gentlemanly, self-deprecatory way.

“That's not what the Headman thinks,” said Ben who was the last person whom the Headmaster would have honored with his opinion. “He reckons you're absolutely outstanding.”

“Does he really? That must have been the two tries I scored at St. Matts.”

“Possibly. Anyway, when's the next match?”

“Tomorrow, as a matter of fact. A friendly against Millbrook.”

“Good. I'll be here. Leave the door open and I'll tell Van Eekelen that his visits are no longer required. He'll take it from me. He's weak in maths. I'll tell him he needs more maths Prep. That'll keep him occupied.”

“Bloody good of you,” said Atkinson. “Thanks a lot. See you tomorrow. Make yourself a cup of coffee if you like. The stuff's in the cupboard. We should get back at about five.”

“Absolutely outstanding,” Ben murmured as he went downstairs.

At four-thirty on the next afternoon, having had words with Nicholas Van Eekelen's maths teacher and found the boy himself, Ben repaired to Atkinson's study. The door was unlocked as arranged. He put on the electric kettle and opened the cupboard. The half-empty carton of sour milk, the congealed lumps of coffee and the dirty spoon were sufficient to deter him from the promised refreshment. He switched off the kettle and sat in the armchair. The bookshelf held little to interest him. There were some quite nice photographs in *Rugby for Schools* so he sat browsing through that.

The downstairs door slammed. Boots clumped up the wooden stairs. The door was flung open and Atkinson appeared. The jersey had been red. His shorts had been white. Both were mud-spattered. Atkinson himself seemed, miraculously, to be unsullied. Indeed, the sparse hairs on his long white legs looked as silky as the hair of a new-born baby.

“Oh! Hi! Has Nicky, I mean Van Eekelen, been up?”

“Your little friend is plowing his way through *Revision Exercises in Arithmetic*, pages one to fifty-three. That'll keep him occupied.”

“Probably just as well from what you said yesterday. Did you make yourself a coffee?”

“No thanks. I had one before I came over.”

“Well. Thanks for coming up and waiting, Ben. I won't keep you. I guess you've got better things to do.”

“Not really. What about your relaxing massage?”

“Can you do it?”

"I can always try. I don't suppose Van Eekelen is a fully qualified masseur."

"No, I suppose not. You sure you don't mind?"

"I'm always prepared to try. What do I have to do?"

"Let me get these things off and I'll tell you." A shower of dried mud particles dropped on the floor as Atkinson pulled the jersey over his head. His torso was absolutely magnificent. Ben stared fascinated at his powerful pectoral muscles and the nipples, each in a brown aureole. Little tufts of dark hair poked out from his armpits.

"How old are you, Atkinson?" asked Ben, trying not to sound too curious.

"Sixteen next birthday. What about you?"

"Same." The shorts slid down Atkinson's legs bending the hairs before them. Ben had never seen underwear such as the rugby captain was wearing. There seemed to be nothing at the back and an inverted triangle in the front, insufficient in size to mask the dense, dark pubic hair which poked out from under its sides.

"You share a room with that little lad, don't you?" Atkinson picked up the discarded clothes and crammed them into a plastic carrier bag.

"Yes." Ben found it difficult to concentrate on the conversation.

"Bit of a bind, isn't it? You can't have much in common."

"We get on okay. Jim Walker likes the ages to mix."

"I know. But not like Van Eekelen and me, eh?"

"I don't see anything wrong with it personally. It's a perfectly natural and normal thing to happen in my view. It's just that you don't want it talked about."

"See what you mean. You're quite a shrewd old devil."

"I wouldn't say that. What do you want me to do?"

"Are you sure you don't mind?"

"I've already said I don't."

"Well, if I get on the bed like this..." – Atkinson lay on his front and turned his face towards Ben who had stood up – "...can you sort of rub my shoulders?"

"Like this?" Atkinson's skin was much softer than Ben had imagined it would be.

"Bit harder. That's right. Now put your hands in my armpits and rub up and down my sides. That's right. Mmm. That's good."

His ribs moved as he breathed deeply. The soft hair under his arms brushed Ben's hands.

"Now go up and down my backbone. Use the side of your hand. Hey! You're good at this. I can feel it relaxing already. Can you?"

"Not yet," Ben replied. Something intimately connected with himself was far from relaxed.

"Now do a bit more on the backbone and then do the same sort of thing with my legs. You have to sort of knead the muscles. A bit like making bread. Do you know what I mean?"

"Like this?" Ben grasped a handful of calf muscle in each hand.

"Exactly. Do the thigh muscles too. Don't worry. I had a bath after the match."

"I thought you looked remarkably clean." Ben took in the two superbly hemispherical buttocks and the strip of cloth which separated them. "Did you win?"

"No. We lost. Thirty-seven : eleven. We'd always lose against Millbrook. They're good."

"I must come and watch you play one day."

"Do. You're very welcome. If you pay a pound you can be a non-playing supporter."

"I should think the Captain's personal masseur should get free membership." Ben continued to knead, working his way along each thigh, stopping short at the place where thigh gave way to buttock.

“Might be able to arrange it, I suppose. You really are good. Give my bum a bit of a rub, would you? Mmm. That's nice. Stay on that for a bit.”

“What's Nicky Van Eekelen like?” asked Ben, now fully aroused. If only the damned thing would go down a bit! He couldn't spare a hand to adjust it: both were busy kneading one of the softest, neatest bottoms Ben had ever experienced.

“He's a promising player. He'll make the first fifteen when he's older. Stop there. I'll turn over and you can do the front... if you don't mind.”

At last! An opportunity to make certain adjustments. Unfortunately, Atkinson turned over rather too rapidly, and Atkinson said, grinning, “You got a hard on too? I always get one when someone works on my bum. Look.”

But Ben was already looking, gazing at an athletic support which seemed likely at any moment to snap.

“You don't mind if I take it off?” asked Atkinson.

“Not at all. It seems to be defying all known laws of physics,” Ben laughed.

“Don't know much about the laws of physics. It's bloody painful when you get a hard on, though.” He reached down and undid something. Like a jack-in-the-box, his enormous weapon leapt upwards and stood bolt upright, throbbing slightly. It was, thought Ben, almost as big as Simon's. On a fifteen-year-old it seemed out of place.

“Wow!” Ben gulped, aware that some sort of comment would be expected.

“Pretty big, wouldn't you say?”

“Bloody enormous. I've never seen one like that,” Ben lied.

“They all say that.”

“All?”

“The rugby team. We share a bath at the end of most matches.”

“I'm surprised there is any water left in the tub. That thing must displace a lot.”

Atkinson laughed. “Now's the time I could use young Nicky,” he said.

“Would you like me to?”

“Providing you don't spread it round the school.”

“I'm hardly likely to do that, am I? I've got a reputation to think of too, you know.”

“My bird would go mad if she thought I let another bloke wank me,” said Atkinson.

“So would mine,” replied Ben, sure that Atkinson's 'bird' was, like his, as mythological as the Phoenix.

Atkinson stretched himself out at full length on the bed, parted his legs slightly, put his hands behind his head and closed his eyes.

“Well, go....” but Ben didn't give him time to finish. He sat on the edge of the bed and grasped it. It felt as hard as steel. With his other hand, he cupped Atkinson's huge scrotum, reaching down with his middle finger to the sensitive area behind it. Atkinson moaned slightly. Then, slowly and deliberately, he slid the foreskin up and down, exposing the shiny purple head.

“Go a bit faster,” Atkinson commanded, but Ben ignored him. He had his own plans and his own technique and Atkinson was about to experience the technique of a master. Up and down. Up and down. It seemed to get even harder. He could feel it pulsating against his palm. Atkinson began to breathe more deeply. Up and down. Up and down. Ben licked his lips. Up and down. Up and down. He tickled with his left hand again. He sensed that it wouldn't be long in coming – and that it would take him unawares if he wasn't careful. He kept his eye on the tip. Up and down. Up and down. All at once, a bead appeared at the eye-like slit and spread downwards. Time.

He bent forward. The scent of teenage penis wafted up his nostrils – the familiar salty, musty, cheesy, rather pungent smell of boy. His mouth watered involuntarily, so much so that he had to swallow. Then,

lowering his face further, he touched it with his lips and let his tongue play over the eye. The little dew there tasted delicious.

“What...?” Atkinson groaned. Even if he had finished the question, Ben wouldn't have been able to answer it. He parted his lips and let the proud penis slide into his mouth, licking the underside frantically as, inch by inch, it slid deeper and deeper, until he could feel the tip pressing and throbbing against the back of his throat.

Then he started. He raised his head a few inches and lowered it again. Atkinson moaned more loudly and tried to raise himself off the bed as if to thrust as much of his rod as possible up into Ben's mouth.

Ben removed his hand from the warm cleft between his legs and pressed him down again. *He* would dictate timing, not Atkinson!

Atkinson's breathing and the ticking of the alarm clock were the only sounds in the room. Ben stopped for an instant for a lung full of air and then recommenced. Atkinson's penis was weeping copiously now, filling his mouth with warm, sweet stickiness. It wouldn't take long. He flicked his tongue against the underside again. His own erection was uncomfortable but he had plans to deal with that later. Like a 'nodding donkey' oil pump, his head continued to move.

Then, suddenly, it happened. Atkinson moaned, not as loudly as Ben would have expected, and heaved himself upwards. The first shot went straight into Ben's gullet. The second and third filled his mouth completely. The fourth, more a flood than a shot, was too much and semen poured from the corners of his mouth down Atkinson's shaft. He let it slide out and swallowed, savoring the warmth, the saltiness and, above all, the syrupy sweetness of it.

Atkinson opened his eyes. “I never knew you were gay,” he said.

“I'm not.”

“Only gays suck cock like that.”

“How do you know?”

“I just do.”

“Come to that, I never knew you were gay either,” said Ben.

“Come off it! Me? You must be fucking joking!”

“Only gays let themselves be sucked. Who asked a twelve year old to suck him off then, eh?”

“That was only to see if he would. He didn't. You did.”

“And you enjoyed it, so that makes us even. You don't have to be gay to like it. Let's enjoy ourselves whilst we can. Let's face it: in a few years time we'll both be married.”

“Guess you're right. Anyway, thanks. Do you fancy a coffee now?”

“No, I'd better be off. When's the next match?”

“Tuesday afternoon of next week against St. Benedicts. Coming?”

“No. You will be, though.”

Chapter Fourteen

“Well, so far we've managed to find a twentieth century screw, a bit of a tractor and an old army mess tin,” Mark said. “Not exactly our day is it?” A strong wind blew up the side of the hill. He thrust his hands into his pockets.

Colin didn't answer. He moved steadily ahead as if scything the long grass with his metal detector. The earphones were clamped over his head and Mark knew that Colin was in another world. He tapped him on the shoulder. Colin pulled the headphones off. “Not exactly our day, is it?” he repeated.

“My thought too. Let's pack up and go home.”

“Might as well, I suppose.”

“Doctor Sawyer is convinced there used to be some sort of military settlement up here though.”

“Well, they cleared up pretty well after them, that's all I can say.” They began the descent down to the road where their bicycles were chained to a tree. Colin took the detector to pieces, cramming some parts into his saddle bag and strapping the shaft to the crossbar. “You've got that look in your eyes again,” he said and laughed as he swung his leg over the saddle.

“Have I?”

“You know very well you have. You're not thinking about archeology at all, are you?”

“Possibly not. If we hurry we can get an hour in at your place.”

“You're obsessed!” Colin expostulated.

“Aha!” said Mark. Colin's pert bottom, as appetizing as a ripe peach, overhung the saddle.

Mark turned his head. There was nobody around. He patted the soft flesh. “I don't need a detector to find what I'm looking for,” he said. “Let's get moving. I have to be home early.”

“Your step-father's very strict, isn't he?” said Colin as they cycled off. “I'm allowed to be out till 10 o'clock on Saturdays and I'm younger than you are. It's ridiculous to make you come home so early.”

“I don't mind it,” said Mark. In fact, he liked it very much. Home by seven. Wish Adam a pleasant evening at the disco and then stand in front of the fire to be lovingly undressed and caressed by Simon. He'd have to be more careful this afternoon. On his last 'Simon Saturday' he'd already spunked up twice at Colin's house and Simon had noticed that it took him longer than usual to come to boiling point.

They cycled along, side by side. Colin, who found Mark's 'posh' school almost as interesting as the Roman occupation of Britain, plied him as usual with questions. What was the woodwork shop like? Did they do pottery? Were the prefects allowed to beat the other boys? What was the Headmaster like? Did the masters wear caps and gowns?

They came to the beginning of a long uphill grade. A huge signboard pronounced that it was being widened and apologized for the inconvenience. Until the work was finished, traffic had to proceed in a single lane.

“You go first,” said Colin. “You're the eldest.”

“No, after you,” said Mark, not entirely for reasons of courtesy. What could be inconvenient about cycling behind such a nice little bottom? There was nothing, he thought, so beautiful as a small boy's bottom, especially one kept in the peak of condition by constant field work and cycling.

There were lots of twelve-year-old bottoms at school but they were unattainable. 'That sort of thing' just didn't happen at his new school; certainly not amongst the day boys and as far as he could make out, not even in the boarding houses. To Colin he had told a different story. It was, he had explained, part of the 'public school tradition'. One was a pariah if one didn't participate in the orgies which took place almost daily in the showers, the dormitories and various outbuildings. His account of one saturnalian afternoon spent in the boathouse with various boys who, for ethical reasons, he refused to name or describe in detail, had been so vivid that he began to believe it himself.

That, and the writings of the Reverend Doctor J. H. Blackstall, had done the trick. Seeking to learn something about his little friend's hobby, Mark had gone to the school library and consulted the catalog for a book on Roman history. By chance he had come across *Boys in Ancient Rome*. It was available on application to the librarian. She had been reluctant to lend it. It seemed that the Reverend Doctor Blackstall had been Headmaster of the school at the turn of the century and this volume was now rather precious. But Mark prevailed and that evening, Simon had difficulty in dragging him from it.

Boys in ancient Rome, according to J. H. Blackstall, led a most extraordinary and enviable life. When not studying and practicing gymnastics they were in bed with their adult male lovers. They studied hard to earn their lovers' praise. Muscles which would be brought into play at night were toned up by day in the gymnasium, which word, the Reverend Doctor explained, was derived from the Latin and Greek words meaning "naked", an etymological fact which led the holy and learned man to spend three pages extolling the beauty of naked boys.

It seemed that there was no artifact dating from those days which could be entirely disassociated from the theme of boy-love. A ring found in a Northumberland field was "almost certainly a love token given by a Roman soldier to his boy lover". What Mark saw as a statuette of a naked boy-runner poised as if on starting blocks, was "a boy posed in such a way as to show off his beauty to the best advantage".

A car swept by, missing him by inches. The driver shouted something. Mark raised two fingers and carried on.

The six weeks he had known Colin had been some of the happiest weeks of his life. He still felt bitter about Howard who had been so loving at first but then deserted him for Lord Charles. True, he had moved too fast with Howard. Like Colin, Howard loved being wanked and sucked. Like Colin, he reciprocated those favors and, as Colin had done before reading *Boys in Ancient Rome*, Howard had totally rejected the idea of being fucked. But now Colin was gradually coming round to the idea. It would take time but Mark was confident of eventual success. It was just a question of finding the right opportunity. Had Howard been interested in Ancient Rome, would things have worked out differently?

Mark thought not. Anyway, that was all water under the bridge now. Howard was miles away, enjoying the company of a man with a fast car, witty conversation, a house near Howard's school and lots of money. Mark hadn't a chance.

Another car almost knocked him off his bike. He regained control. Colin was some distance ahead. Mark accelerated to narrow the gap and to keep the boy in sight. Then he fell into his reverie again.

Adam didn't help much. On nights when Simon wanted to sleep alone, Adam either spoke about Ben, which was interesting, or about Howard and what he would do if he were Mark. That was annoying, in some ways like being back on the island. And, on those nights, Adam still affected the callous conversation which had been the island argot. Mark had not liked it then. He didn't mind so much when Adam spoke of Ben in those terms. He would lie still in the dark bedroom fingering his penis whilst Adam spoke of Ben as if the latter were some sort of prize bull. But when Adam spoke of Howard like that, it was infuriating. Indeed, there had been one evening when Simon had to come in to break up the fight which had ensued.

“Pity you never managed to screw Howard,” Adam had said.

“Mmm.”

“Of course, you're the greatest fool. You're much stronger than he is.”

“What's that got to do with it?”

“You should have forced it up him. I would.”

“That's revolting! I happen to love him. At least, I did.”

“You'd love him much more if you'd had your tool in his arse. He's got such a nice arse too. He bent forward when he got into Charles's car – I noticed it particularly then. Just right for fucking.”

“Do you think you could shut up about Howard?” Mark asked. “It's finished. Over. At an end. Understand?”

“Finished as far as you're concerned,” Adam replied. “I'll bet Charles hasn't finished with him.”

“He won't get anywhere. Not with Howard.”

“What about Ben? They share the same room at school. What's the time?”

Mark brought his hand out into the open to consult his watch. “Five minutes to midnight. Time to get some sleep. We've got a maths test tomorrow.”

“I'll bet Howard isn't asleep,” said Adam.

“I'll bet he is. That boy falls asleep as soon as his head hits the pillow.”

“No,” said Adam scornfully, “your little boyfriend is wriggling about like a worm on a hook at this moment. I'll bet old Ben has brought a few tears to his eyes. With Ben's prick up his arse, he'll...”

Adam never finished the sentence. His nose bled for most of the night and his pillow was a horrible mess. Simon was pretty angry about it. Mark was very glad that he had never told Adam about Colin.

Could he have persuaded Howard as he was persuading Colin? Was it right to persuade boys? It was brainwashing, really. Was he doing to Colin what Richard had so subtly done to him? Their situations were slightly different. He'd not been a virgin when he met Richard but the lines were the same.

“It's perfectly natural,” Richard had said. “Yes, it's very slightly uncomfortable at first but that soon wears off.” On the island they had been shown models and diagrams proving that the angle of the anal canal was identical to the angle of the average erect penis. The prostate: the only internal gland with nerve receptors on its surface. The endless slide shows. Pictures of naked boys. Pictures of boys sucking huge, blue-veined penises, boys being screwed in various positions, all with delighted smiles on their faces.... It was all intended to make them compliant bedmates for any male with enough money to pay for them – businessmen, professional men, princes, sheikhs....

Was he, Mark Lee, doing the same thing to Colin? Was it right? Colin had reservations at first. He had enjoyed it but sometimes, afterwards when they were cleaning up, Colin would say something like, “It's not really right, is it?” or “Do you think we ought to keep on like this?” or “I don't think we ought to do it again.”

And Mark would reassure him. It was only Colin's working-class background which made him think that way. It was perfectly acceptable behavior in public schools. Why, Mark knew at least one peer of the realm who did it. He couldn't divulge the man's name but he had been staying with Mark's guardian only recently....

So the Saturday sessions continued. They scoured the hills and fields for evidence of Roman remains, eating sandwiches provided by Colin's mother. She approved of her son's new friend. Then, after a usually unsuccessful hunt, they cycled back to Colin's house and became, for an hour, a fifteen-year-old patrician with a devoted twelve-year-old slave or the twelve-year-old scion of a noble family and his captive adolescent Briton. Colin was a delightfully obedient slave. Colinus was a firm but affectionate master who sometimes found sufficient fault in his slave to slap a broad British bottom before slaving

on a fifteen year old penis, making it even more rigid, and then filling his mouth with his slave's creamy, steaming semen.

After reading *Boys in Ancient Rome*, (and which twelve-year-old could fail to be impressed by an author with such imposing qualifications?) it was decided that, in the interests of historical authenticity, Colinus/Colin would have to “go the whole way”. Marcus/Mark, despite his anxiety to please, was determined not to rush the process, knowing very well that, if he did, the spell might be broken forever. Time was the problem. Colin's parents returned to the house at five o' clock and would have found it odd, to say the least, to discover two ancient Romans engaged in Roman pursuits, however authentic, in the bedroom. When they returned, they expected to find two boys sitting in front of the television set in the lounge. The usual pleasantries were exchanged and Mark would cycle home.

They were coming to the top of the hill and the end of the single lane now. Colin was standing on the pedals straining with all his might to make the last few steep yards. Mark glanced at his watch. They'd have to hurry. It was already four o'clock. He speeded up. Colin was at his best just after strenuous exercise: white, glistening with gamy, small-boy sweat, twitching slightly as his muscles relaxed....

“We'd better get a move on,” Mark said as he drew alongside. “Race you home!” Colin sped away. Mark smiled, switched into top gear and followed. He let Colin win. He always did.

“Would you like a cup of tea or something?” Colin asked as he opened the front door. He always asked the same question and always got the same reply.

“Something,” said Mark. Colin bent down to pick up a magazine from the doormat, an action which focused Mark's desires even more explicitly. “My magazine,” the boy explained, tearing off the wrapper, “*Journal of Roman Archeology*. I always look forward to it.”

“Not as much as I'm looking forward to something else, I'll bet,” said Mark. “Read it later. Let's get upstairs. It's getting late.”

He let Colin, still grasping the magazine, precede him. Even a simple action like climbing a flight of stairs became a graceful performance when Colin did it. They went into the bedroom. Colin locked the door from the inside. Mark looked at his watch and frowned. It was always the same. If only the field work excursions could be shortened! He began hurriedly to undress. Colin sat on the bed and watched him. The boy's eyes seemed to sparkle through the thick lenses of his glasses. It always made Mark feel slightly embarrassed to be observed with such obvious enthusiasm.

“The hairs on your legs look all golden from here,” said Colin. “How did you get that scar on your bum?”

“Oh, that was ages ago.”

It was to escape his step-father, who had made the scar in question with a rhinoceros-hide whip, that Mark had been so glad to get to the island. At first it had been paradise. The Professor, who ran the place, was a benevolent old man. Nobody minded obliging his friends occasionally, but then Richard began to take over. Hardly a month went by without what Richard referred to as “hospitality”. Men would arrive. Rich, usually ugly men, in private helicopters. Boys would be sent for, as Mark had been on one afternoon, told to strip, and paraded like horses.

“How did he get that scar?” one of the men had drawled. Richard had smiled. “That was done before he came to us. If your client has ideas in that direction, he'd better forget them. We like our boys to be returned in the same condition as when hired, as they say on the car forms.”

“Don't worry,” the man replied. “You'll never notice the difference.”

“Apart from a stretched arsehole,” said the other man and they laughed.

One of them looked at a piece of paper he held in his hand. “Well,” he said, “the age is right. The height is right. Hair color is right and he seems strongly built which is what the client wants. Let's have a

look at his gear.” And Mark had to turn round and be felt and fumbled and endure their coarse humor as stoically as he was able.

And then money had changed hands. A very large sum indeed, all in dollar bills, and Mark, dressed in his best clothes, was whisked away to Aberdeen, to a hotel and to the suite of an Australian millionaire who was something to do with oil and who called him “kid”. He forced Mark to use the hotel's “Fitness Hall” for hours on end and watched him through thick glasses until Mark lay, with his heart pumping as if it might burst, exhausted.

At that point, the man – Mark never discovered his name – would point to the lift. Drops of perspiration fell on the carpeted floor. He wouldn't allow Mark to shower in the Fitness Hall. Neither would he allow him to close the shower cubicle in his hotel suite. He sat on a stool smoking a cigarette as Mark stood under a cascade of water.

“Exercise does yer good,” he shouted. “Keeps yer fit. Never had a pommy boy who wasn't flabby. Can't stand flabby kids. If I wanted to fuck something like that, I'd go for the Sheilas.”

When the cigarette was finished and the stub thrown into the toilet it was time to step out of the shower.

“Hey!” Colin's voice snapped him out of his reverie. “Professor Kingston's coming here.”

“Who's Professor Kingston?”

“You are ignorant sometimes, Mark. He's the greatest authority in the world on Roman archeology. He's written so many papers you'd never believe it! He's giving a lecture at the Town Hall.”

Mark sat on the bed beside him and very gently removed the boy's spectacles and placed them on the bedside table.

“What are you doing? I can't read without my glasses.”

“You're not supposed to be reading. You're supposed to be a boy in ancient Rome and they didn't have glasses.”

“Can't I just finish reading that bit?”

“No.”

“It's only half a page.”

“No. Stand up.”

“Oh, all right. Gosh! Your thing's stiff already!”

“Of course it is.”

“It's sort of automatic, isn't it?”

Mark swung his legs over the side of the bed and began to remove his sneakers and socks. “I suppose it is. Are you the master or the slave this afternoon?”

“I don't really mind.” Colin stood up. “Hey! The floor's cold.”

“I'll have a a hypocaust installed,” said Mark, thankful for his latest reading. “That's right. Stand there. A bit closer. Mmm. Nice?”

He placed the palm of his hand against the soft flesh of Colin's crotch and felt the first slight stirrings through the denim jeans.

“Nice. Shall I take my shirt off?”

“Of course.”

Like a theater curtain, the shirt rose in front of Mark's eyes, and revealed the firm white flesh of Colin's abdomen and cutely indented navel. It was a much nicer, neater navel than Howard's. He touched it with his little finger and felt the muscles beneath it contract. Colin's arms were over his head, wrestling with his shirt. Mark reached for the belt buckle and undid it. The shirt landed on the bed at his side. Colin took a pace forwards. With some difficulty, Mark undid the large button of the jeans and reached in for the zip. He found it and gently ran it down. Colin giggled. The jeans began to slide down his thighs.

Colin kicked them off. He was wearing his orange boxer shorts, the same ones that he had worn on their first afternoon together. Mark could just make out the outline of the boy's tiny prick under the material. He touched it. It felt soft and spongy. Colin breathed deeply. He grasped the fold of material between his forefinger and thumb.

"Been playing with it?" he asked.

"Only last night."

"Nice?"

"Not as good as when you do it."

"I'm glad."

The banter continued as he went on fingering it, thrilling to feel it harden under his touch. He looked down. A small bead of moisture had emerged from his own rampant, purple-headed penis. It was time! Grasping the shorts he pulled them down and inhaled deeply as the aroma of excited boy reached his nostrils. Colin's tiny prick pointed upwards and outwards proudly. The little moist head peeped out under the foreskin as if looking at the world for the first time. It was so tiny and so cute. So, for that matter, were Colin's balls: his scrotum was more like one firm golf ball. The boy was hairless; white and smooth as porcelain.

Mark touched the ball-sac with a finger and Colin breathed in deeply. "I would like to go to that lecture." the boy said.

Mark grasped the little cocklet again.

"Do you think my dad would let me go?" Colin wondered. Mark didn't answer. He was much too busy.

"Would you come with me?" Colin persisted.

"Maybe." It was the only word Mark had time to utter before he parted his lips and slid them over the deliciously hard little shaft.

"I could ask Doctor Sawyer if he's.... Oh! Mmm! Aaaaah! Oh! That feels good!"

Mark's expertise at fellatio had been much appreciated on the island. Both by the teenage boy-residents and the guests. But he had never realized how much more enjoyable a small boy's prick could be. He felt it hardening fast as the sweet/salty/sweaty taste of it warmed his mouth.

He put his hands round Colin's buttocks. Feeling the soft flesh give, and pulled the boy further towards him. One of Colin's knees touched his prick which leapt up expectantly. It was time!

He withdrew his lips and with hands on the younger boy's hips maneuvered him onto the bed and pushed him down into a prone position. With his head pointing towards Colin's feet. He nestled his face down into the boy's crotch. Would he? Would he? Yes! He felt Colin's nose first, then the boy's lips closed round his cock.

"Just a bit, Col. Just a bit." he warned.

Colin's legs parted obligingly. He licked the insides of the smooth thighs and then, working backwards and deeper all the time found the tight little scrotum. It was small enough to make a mouthful, and he licked it. Colin's legs parted even wider; the boy arched upwards as if he wanted Mark to bite it off. But no. It was far too precious and too beautiful for that! Mark continued to lick. Then a bit further down.

Colin arched upwards even more and moaned softly as Mark lapped against the firm flesh of his perineum. How he loved that!

Colin's own tongue began to work energetically on Mark's cock-head and he felt another drop of pre-cum surge along the shaft.

"Enough, Col. Enough!" Reluctantly, the boy released it as he came up for a breather. Mark rolled over onto his side, feeling Colin's chest heaving as he did so.

“Do you want to...?” Colin asked tremulously.

“Fuck you?”

The boy nodded.

“Very much. Not now, though.”

“You can if you want”

“Not now. We'll do the next best thing, shall we?”

“What's that?”

“You'll see. Keep lying the way you are. Now, I'll get over you... like this. Feel okay? Good. Now, I'll put the head in just under your balls. That feel nice?”

There was no need to ask the question. Colin grinned happily as, for the first time in his young life, a hard and sticky penis pressed against the sensitive skin of his perineum. Mark pushed his hands under the boy and down to his soft rump.

“You're beautiful!” he gasped as he thrust forwards.

“You're nice,” whispered Colin, and Mark felt the boy's hands on his back, pulling him down.

And so they began. Mark's jabbing movements were soon synchronous with Colin's violent upward heavings. Several times, Mark felt Colin's anus at his cock tip. Several times he had the impression that it was trying to open. They gasped; they moaned together and, finally, with a huge mutual spasm, they came together. Mark's generous libation spurted out onto the candlewick bedspread. Colin's dribbled down and mingled with Mark's as they lay clinging to each other and enjoying the mixed scents of their individual bodies and their mutual outpouring.

“I thought you were going to do it properly for a minute,” said Colin when they were together in the bathroom.

“I need more than a minute,” said Mark, toweling his legs.

“Have you done it a lot?”

“Quite a lot, yes.”

“With the boys at school?”

“Yes.”

“How often?”

“About three times a week,” Mark lied and wished he didn't have to.

“Could you make a promise?”

“Sure. What is it?”

“That you won't do it with them again?”

“Why?”

“Because you're my friend and I want you all to myself,” replied Colin.

Mark couldn't help himself. He dropped the towel, grasped Colin's naked, wet shoulders and kissed him. “And you're mine. The nicest boy in the world!” he said and, to his surprise, he felt a tear fall down his cheek.

Colin's parents returned at five and, as usual, they pressed Mark to stay to tea. As usual, he declined because his guardian was expecting him but he left more reluctantly than usual.

“Have a nice evening,” said Mrs. Stoker as he unlocked his bike in the front garden.

“I will. Thank you very much.”

“Go carefully now. Your step-father will want you in one piece.”

“I will,” said Mark, cycling off. He stopped on the way and sat for a long time on a bench, thinking. By the time he remounted his bike, the sun was beginning to go down. He stopped again at a roadside

transport cafe and ordered a mixed grill and a Coke. As he pushed the empty plate away, he grinned. There was no need to tell Simon. A familiar throbbing at his groin was all the reassurance he needed. Simon would never know.

The waitress had been trying to engage him in conversation throughout the meal. “Got anything lined up for tonight, then?” she asked as she collected his plate and glass.

“Yes,” said Mark. “I’ve got quite an active evening lined up, thanks.”

“Lucky old you!” she called, as he left.

“Lucky old me!” said Mark. He got onto his bike. “And now for Simon,” he said with a grin as the tip of the saddle slipped between his thighs.

Chapter Fifteen

Twice a week Alex and Gareth came back to school muddy and tired, but delighted with the money Charles had given them for their help in the garden. Ben smiled to himself but asked no questions.

He made a habit of walking down to the village on their gardening afternoons and found that, by peering through a crack in the high wall at the back of the house, he could see them at work. Weeds and knee-high grass had given way to a square of freshly dug soil. As the weeks went by, the square became a rectangle at one end of which two sturdy little boys in pullovers, jeans and wellington boots dug in their spades and turned the soil in perfect time with each other, moving from one side to the other like slow-moving shuttles in a giant loom. Sometimes Charles was out there with them, pointing, gesticulating and laughing. Everything was going well.

Ben established a routine: a cup of coffee in the village cafe-cum-bakery and then back to an afternoon's study or a session at the computer. He always returned via Charles's house. By that time the spades were always stuck in the ground like the crosses on soldiers' graves. The boys were in the house. It was usually at least three hours after that when they returned to school.

A letter from Ben's bank manager to say that a check from Beresford Holdings had been credited to his account made his life even more pleasant. The dinghy was now a possibility.

Life with Howard was more pleasant, too. The boy still needed persuading and would still only allow one-sided masturbation, but it was pleasant enough, for now.

The weather worsened, but that made no difference to Ben's general contentment with life. He was roped in to help with the Junior School nativity play; he tacked up crepe paper and dressed very small boys in eastern robes with equanimity.

He was in a particularly happy and self-satisfied frame of mind one Tuesday afternoon as, muffled against the bitter wind, he made his way down the hill to the village. He had a tolerant housemaster. He had a good-looking fourteen-year-old to share his room. There was money in the bank – no need to question where it came from, although he would need to think up a story to tell his parents. It might, he thought, be a good idea to pop in on Charles. He could perhaps write a letter explaining that it was a reward for a particularly brilliant computer program. Something like that. He looked at his watch. The boys should still be gardening. He wouldn't want to disturb them later – though it would be rather fun, and educational, to see what actually went on. How did one manage sex with two boys at the same time?

The house came in sight as he rounded the corner. He didn't notice anything at first, being too wrapped up in his warm blanket of contentment. It was only when he was almost at the gate that he noticed the vehicles: a van, two large cars and two police cars were parked at the side of the house.

Hurriedly, Ben pulled up the hood of his anorak and crossed to the other side of the road. Police! His heart beat fast and he suddenly felt clammy cold. What evidence did they have against him? Nothing really, unless Charles told them. There was the check. That would have to be explained. They were bound to call at the school to interview him. Had Lord Charles interfered with him at any time? No. A check from Beresford Holdings had been paid into his bank. Could he explain that? Well, it was simple, really. Lord Charles had lent him some money because he was broke and needed a new computer. "Look, officer, Here are my bank statements." Why had he approached Lord Charles? Well, he had

known the previous occupant of the house, Mr. Simon Spencer... No, better leave Simon out of it.

Howard! They were bound to want to speak to him. But it seemed that nothing had happened between Charles and Howard so that was all right. Anyway, there was time to warn the boy.

A policeman and another man in a raincoat came out of the house and walked round to the back garden. Ben walked on for a little way, then crossed the road again and moved, as stealthily as he could, to the hole in the wall.

They were standing in the garden, looking down at the ground. Of course! They were checking the amount of work done against the time Alex and Gareth had been there. If only he had had the sense to have a word with them. "Look lads. I know what's going on. Good luck to you, but be careful. Make sure that it looks as if you really have been gardening."

Charles would go to prison. There was no doubt about that. Howard would be upset. Ben hurried back to school.

Howard wasn't around. Ben looked at his watch. He'd be at his last lesson and was bound to come up to dump his books before going to tea. Ben sat at his computer and switched it on.

A clatter of footsteps announced Howard's arrival.

"You're back early," he said. "Coming to tea?"

"In a minute. There's a bit of a panic on."

"How so?"

"The police are down at Charles's place. I think they've rumbled him."

"Doing what?"

"Don't be naive, Howard. Screwing Alex and Gareth, of course."

"What? The kids who do his garden?"

"Yes."

"Does he?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?" Howard was growing angry.

"I just do. If they come to the school and ask you anything, the answer is no."

"What are they likely to ask me? I'm nothing to do with the garden."

"Well they'll find out that you go to see him often and they're bound to put two and two together. They'll ask you if he has ever done anything to you."

"He hasn't. Not like that anyway."

"We'll just have to be careful, that's all. Whatever happens, keep away from the cottage."

"Don't you think I ought to go there? I could go now. It would look more natural."

"Definitely not. Let's go and have some tea. The refectory girls may have heard something. They get all the village gossip first."

In fact they had heard nothing. It was Ben who started the subsequent rumors by asking them what the police were doing at Lord Charles's house.

That evening, Ben waited in the Junior School for Alex and Gareth to return. As usual, it was well after seven o' clock when they came up the path.

"Hallo, lads," he said, affecting a casual manner which he certainly didn't feel. "Had a good afternoon?"

"Yes thank you, Hill," said Gareth. It was amazing what a few months in a good school had done to their accents.

"The ground must be a bit hard for digging at this time of the year, isn't it?" Ben continued.

"It is actually, yes," said Alex. A few months previously he would have said "Too fucking right it is!"

“What exactly have you been doing this afternoon?” Ben persisted.

“I'm most awfully sorry, Hill, but we're not allowed to tell you that,” said Alex.

“Don't be silly.”

“I'm not. We've been told to say nothing to anybody.”

“Something to do with the police, is it?” asked Ben. “I thought I saw a couple of police cars there.”

“Well, yes it is.”

Ben put a hand on Gareth's shoulder. “Just deny everything. Say nothing happened,” he said. “They can't prove anything.”

“They took it away with them.” said Alex.

“Took what?”

“Well, whatever it was. Look, Hill, I am really am sorry but we can't say anything. Honestly. They're going to tell the Headmaster but even he's being asked to keep quiet.”

“Reputation of the school, I suppose,” said Ben. “Anyway, if things get too tough, let me know. And, incidentally, don't mention me or Howard will you?”

“We wouldn't.”

“Good for you. Go and have a meal now and don't forget to do your Prep.”

“We won't. Goodnight, Hill.”

Ben walked across the road and up the stairs. Howard was doing his Prep. “Any news?” he asked.

“No. The cops have told them to keep quiet. The Head's going to be informed but he's to keep it hush-hush as well. A cover-up, I suppose, to protect the school.”

“It's not the school's fault,” said Howard.

“I know, but if it gets out, parents will think their sons are in danger. The police have found some sort of evidence too. I managed to get that out of them. Did Charles keep any dirty books or anything like that?”

“Not that I know of. What are you going to do?”

“Right now,” said Ben, “I'm going to have yet another go at mastering this program. I can't seem to make it work. I promised to have it ready for Christmas.”

He sat at the computer again. Howard continued to work. For about thirty minutes, the room was silent.

“I wonder if he really did do it to them,” said Howard, suddenly.

“No doubt about it.”

“It seems funny.”

“Why?”

“Well, they're so little.”

“You were about that age when you first came up here with me and Adam.”

“I suppose you're right.”

“As I recall, you spent that evening sucking cock like an Arab with his first ice lolly.”

Howard laughed. “That's right, I did. It was good fun really, wasn't it?”

“Well, you seemed to enjoy it.”

“I still do.”

Ben was barely listening.

“I quite like you tossing me off too.”

“Good.”

“Course, I've never been fucked. Does that make me a virgin?”

“Suppose so, yes.” The program was a complex one. Ben had tried several times to get it right but it

didn't seem to work. There was an error somewhere.

“Ben...”

“Shut up for a moment, Howard.”

But Howard wouldn't shut up. “Do you think Mr. Walker will come round?” he asked.

“Shouldn't think so. They're all busy writing reports. Now do belt up.”

He was aware of Howard getting off his bed and coming to stand next to him. He didn't look up from the screen.

“It's a program to do the Sixth Form Christmas draw,” Ben explained. “It'll choose the prize-winners by random selection like the Premium Bond computer.”

“I suppose it depends how big it is,” said Howard.

“Not really. The first prize is only a book token.”

“And how you put it in,” said Howard.

“You've hit the nail on the head. There's an input error somewhere.”

He felt Howard's breath on his neck. Then he jumped as if the computer had delivered an electric shock. Howard's hand came to rest on his crotch and squeezed his flaccid flesh through his trousers.

“Bet you won't make an input error with this.”

He felt his zip fastener being drawn down. A warm hand groped inside his pants. It sprang out into Howard's warm palm. He turned his attention to the rigid mound in Howard's trousers. “Better lock the door. Just in case,” Ben said.

It was like a dream. Ben couldn't believe it was happening. Howard turned the key in the lock and returned, smiling, to Ben's bed. He sat down, took off his shoes and socks and then lay back in his usual pose with his hands behind his head. “Come and stand here and take all your things off,” said Howard.

“I want to see you naked.”

“You've seen me starkers before.” Ben started to undress.

“I wasn't in the mood then. I am now.”

“What's caused this change?” Ben slipped off his trousers and then his pants.

“I don't know. God! It's huge! Come a bit nearer. Let me feel it.”

Undressing a sexually aroused fourteen-year-old when you are in the same state is a bit like fighting with an octopus. Ben struggled with the shirt buttons, pushing Howard's hands away impatiently, and the shirt was off.

“You smell nice!” said Howard.

“So do you!” He undid Howard's belt, the top button of his trousers and the zip. “Lift yourself up a bit... That's it. Just take these off... There! He reached down and touched the glowing tip of Howard's sturdy penis, then licked the finger. The most exciting taste in the world! Not even Adam had that special boy-smell. Over-ripe indeed! Charles must be mad!

“What?” said Howard.

“What?”

“You said something about Charles.”

“Supposing we forget Charles.”

“Yes, let's. I've gone off him. He's too old anyway.”

“That's what he said about you.” Gently, Ben massaged Howard's nipples.

“And what do *you* think?”

“I think you're perfect.”

Howard caressed Ben's prick. “You're not so bad yourself!” he said. “Do you think it will go in?”

“Easily. I've got some stuff...”

In fact it was easier than Ben had thought. He looked down between the legs which lay on his shoulders and watched his well-slicked penis sliding up to nudge into Howard's well-greased anus. All doubts as to whether the boy had told him the truth about Charles vanished when Howard yelled, "Jeeeeesus!"

"Okay?"

"Go a bit slower. That bit hurt. That's better. Is it all in yet?"

"Just a fraction. There! How's that?"

Howard didn't need to answer. Supporting himself on his forearms he pushed himself upwards and forwards and gasped as Ben's cock-head touched his prostate. He began to writhe. Ben had to hold Howard's thighs to stop the boy's legs from falling.

"Oh you're *good* – so tight!" Ben lunged forward.

"Christ, that felt good."

It was well that nobody lived on the other side of the wall. The bed banged against it with increasing tempo. Howard groaned. Ben panted. Cool boy-buttocks slapped against hard adolescent thighs. Howard reached up to grasp his swaying, stiff penis.

"Oh Christ, I'm going to come! I'm..."

The muscles grasping Ben's penis tightened in a powerful spasm. A jet of semen shot upwards and described a low arc before spattering down everywhere. Some went in Ben's hair. Some landed on the counterpane. Pearly droplets decorated Howard's honey-colored torso.

The spasms continued. Goblets of more semen oozed from the gaping slit in Howard's penis and trickled down the shaft, soaking the boy's pubic hair.

The muscles slackened. Ben thrust with renewed vigor. Any minute now. It had to come. Howard closed his eyes and Ben exploded deep inside him. He felt the warm fluid surrounding his prick. It was all over.

Later, freshly showered, they went to bed. Ben put out the light and smiled to himself.

"It's not nearly as bad as I thought," said Howard.

"Good. We'll have to do it again sometime."

"OK. I don't mind doing it with you. I wouldn't do it with anybody else, though."

"What about Mark? He's very keen on you, you know."

"Mmmm. I might do it with Mark. Have you done it with loads of people?"

"A few, yes."

"Who?"

"Why don't you go to sleep?"

"I'm not tired. Who else have you done it with?"

"Well, there's Adam. You know about him. And Simon."

"What about that chap Richard? Simon's friend."

"I don't think Richard does it with anybody. He's a dark horse."

"He kidnapped Simon and Mark, didn't he?"

"He didn't exactly kidnap them. He told them that the island was a sort of sanctuary and it turned out to be more like a prison."

"Why don't they tell the police?"

"Because it would come out that they had had sex with Simon and they like Simon. Now go to sleep."

Howard turned over in bed and grunted. "Do you think Richard is after them, Ben?"

"No. That's Simon being dramatic. No chance. Good night."

"Night Ben. It was good fun. Thanks."

Chapter 16

Mark said nothing about Colin to anybody. It would have been nice to invite Colin over to the Grange and Simon might have understood, though he would have been anxious about Colin's age. Adam would certainly have made coarse remarks. It was better to say nothing.

Secrets, though, have a way of coming out. Mrs. Stoker telephoned Simon one Thursday afternoon to say that her son wished to go to a lecture on "Recent Developments in the Archeology of Roman Britain" to be given by a Professor Kingston at the Town Hall. She and her husband were going to a family wedding on that day and, in view of Colin's age, she wondered if Mark might like to go to the lecture and stay overnight to look after Colin.

Simon was glad to give his permission after hearing a little more about Colin. Mark told him that he had met Colin at the museum; that Colin had been able actually to show him a piece of Roman glass as a result of which he had got a good mark for his short story and become interested in Roman history; nothing else.

Dr. Sawyer chaired the lecture. The hall was packed. Mark had never imagined that so many people could be interested in Roman history.

Mark didn't understand very much of the lecture. The slides were interesting but Mark's mind was on something else entirely. He kept looking at his watch. Surely the man couldn't keep talking for much longer?

Colin sat back in his chair with his legs sprawled out in front of him, occasioning Mark some delightful thoughts. Then, the Professor said something which jolted him out of his reverie.

"...Combleton," said the Professor. Mark jerked upright. "I can't, of

course, at this stage, tell you much about the discoveries there. News is being released to the press in the next few days. We all know their tendency to exaggerate finds. In this case, however, it will be difficult to exaggerate. This is certainly the greatest discovery of this century. May I have the next slide?"

Common sense told Marie that there must be several Combletons. It was unlikely that this was the Combleton at which he had gone to school and met Simon for the first time. It must be another.

When the slide came up on the screen, he couldn't repress a gasp of astonishment for, not only was this the Combleton he remembered but the photograph was of the garden of Simon's old house; the house in which Charles now lived! A trench ran diagonally across the lawn which he, Mark, had sown by hand kneeling on all fours. At the time he hadn't understood Simon's remarks. "Always make sure the furrow is wide open before you insert the drill." "Some seed is bound to get spilt but it's good fun to lick it up afterwards." Mark hadn't made furrows. You don't when you seed a lawn. He wasn't using a drill and he had no intention of licking up grass seeds.

The rose bush which he had trimmed was still there. Everything had started with that rose bush. One hot afternoon he'd been trying to cut it back, wearing only shorts, and a thorn had ripped into his chest. It had bled badly at first but Simon put some cream onto the wound and then to Mark's surprise, started to nibble at his nipples. It was an extraordinary feeling. A warm glow seemed to spread throughout his body. Soon his shorts were off and then Simon's tongue began to explore every inch of him. He smiled as he remembered the conversation he had had with the boy in the next bed as he undressed that night.

"That's a nasty scratch you've got. Some randy bird?"

"No such luck. A bloody rose bush."

"I got scratched like that once. I had to have an injection."

"I've just had one. That's why I'm so late back."

"With me, they put it in my behind!" the boy said, indignantly. "It was

sore for days!”

“Same here,” said Mark, desperately trying not to laugh. “It hurt a bit but the pain's wearing off now.”

“What we have here,” said Professor Kingston, and Mark tried to concentrate again, “is a large villa which appears to have been continually occupied for some considerable time. The mosaics are extraordinary. Our trial trench has shown that at least three rooms have mosaic floors. However, what the press will be most interested in is undoubtedly this. May I have the next slide please?”

The audience gasped. Photographed against a purple background was a collection of gold and silver plate and jewelery which would not have looked out of place in a West End showroom.

“Could you tell us how this was discovered?” shouted a man from the back of the hall.

“I was coming to that. Combleton's only claim to fame so far, as I am sure you know, is it's school which I understand to have been founded in the seventeenth century and therefore modern in my eyes...”

Some people tittered politely.

“It appears,” said the professor, “that two boys from the school have been helping the owner of the house, whom I am asked not to name, by doing a little light gardening. In digging a pit for compost, they came across the treasure. They reported it to the owner of the house and he, very sensibly, contacted the County Archaeologist. We have negotiated permission to excavate and work will start very shortly. As you see, all we have achieved so far is a trial trench. The villa lies under the garden and the adjacent paddock. That is also owned by the householder and he has kindly agreed to a full scale excavation.”

“Are you all right, Mark?” Colin asked. “You've gone pale.”

“I'm okay,” Mark whispered. “It's just that I know that house and I know the owner. I used to help Sim... the previous owner with the garden too. I used to go to Combleton School.”

The lecture continued but Mark had ceased to listen. Fury seemed to boil

inside him. One of the finders of the villa and the treasure had to be Howard; it could only be Howard. Howard, who, at ten, had been thirteen-year-old Mark's best friend. Howard, the boy who had followed him to Combleton School and who was still there. He still dreamed often at night about Howard; there were still occasions at school when a younger boy, by some gesture or phrase, reminded him of Howard. Now Howard had stumbled on the greatest discovery of the century and told him nothing about it. A short phone call was all that was necessary – neither he nor Howard was much into letter writing. Howard could even have asked Charles to phone Simon and ask Simon to tell Mark. Perhaps he had. Perhaps Simon had decided not to tell him. No. That wouldn't be like Simon.

He wondered who the other boy was, not that he mattered much. Howard mattered – or did he? Funny how people you met and liked so often turned out to be rats. He was used to adults like that: visitors to the island who had pawed their way into his trousers with promises of large sums of money which Richard would never know about – “Don't worry, son. I know Richard is doing his best to get you an American visa. You'll be out of here soon. I've got a pal at the embassy. I'll have a word with him. Just open your legs a bit more for me. That's right. Oh, you feel so good...!”

What had Professor Kingston said? “The owner of the house whom I am asked not to name.” No wonder. A man who screwed boys of Howard's age wouldn't want reporters asking questions.

Did Howard say, “Can I ring Mark and tell him about it?” Maybe. What did Charles say? “Why bother? Mark's a long way away. You've finished with Mark now. Just open your legs a bit more for me. That's right. Oh, you feel so good...”

The lecture came to an end. Mark joined mechanically in the applause. Professor Kingston looked at his watch. Then the questions started. Everybody wanted to know about Combleton. Time and time again, the professor said that nobody knew much about it. Each questioner seemed determined to show off his or her own knowledge. Could the professor

suggest a possible date for the abandonment of the villa? No. Could the professor hazard a guess at the reason for burying the treasure? No. He had already said that excavation had hardly begun. Was it likely that the villa had been abandoned at the time of the Saxon invasion? It was impossible to say; excavations had only just started. So it went on. Professor Kingston looked at his watch again.

Mark was equally impatient to get out but there was something he had to know. He joined the group of people who clustered round the professor whilst the others left.

“Could you tell me the names of the boys who discovered the villa, please? I used to go to Combleton School and I think I might know them.”

But the professor had no idea. He had never met them. “You could telephone the school, I suppose,” he suggested. Mark nodded. Colin, standing next to him, managed to get the Professor's autograph. They said goodnight to Dr. Sawyer and left the Town Hall. It was pouring with rain.

Mark suggested that they should take a taxi but Colin, unaccustomed to such luxury, insisted upon walking.

Together, they plodded through the empty streets. Colin wanted something to eat so they stopped at a fish-and-chip shop and nibbled chips in its steamy warmth.

“Tell me more about Combleton,” said Colin. “Why did you change schools? I mean everybody's heard of Combleton School. It's ever so famous.”

“We moved here.”

“But it's a boarding school. Moving here wouldn't make any difference.”

“I prefer to live at home with my step-father. I didn't like boarding school life.”

“Oh. Who are the boys who found the villa?”

“I only know one of them. He's younger than me. We lived in the same area. We were friends outside school.”

“Do you think your step-father would take us to Combleton? I'd give anything to see that villa and I'll bet you'd like to see that boy again.”

“Not really,” said Mark. He shrugged his shoulders. “Come on. It seems to have let up a bit.”

It was shortly after eleven o'clock when Colin opened his front door. “Do you know what I'd like?”

“What?” Mark asked with unusual eagerness.

“A hot bath. I'll bet you'd like one too. I'm soaking.”

“I told you we should have taken a taxi but it's an idea. We could... er... have one together. It would save water and we could have a bit of fun!”

Colin wrinkled his nose. “I don't think much of that idea,” he said. “Do you want to go first?”

“No. You go. I'll have one in the morning.” Mark's spirits sank.

“You're sleeping in my room,” said Colin. “Mum's put up the folding bed for you. See you in a minute.” He ran upstairs. Mark picked up his bag which he had left at Colin's house before going to the lecture and trudged, resignedly, upstairs. Everything, absolutely everything was going wrong these days. Howard was lost. Colin had lost interest. If Charles was anything to go by, adults couldn't be trusted. He began to wonder, as he undressed, how long Simon would remain a friend.

He undressed and reached for his bag. He pulled out a towel to dry his hair. One or two other items fell out. It didn't look as if he would be needing them after all. He put them back carefully and closed the zip. He got into the creaking bed and listened to the sound of bath water being swished around and then released, gurgling, down the drain pipes outside.

Colin entered the room. He was wearing the boxer shorts with lightning flashes on them.

“Good lecture, wasn't it?” he asked, sliding into his bed.

“It was okay, yes.”

“Will you take me to Combleton?”

“I can't, Col. My step-father wouldn't let me.”

“I don't see why not.”

“He doesn't think it would be a good idea to go back to the old school. He says it might unsettle me.”

“Course it wouldn't. I shouldn't think anything would unsettle you. I could ask Doctor Sawyer to take us. I bet he would.”

“You'll have to ask him yourself. I dare not go, much as I should like to.”

“It wouldn't be any good without you. You know the boys who found it. Do you know the name of the man who owns the house?”

“Yes. I know him very well.” “Cor! What's he like?”

“He's okay.” It seemed the safest thing to say. “I suppose we'd better get to sleep,” said Colin.

“You sure you don't want to have a bit of fun?” Mark's penis began to throb at the prospect.

“No thanks. I'm still thinking about that villa.” Colin turned off the light. Mark lay still in the darkness, listening to Colin's regular breathing.

Outside, a car screeched to a stop. Somebody shouted. Then it was quiet again. It was difficult not to think about Colin, although he tried hard. He thought about Howard but felt anger boiling inside him again. He thought about Simon and Adam. What were they doing at that moment? That didn't take much guessing. Mark had done it often enough, and Adam wasn't at all hesitant when describing his sexual adventures.

They'd be on what Simon called “the second round” by now, kneeling naked on Simon's bed, and Adam would be whimpering slightly, as Simon's monster prick slid up into him for the second time. The thought made Mark's penis rise. He put a hand down to touch it. Colin was so stupid! It wouldn't hurt him. He wrapped his fingers round the swollen shaft and squeezed. It was a nice feeling. Colin would feel even nicer; softer and warmer.

“You awake Col?’ he whispered. There was no answer. Perhaps he was wanking very quietly. If he was....

It was too dark to see. Mark slid his hand out of the side of his bed and groped for Colin's bed. He found the top blanket and reached under it. The sheet brushed the top of his hand. He slid across until he was almost falling out of bed. His hand reached further in. It was warm in there. Suddenly, he touched flesh. He stopped. What was he touching? He

didn't know. It felt smooth. Very gently, he moved his finger tip. Smooth skin, no hair at all. The back of a hand? Maybe but he couldn't feel any sinews. A leg? Not that high up in the bed. He had to know. He moved his finger again. Colin made a snoring noise. It was just as well he was a heavy sleeper! Another little movement. Just about a centimeter. Aha! Some sort of pulse. He felt it distinctly. It must be Colin's wrist. That answered the question. He wasn't wanking. He really was asleep. To take the hand away might wake him up so Mark decided to leave it where it was, at least for the time being.

“Down a bit lower,” said Colin in a low voice. Mark jumped. “How do you mean?” he asked, scarcely believing what he had heard.

“Go down a bit lower. Your hand's on my stomach.”

Mark slid his hand over the smooth skin. Of course! He knew where he was now. How could he have confused an abdomen with the back of a hand? He felt the top of Colin's shorts and stopped.

“Go on,” whispered the boy. Mark pushed his fingers under the elastic and there it was – minute and sturdy but so stiff! It felt like a piece of wood. He grasped it between his finger and thumb. Colin gasped. He felt beneath it and thrilled to the feel of the little crinkled ball bag.

“Shall I come over there?” Mark asked.

“If you like.” Colin lifted his sheets and blankets. The gap between the beds was so narrow that Mark didn't need to put his feet on the cold floor. He slid across and nestled alongside his favorite twelve-year-old. He took Colin's head in his hand and kissed him. He couldn't help it. Colin tried to avert his lips and the kiss landed half on his mouth and half on his chin. A tiny hand reached down and checked out Ben's throbbing penis.

“You're stiff,” said Colin, giggling.

“So are you. Shall I suck it for you?”

“If you like.”

Mark did like. He liked very much. He slid down the bed, pushed the shorts down to Colin's knees and placed his lips over the perky shaft. He sucked it into his mouth.

“I like it when you do that,” said Colin, conversationally.

Mark sucked rhythmically and felt the glans emerge from its protective foreskin. It tasted sweet and very slightly soapy. He let it go and, pushing his head between Colin's legs, took the boy's scrotum into his mouth. He heard the sound of tearing cloth.

“My shorts – Mum'll kill me!” said Colin. “Hang on, I'll take them off.” He kicked and fumbled for a few minutes.

“Shall I do it to you now?” Colin asked.

“Not yet. Turn over, Col.”

“I don't fancy doing that now.”

“I'll arrange for you to see the villa.”

“Would you really?”

“Yes. The treasure too, if I can. I could telephone the man who owns the house. He really is a friend of mine.” It was on the tip of his tongue to tell Colin that Charles, too, had a penchant for little boys.

“You promise?”

“Yes, sure.” Colin turned over.

Just touching the soft, yielding flesh of that perfect little bottom was enough to cause Mark's penis to dribble. He reached over and turned on the light, the better to appreciate the boy's sunburned back, narrow waist and perfect, white buttocks.

“You're so beautiful!” he gasped. Colin giggled and lay still. Gently, Mark parted the ivory cheeks. There it was – a tiny, purse-strung pink spot. He had to crawl out of bed to get the things out of his bag but was back in seconds.

“What're you doing?” asked Colin in a muffled voice, and then giggled again as Mark's tongue began to lap at the sensitive skin under his scrotum.

It took a long time. He licked and laved and inserted his tongue as far as it would go, loosening up, lubricating, generous with his saliva. Then came a finger, and the cream. It was just after three o'clock when Mark placed the head of his iron-hard, drooling penis on Colin's rectum. Colin's legs clamped against his neck and then slackened as Mark pushed forward.

“Ow! Stop! It hurts! It hurts!” Mark gritted his teeth and froze the forward motion of his hips. “Ooooh! Aaah!” Mark felt Colin's muscles grip his penis just behind the glans, then loosen slightly. A bit more...

“Aaah! Oooh! Ow!” Colin's head thrashed from side to side on the pillow. He hadn't minded when Mark's well greased finger had slid into him but a lust-hardened sixteen-year-old penis was a different matter.

“A little more,” Mark breathed. He thrust harder. Colin bit his lip and closed his eyes tightly. And suddenly everything gave way and, seemingly without any resistance, Mark glided in. The warm, silky tissues enveloped every centimeter of his cock.

“It's all in now, Col,” he whispered.

“Thank Christ for that!”

“How does it feel? I don't want to hurt you.”

“Not so bad now. It just feels *so big!*”

“You'll get used to it. I love you, Col.”

“I love you too. Go on. I think you can do it now.”

And so Mark did it. Colin groaned but it wasn't a groan of pain. Mark wanted it to last through eternity, but it seemed like seconds. His balls ached. His legs felt numb. His head swam as something inside him contracted and a gush of warm, sticky semen flooded up into Colin's colon. The little boy grinned as another flood followed the first; then another; then another. Mark sank forwards onto Colin's still-stiff cocklet.

“That was nice,” said Colin. “I haven't come yet. Stay in if you like. Shall we do it again?”

Chapter Seventeen

Two weeks later, Mark sat in a transport cafe with Dr. Sawyer and Colin.

"It was smashing!" said Colin. "It's a terrific villa!"

"Certainly one of the major finds in our part of the country," said Dr. Sawyer, tucking into his bacon sandwich.

"Tell me about the people," said Mark, trying to conceal his impatience. The two of them had talked about the villa ever since the car drew up at the cafe.

"I liked Lord Charles," said Colin. "He's a really, really nice man. Did I tell you that he took us out to lunch?"

"No, not yet."

"Well it was absolutely terrific and I had prawn cocktail and Doctor Sawyer had soup and Alex had...."

"Who's Alex?"

"He's one of the boys who found it. The other one's name is Gareth. He didn't have any starters."

"Not Howard? Didn't you meet Howard?"

"No. Who's Howard?"

"The friend I told you about. I thought he'd found the villa."

"No. Their names are Alex and Gareth and they came to the school from a children's home. They're quite nice. Not stuck up at all. Neither is Lord Charles. He told us some really good jokes. Shall I tell you one?"

"Not now. Did Charles mention anyone named Howard at all?"

"I don't think so. No. I'm sure he didn't. Anyway, we saw what's been uncovered so far. There's a hypocaust. We couldn't see the treasure because it's gone to London and there's going to be some sort of inquest and Gareth and Alex will probably get a load of money."

"So what did you do after lunch? Did you go back to Charles's place?"

"Yes."

"With Gareth and Alex? How old are they, by the way?"

"Don't know really. About twelve or thirteen maybe. They didn't come back with us because they wanted to stay in the town. Doctor Sawyer and I went back and the County Archaeologist came and we talked about the villa and Lord Charles says I can go and see him any time and, if I want, he'll come to meet me at the station. He's really kind."

"You're not to go," said Mark, flushing angrily.

"Why not?"

"If Lord Charles invites him and his parents agree, I can't see any objection," said Dr. Sawyer mildly.

"You had a row with him, didn't you?" asked Colin.

"Course not. What makes you say that?"

"Because you don't want me to go and see him and because he said, 'Tell Mark no hard feelings.'"

"I don't know what you're talking about. I just don't think it's a good idea for you to go there again. He's ever such a busy man. He's got businesses all over the world and that sort of thing."

"He didn't say anything about that but he asked me to pass on his best wishes to Simon," said Colin.

“Who's Simon?”

“My step-father.”

“You never told me that there was a boy called Adam living with you,” said Colin. “I felt a bit stupid when everybody asked me how he is. Lord Charles said to tell him that Ben misses him. Who's Ben?”

“Ben goes to Combleton School. I never mentioned Adam because he's not the slightest bit interested in Roman archeology. Anyway, I'd better get back home. My step-father said I mustn't be late. Glad you enjoyed the trip.”

Mark thanked Doctor Sawyer for taking Colin, saw them off and cycled home. It would probably be better, Mark thought, not to pass on the various messages. The least Simon knew about the trip, the better.

In another, similar cafe just outside Combleton, Richard sat with Gareth and Alex.

“Well done!” he said. “What else did you manage to pick up?”

“Not a lot,” said Gareth. “This Colin chap doesn't know Adam but it's definitely the same Mark. We got Colin to describe him and he sounds exactly like the picture you showed us.”

“His face is, anyway,” said Alex. “We didn't ask about the rest!” They giggled.

“Now tell me about this Lord Charles. He knows Simon Spencer, you say?”

“Yes, and he asked Colin to tell Adam that Ben misses him. That must be Ben Hill in the Upper Sixth; the one you told us to watch.”

“Yes, it would be.”

“And he told Colin to send his regards to Simon.”

“He's rich you say?”

“Absolutely dripping!” said Alex.

“Did he mention owning a yacht called the 'Narwhal'?”

Alex frowned. “Don't think so,” he said. “There's a picture of a big boat in the bedroom though. I know the name starts with an N.”

“Aha! So you've been in the bedroom? You'd better tell me everything.”

Alex blushed crimson. “You won't tell Mr. Furth, will you?”

“Of course not. Anything you say to me is absolutely secret. Now, keep your voices down and tell me the truth.”

“Well, we started going down there to do gardening. Actually, that was Ben Hill's idea, I think. He said it was the Housemaster's but we didn't believe him.”

“Very bright of you. It would have been his idea,” said Richard, recalling an afternoon when Ben, who had gone to the cottage to do some gardening, ended up by being screwed silly on the lawn by Simon.

“Well for the first three or four weeks, we did gardening,” said Gareth, continuing the story. “Then, one afternoon, I think it was about September or October, Charles said somebody told him that Mr. Furth screws us.”

“How could he know that?” asked Richard. He reached into his inside pocket, flipped a switch and felt behind his lapel.

It was Gareth's turn to blush. “We were talking about it in the showers one day,” he said. “There's this boy called Nicholas van Eekelen and we told him.”

“That was silly of you.”

We never... I mean we didn't say Mr. Furth's name. Nicky van Eekelen seemed sort of keen on the idea and Mr. Furth said if we found anyone at school who liked... you know.”

“You'd better tell me the names in future,” Richard counseled. “Anyway, go on.”

“So of course we said it was all lies but Charles said it was a very good thing to do and the ancient

Greeks and the Romans used to do it and, like, there was nothing more beautiful than boys of our age. All sloppy stuff like that.”

“And then?”

“He tossed Alex off.”

Both boys were now as red as lobsters. It was a suitable analogy, thought Richard. If it proved necessary to play the tape which was running in his pocket recorder to Mr. Furth, they would clearly be in hot water.

“Which you enjoyed, Alex?” Richard sipped his coffee.

“It was okay. I'm used to it.”

“And what did Gareth do?”

“Nothing. I watched. He did me the next time.”

“Carry on.”

“Well, when we got back to school we duffed van Eekelen up but he said he never told anybody and he didn't even know Charles so we still don't know who told him.”

“I can guess, but carry on.”

“Well, one thing led to another, really. You know.”

“No, I don't know. I want to know everything that was said and done. If Mr. Furth hears about this, he'll be furious and you'll be back in the children's home. If I'm to help you, you have to be completely honest with me. He wasn't exactly enchanted when he heard about you finding the treasure on television. He felt you could have told him.”

“We couldn't. They said we couldn't tell anybody. They only told the Headmaster.”

“Well, don't worry about that. I had a word with him and he's as pleased as punch now. He's really proud of you. I told him I thought you had to keep it quiet, so he's pleased that you didn't break your word.”

“That was kind of you. Thanks.”

“So now let's have the full details of your affair with the aristocracy.”

* * *

“This all sounds most intriguing, dear Richard.” Mr. Furth sipped his drink thoughtfully. “You're quite sure that Lord Beresford hasn't actually...?”

“Absolutely sure. Gareth and Alex suspected he was a boy-lover, of course. Bachelor, living alone – that sort of thing. They just kept their eyes and ears open and, by sheer chance, ran Mark and Adam to ground.”

“And how is dear Adam? He was such a sweet little boy, you know. He had the dearest little bottom.”

“The boys didn't actually meet him but as he's nearly seventeen now, I imagine that his dear little bottom is now a rather muscular arse.”

Mr. Furth wrinkled up his nose. “Ugh!” he said. “Why do boys grow up, Richard? It's terribly sad.”

Richard ignored the question. “What we need to do now,” he said, “is to put some pressure on this man Beresford. He's got a lot to lose. I was going to suggest that we invite him to the Christmas party.”

“He's rich, you say?” said Mr. Furth.

“Very.”

“So he'll not mind losing a bit to help our funds?”

“He'll be glad to. My other suggestion is that you let him have Alex and Gareth.”

“But they're mine, Richard. They're my personal little boys. I haven't seen them for ages!”

“You'll have them for the rest of the Christmas holidays. Just think. It wouldn't hurt to let the Beresford man use their arses for a few hours.” The old man's sentimentality was sometimes almost too much for Richard to bear.

“They told me how much they are looking forward to sessions with you,” Richard lied.

“Did they?” Mr. Furth's face brightened up.

“They can't wait. Young Gareth especially.” Richard hoped he had chosen the right one. He had.

“I thought he was the keenest,” Mr. Furth chuckled. “I like him best, you know, but don't tell Alex. Gareth is so delightfully tight. He really loves it. I can always tell. Couldn't we give Alex to Lord Beresford, then I can have Gareth?”

“Not really, no. If we are to make money out of him, he'll want both and if I am to use him to keep Adam and Mark quiet, I need both.”

“Oh well, so be it.” Mr. Furth picked up his glass. “Bottoms up, Richard,” he said, and giggled.

Chapter Eighteen

First impressions of Mr. Furth's Christmas party were deceptive. Elegantly suited men stood chatting in groups, with drinks in their hands and picking canapes from silver trays. Only the sound of boyish voices from beyond the double doors at the end of the room gave any clue as to the real purpose of the gathering.

"I'm glad you were able to make it, Charles," said Richard. "You don't mind me using your first name, do you?"

"Not at all. An occasion like this requires a certain intimacy," Charles replied. There was something about the young man that he didn't like but he seemed cordial enough.

Richard helped himself to a drink from a table in the corner.

"Alex and Gareth are here," he said.

"Oh good!"

"I've had a word with Mr. Furth. He has no objection to you having them for this weekend. After all, they are staying with him for the Christmas holidays and he'll have plenty of other chances. I'm sure you won't mind making a contribution to the funds." Charles nodded. "I don't want to see them locked in old man Furth's bedroom for a complete weekend," Richard continued. "You and they have so much to talk about: the villa, the treasure, your yacht..."

"I don't remember saying I had a yacht," said Charles.

"Oh, I thought you did. No matter, but you see what I mean, don't you?"

"Providing they are happy, I'd be quite happy to entertain them. They're a nice couple of lads."

"And pretty good at it, I believe?"

Charles smiled. "That, Richard, would be telling tales out of school."

A smartly dressed man – Charles guessed him to be in his mid-thirties – came up.

"What's the plan, Richard?" he asked.

"A meat market. Boys laid out for inspection. Customers walk round, have a good feel of the goods, write their initials on the boys they want, take them to their rooms and..."

"Roast them!" said the man with a laugh. "It's good. I like it."

"One hopes the boys do," said Charles. "Beresford. Charles Beresford."

"Pleased to meet you. Andrew Longman."

"How many did you manage to bring?" asked Richard.

"Four. Two fourteens, a sixteen and a seventeen."

"Andrew runs a boys' club in his spare time which is a great help to us," explained Richard. He took out a small notebook from his pocket. "That makes fifty-five boys in all. Twenty-three guests gives everybody at least two boys. That's excellent. The old man will be pleased."

One of the double doors opened slightly. A young man slid round it. "Ready, Richard," he said and withdrew, closing the door after him.

Richard clapped his hands. Everyone fell silent. "Gentlemen," he announced, "our Christmas meat market is about to open. We've categorized the wares. Those of you who like a tender chicken will find a delightful array on the center table. For those of you who like something with a slightly more meaty rump

suitable for stuffing, we've a selection on the left of the hall. You'll find the really big stuff, the beef, on the right. Just write your initials on the ones you want. It'll wash off and if you want to lick it off, it's non-poisonous." Somebody clapped. "Now, if you'll follow me." He swung the doors open.

"Good God!" "Damned amazin'!" "There's a sight for sore eyes!" Exclamation after exclamation left no doubt that Richard's imaginative gifts were appreciated.

Gareth and Alex, kneeling on the center table, grinned as Charles approached. He waved and, for a moment wondered why they didn't wave back, until he saw that their ankles were tied together and their hands bound behind their backs. His dislike of Richard boiled within him.

"You don't look very happy," said Charles. He smiled to reassure them.

"Excuse me," said a youth dressed in a straw hat and butcher's apron, "they're not allowed to speak. It destroys the illusion, Sir says."

"To hell with illusion. Nobody should be treated like this," Charles snapped. "Give me a pen." The young man produced one. Hurriedly, Charles scrawled his initials on each of their backs.

"Christ! You don't take long to make up your mind," said a man with a busy mustache next to him. He spoke with a strong Australian accent.

"I know them well," explained Charles.

"I know several," said the mustache. "I come here for a change. Young Eric here was one of my first, weren't you, son?"

"That was absolutely yonks ago!" said the youth, indignantly. "I was eleven then. I'm eighteen now and I'm on Sir's personal staff."

"So which one of these little lovelies would you recommend, Eric?" the mustache asked. "You know what I like."

"I'm sure I don't know." The youth tossed his head and walked off.

"Arrogant little sod," said the mustache. "Always was. Nice little arse though and he knew what to do with it."

"I'm sure he still does," said Charles.

"Not with old man Furth. He likes 'em a lot younger. Now then, let's have a look at the goods." The mustache walked round the table, stopping occasionally to place a callused hand on a tiny bottom.

"This little blond one looks nice." The mustache took the label which hung round the boy's neck. "Neil," he read. "Twelve years, three months. Nothing like being exact." Holding the label high, he forcefully raised the boy's head. "Get up for a minute, son. Let's have a look at your equipment."

Charles felt himself blushing in vicarious embarrassment as the shamefaced boy knelt upright.

"Smashing! Not a hair to be seen. Just how I like 'em. Nice little cobblers too. Let's have a feel of your prick, son." He turned to Charles. "Funny, you can always tell how a boy'll fuck by the feel of his prick. Dunno how. It's a trick of the trade, I suppose."

He yanked the label into the air, pulling Neil's torso upright and reached down to feel the tiny, limp penis. Neil's face turned scarlet. "Good un! Nice and rubbery. Down you get son, lets have a feel of yer bum." He dropped the name tag. The boy sank to his knees. The mustache placed both hands into the boy's gluteal folds and kneaded the white buttocks appreciatively.

"He's got a beautiful little arse on 'im too. He'll do for starters." Taking a pen from the table, he wrote R. F. on the taut skin.

Charles moved away, appalled, but fascinated by the corruption which surrounded him.

"Wonderful, isn't it?" Mr. Furth approached, flapping his wrists and making the diamond on his little finger describe spangling arcs under the bright lights.

"An eye-opener," said Charles.

“Richard tells me that you're going to look after Gareth and Alex.”

“I hope you don't mind.”

“Of course not. They'll be staying here for the holidays and every contribution helps to finance the dear Professor's studies. I'm sure Richard has told you about our little community....”

“Yes, I know something about it,” said Charles, remembering a dark winter's night when Adam and Mark had been hauled on to his yacht half dead after swimming away from the island.

“Have you met all the other guests? Such interesting men.”

“Not all of them.”

“You'll meet them properly at luncheon tomorrow. Very few come to breakfast for obvious reasons. Oh! There's the dear Admiral. I must introduce you to him. He's a long-standing friend of our cause.”

Charles was propelled towards a tall, dignified and remarkably youthful looking middle-age man and introduced.

“Glad to meet you,” said the Admiral. “First time here?”

“Yes.”

“Does you good to let your hair down, eh?” said the Admiral. Charles, conscious of a small bald patch at the back of his head, agreed.

“Does the lads good, too,” said the Admiral. “They appreciate a helping hand occasionally.”

For a moment, Charles took the remark to be a reference to the Admiral's sexual preferences. It was fortunate that he continued.

“See that lad over there on the beef counter; the one fifth from the left? He's leaving the community this year. I managed to get him a job in a stockbroker's office. Pal of mine, you know.”

“It's rather a relief to hear things like that,” said Charles. “One rather wishes that all the guests were like you.”

“Class, old boy, class. Young Richard's a bright lad but in the old days you got the cream of society here and the boys enjoyed it. Nowadays, you get the wealthy dregs. If a chap likes boys and he's got lots of money to spend, he gets an invitation. Present company excepted, of course.”

“Of course.”

“Made your choice yet?” asked the Admiral.

“Yes. Two little chaps on the chicken table. I know them well.”

The Admiral shook his head. “Never manage to understand chaps like you,” he said. “Give me a youngster with a whopping great dong and balls to match any day. Come with me.”

Charles followed him over to the 'beef' table. Initials had been written on most of them.

“Meet Stephen, my companion for the weekend,” said the Admiral grinning down at a rather hairy, dark-haired lad. The label hanging round his neck announced that his name was Stephen and that he was seventeen but seemed, paradoxically, to de-humanise him. His prick, like those of many of the other boys, was already half-erect from the attentions of other admirers.

Charles smiled at the lad. Stephen winked.

“Can't wait till I get him upstairs,” said the Admiral. Stephen grinned. “Nice face; honest-looking sort of chap; nice flat tummy. Big balls and a prick to match. That's what I go for.” The Admiral and Charles moved away from the table. “Not into sticking my private parts into boys' dirt boxes, myself,” he added.

“No offense meant.”

“None taken,” said Charles.

“Nothing against it, of course. One man's meat, eh? Chum of mine likes a bit of bum. That's him over there. Lawyer. Nice chap. Come over and meet him.”

Presumably with the peccadilloes of the Admiral's friend in mind, the boys on the other counter lay on

their fronts. It was as well, Charles thought, that their faces were buried in cushions so that their embarrassment, as their behinds were stroked, prodded and kneaded, could not be seen.

The lawyer, whose name was Francis, released the brown-skinned buttocks he was holding apart to peer between them, and shook hands cordially.

“I heard we had a Lord coming. A pleasure to meet you. Are you one of the Leicester Beresfords?”

“Yes. The Earl is my brother.”

“I saw round Beresford Castle last year on holiday. What a place! Makes this house look like a semi-detached. You ought to get these affairs transferred there.”

“I don't think my brother or the Countess would like that,” said Charles, laughing, “but if you go again, let me know and I'll do a letter of introduction.”

“That's damned decent of you. Does the Earl have 'issue', as they call it in Debrett?”

“Two sons, my nephews. Fourteen and twelve respectively and both hideously unattractive.” (As a matter of fact, they weren't ugly at all, although some sort of incest taboo had prevented Charles from responding to vague signals the boys had been making in his direction ever since their first terms in Prep School.)

“Then I might not take up your kind offer. These are much nicer.” He picked up the card which, suspended on a ribbon, lay between the boy's shoulder-blades. “Ranjit,” he read. “Fifteen. My favorite age.” The boy's slim waist set off his bottom to perfection and Charles, faced (if that is the right word) with such beauty, felt happier.

“Just right,” said Francis. He wrote his initials on the boy's dusky posterior.

“That's Ranjit and Kenny,” said Francis. “Kenny's that one third from the right. Lovely bottom. All muscle. Which ones have you picked Charles?”

“Charles likes them even younger,” said the Admiral. “Nothing wrong with that, providing the boys aren't harmed in any way,” said Francis, stroking Ranjit's back. “The best fuck I ever had was a twelve year old. Fitted like a glove and couldn't get enough of it.”

Charles left the Admiral and Francis admiring Ranjit's anatomy and returned to the center table.

“Can we get down now?” one of the boys whined. “My legs are aching.”

“In a minute,” said Eric. “Just be quiet. You're not supposed to speak! I told you.”

“May I have your attention, gentlemen?” Richard's clear voice rang out. There was silence.

“All the boys have now been chosen. You may now collect your partners. Refreshments are served in the ante-room.”

Charles had expected a round of applause; a few cheers. There were none. There was something about Richard which inhibited everybody. Charles shuddered.

“Can you help us down please, Charles? My legs have got cramp.” Gareth's voice.

“Sorry Gareth. Here. Let's undo these, shall we?” His fingers fumbled clumsily with the knots. Somebody nearby laughed. In normal circumstances, Charles could have parted the cords in seconds but seething anger overcame dexterity, anger that anyone could treat boys like this. “Okay?” he whispered as the last knot securing the boy's thin ankles came undone.

“Okay.” Gareth slid down and stood, teetering, by the table.

Charles went to Alex and managed to free him more rapidly.

“I'm very sorry you had to go through that, lads,” said Charles. “I was not responsible.”

“No,” said Alex. “It's Richard. The other boys said he always has a kinky plan for these parties.”

“We're in thirty-one, aren't we?” asked Gareth striding up the carpeted staircase and taking two steps with each stride of his long legs.

“Yes.”

It was a extremely comfortable-looking room, dominated by the king-sized bed in the center.

“My hair's a mess,” said Gareth. “Have you got a comb, Charles?”

Charles' luggage had been placed on a rack near the window.

He opened his bag and took out a pigskin toilet set, extracted a comb and handed it over.

“Thanks,” said Gareth. He walked to the huge mirror on the wall and combed his hair.

“Aren't you going to get undressed, then?” said Alex.

“Are you sure you want to?” asked Charles. “After all that silly nonsense downstairs I mean?”

“Course we do.” Gareth handed back the comb. “Besides,” he added, “you're a Lord. In the old days people had to do what the Lords told them to do or they'd get their heads chopped off.”

“I'm glad to say that the old days have gone for good,” said Charles. “My brother uses his dungeons for storing central heating oil,”

“What's your brother's actual title?” asked Gareth. He reached up and began to loosen Charles' tie. Another pair of hands began to undo his waistcoat buttons.

“He's the Earl of Beresford. I just take the name of the place and use it as a surname.”

Tiny hands began to undo his trousers. “I'll get it nice and hard for you,” said Gareth.

Charles sank back onto the bed.

Chapter Nineteen

“What's your brother's actual title?” asked Gareth. He reached up to loosen Charles' tie. Alex began to undo his waistcoat buttons.

“He's the Earl of Beresford. I use the name of the place as a surname.” Charles' voice echoed back from the ceiling beams in his newly-restored lounge.

“A one-way mirror,” said Richard, smiling. “Optical glass. Bloody expensive. Nice of you to introduce yourself so clearly. This next bit's worth watching.”

With scant regard for Saville Row tailoring, the boys yanked Charles' garments off until he lay naked on the bed. His penis stood up like a lighthouse on a large, white island.

“I'll get it nice and hard for you,” said Gareth. Kneeling between Charles' outspread legs, he took the man's penis in his lips. It was too large for his young mouth. The one-sided camera angle made him look like a hamster with a walnut.

“He's got a nice little arse, hasn't he?” Richard observed.

“I find this very distasteful indeed!” said Charles. He was still shocked by Richard's unexpected call. He switched the television set off. “It is also very immoral!”

“Ha! You didn't think either of them distasteful at the time. 'Delicious' was the word you used, I think. We'll see it later. As for immoral, well, the police might agree with you, were I to take them this cassette. I don't intend to, of course. It should be sufficient for me to send a copy to your brother and another to the House of Lords but I don't think that will be necessary. Shall we see some more?”

“No, we will not!” said Charles.

“I think I must insist,” Richard replied. “Turn it on again,” and Charles, like so many people before him, obeyed.

“My turn,” said Alex. “Leave off.” Reluctantly, Gareth lifted his head and a long viscous strand of pre-cum and little-boy spittle linking mouth with glans snapped. Gareth climbed down off the bed and, for a moment, stood in front of the camera, with his feet slightly apart and showed off his rigid prick. There was no doubt that the boy had known the camera was there. Charles' heart sank. He had been caught.

“Have you noticed how my cock's grown, Charles?” he asked. “Mmmm.” Charles replied. It wasn't certain from the tape whether this was an affirmative answer or a response to Alex's tongue which was then lapping hungrily around his scrotum.

“Better leave off a bit, Alex,” Gareth continued, still smiling into the camera. “Don't make him come too soon. Remember what happened to the carpet in his house. It was good, that afternoon, wasn't it, Charles?”

Alex knelt upright and flashed a wet-lipped smile towards the camera.

“I said it was good that afternoon when you came on the carpet, wasn't it?” Gareth repeated the question.

“Tremendous fun,” said Charles enthusiastically.

“I can't remember exactly what happened. It's all a blur really.”

“Silly boy! Of course you can. You were screwing Alex and I tried to screw you at the same time but

it didn't work.”

“Oh, yes. I remember. When you said something about a sandwich I didn't understand what you were on about. Which of us do you want to do first?”

“Mmmm. I don't know.” Charles propped himself up on the lace-edged pillow. “Come and stand over here. Let's have a good look at you both.”

“You had a good look at us downstairs,” said Alex.

“I know, but I can't resist those delicious little bottoms of yours. Come here.”

Gareth left the mirror and joined Alex by the bed.

“Mmm. Both pretty keen by the looks of things.” Charles reached up. The camera showed Gareth's bottom tighten as Charles fingered his prick.

“Now turn round.” Two smiling boys with stiff penises faced the camera. Alex winked knowingly.

“Delightful! Utterly delightful!” said Charles.

Both boys appeared to skip rapidly to one side. It was obvious that the film had been cut. Grimly, Charles remembered why.

One of them, he couldn't remember who, had said that Mr. Furth used the self-same words.

“I'll have Gareth first,” Charles was saying. “Then we'll have a little rest and then it'll be your turn, Alex.”

Dutifully, Gareth climbed up onto the bed and lay on his back. Charles rummaged in a drawer of the bedside cabinet and the boy grinned at the camera.

“Vain creature!” said Charles, laughing. “You shouldn't need to look at the mirror to convince yourself that you're beautiful. Lift your legs up. That's it.” He bent down and placed Gareth's ankles on his shoulders.

He opened the tube of cream he held in his hand and smeared his third finger liberally.

“Make sure it's not too cold,” said Gareth.

“It won't be. Ready?” The boy nodded and gasped slightly as the finger made contact.

“Here we go then.” Alex gasped again. “You're tighter than I expected. Hasn't...?”

The film jumped again. Charles finger was fully inside Gareth and the boy was squirming delightedly. “Oooh! That's great! That's really great,” he moaned. “Get it right up, Charles. Mmm. That's it.” He put his hands under the small of his back and arched upwards as Charles' finger bored into him. “Try another one,” he gasped. “It should be okay.”

It was impossible to see, from the television picture, what Charles did next – Gareth's long white legs obscured the view – but the effect was dramatic. Gareth shuddered as if he'd received an electric shock. He moaned.

Alex wandered over to the bed and stood, fingering his rigid penis, and looked down at his friend. Gareth lay with his mouth open still quivering slightly.

“Better have him now,” Alex advised. “He'll spunk up in a minute.” His young voice drowned out the sound of greasy fingers being removed from Gareth's tight rosette.

Charles reached for the cream tube. “I'll do it for you,” said Alex. He took the tube from Charles' trembling fingers, opened it and squeezed a large quantity on to his palm.

“Don't make a mess on the bed,” Charles cautioned.

“I won't.” Alex reached between Gareth's bottom and Charles. Again, Gareth's legs obstructed the camera's view.

“Am I doing it right?” he asked.

“Very well. Mmm. That's nice. You've got soft hands.” Charles looked at the ceiling.

“Haven't done any gardening for ages. That's why,” said Gareth with a laugh. “There I You're done.”

Really fuck him hard, Charles. He needs it.”

“So do you!” Charles touched the boy's rampant weapon affectionately and smiled.

“My turn'll come later.” He looked down at Gareth. “Feel like a suck whilst you're being screwed, Gaz?” he asked.

“Okay. Come over here.” Alex moved to the head of the bed and positioned himself in a press-up position transversely across his sweating friend's head. Gareth put the palm of his hand on Alex's abdomen and lowered him slowly until Alex's stiff penis brushed his lips.

Charles shuffled forward and lifted Gareth's legs slightly. The boy raised his right leg until his foot was above the level of Charles' head. Charles hadn't noticed the move at the time. In retrospect, it was obvious that Gareth had done it so that the camera should have an uninterrupted view of Charles' massive penis pushing against his anus. It glinted in the bright light. The head seemed to compress slightly and then vanished into the boy, who moaned, shook his head slightly and then took Alex's penis into his mouth.

Slowly, inexorably, the thick, veined shaft pushed into Gareth's tight bottom. He pushed Alex upwards and moaned again. The toes of his raised right foot curled and straightened again. Charles gave one further push forwards.

“Mmmm. That's good!” he said. “Do it, Charles, do it!” Charles' broad buttocks clenched. “That's right!” Gareth gasped. “Do it to me.”

As Charles thrust in again, Gareth lowered Alex and took the whole of the boy's penis into his mouth. It slipped out again. He took it again and gradually the two boys acquired the same rhythm. Every time Charles rammed forward Alex was pushed upwards. When Charles relaxed, Alex was lowered.

The pace became faster...

“I admire your stamina,” observed Richard nonchalantly.

“It was disgusting of you to film this,” Charles replied but found that he couldn't keep his eyes off the screen. It wasn't his own powerful, muscular thrusts which he found so fascinating, nor Gareth's salivating mouth clamped round Alex's stiff penis, but Alex's bottom. It rose and it sank almost imperceptibly but and in doing so reflected the bright light and made it seem as appetizing as a soft meringue.

“Most people would say that what you are doing is pretty disgusting,” Richard replied. “It's not a view I share. This bit's good.”

On the screen in front of them, Alex seemed to shudder. A white ring formed on Gareth's lips. Alex heaved upwards and, as he did so, a stream of saliva and semen flowed down Gareth's chin. The boy smiled. Alex grinned at the camera. Charles gave one mighty heave. “Oh!” he gasped.

“Mmmm!” said Gareth. Charles bent forward and began to lick around the boy's pubic region. Gareth lifted his right leg again. The mighty organ began to slip out of him.

“Finish me off Charles. Finish me!” said Gareth. Charles took the boy's prick into his mouth and sucked on it greedily. Gareth began to squirm excitedly, then, suddenly, lay still. The picture definition was so good that one could see the muscles on Charles neck as he swallowed the boy's semen. He licked his lips as if it had been cream.

“Nice one,” observed Gareth. “What shall we do now?”

“Have a rest!” said Charles, smiling. “Then it'll be your turn, Alex.

“I think we've seen enough for now,” said Richard.

“I take it you also have me and Alex on tape?” asked Charles. “Of course. I'll leave this cassette with you. You can play it in the long winter evenings. That's if you're not in prison, of course. I don't think they let you have videos there, especially not ones like this.”

“You are the most despicable person I have ever met!” said Charles.

“Many people have said that, but to come to business, you are in contact with Simon Spencer.”

“I've never heard of the man. I don't know what you are talking about,” said Charles.

“That is surprising. You bought this house from him. He lives in a village called Hardwick St. Mary. You asked a boy called Colin Stoker to send him your regards the other day.”

“Don't tell me that little Colin is another of your minions!”

“Certainly not. He was foolish enough to tell Alex and Gareth enough. It was nice of you to take the three of them out to lunch. I suppose I ought to offer something towards your expenses.”

“Get lost!” said Charles.

“That, dear Charles, I shall never do. Now, your friend Spencer has two extremely beautiful teenage boys living with him. Adam and Mark are their names. I need hardly tell you that they spend a lot of time in Spencer's bed. One can hardly blame him for that. I am told that they are both rather good in bed, though the reading public might be horrified to learn about Spencer's tastes.”

“Leave them alone!” Charles growled. “You've done enough harm to those boys.”

“Aha! I see that we are on the same wavelength. Well, Charles, as you know, they left the... er... educational institution owned by my respected patron. You helped them leave.”

“One of the best things I have ever done,” said Charles. Richard ignored the remark. “What I came to tell you, Charles, is simply that if either of those boys ever says anything about their experiences, copies of this tape will be sent to various people. They are labeled already and in the hands of a trusted third party. I am not stupid. I know that if they talk, I shall go to jail. So will Mr. Furth and so, dear Charles, will you. You follow my argument I'm sure; just as surely as you will follow me to prison.”

“I follow you very well. You are right. I know Simon. I know Adam and Mark. I respect all three. None of them have said anything yet. None of them ever will. They just want to lead their lives quietly, away from people like you. Now get out and take your nasty little cassette with you!”

Charles' next visitor, some four days later, was much more welcome. It was easy to see that Ben had enjoyed his Christmas holiday. In the delightful way that teenage boys have of communicating delight, his face radiated pleasure. “My parents are really grateful to you for paying for the computer,” he said, as he sat with a beer by the fire.

“What did you tell them?” asked Charles anxiously.

“I told them the truth, or nearly the truth. I said that it was necessary for my studies and that you paid for it.”

“They didn't think it was a bit suspicious?”

“Well, er... no. I said I'd been working in your garden.”

“That sounds feasible,” said Charles. “Good thinking.”

“It wasn't true, I admit.”

“Well you found Alex and Gareth. So the garden wouldn't have been done if it wasn't for you.”

“And you wouldn't have found the Roman villa or the treasure,” said Ben. “There's a rumor going around the school that Alex and Gareth are going to get a lot of money for that. Is it true?”

“It's still in the hands of the authorities. Are Alex and Gareth back at school?”

“Not yet. Howard's not back either. He returns tomorrow. I'm one of the first. Living in Germany and having a dad in the Air Force means I have to use their flights and they only go on certain days. Did you have a good holiday, Charles?”

“Oh, quite pleasant,” said Charles. He tried to repress a shudder.

“Did you go away?”

“Only to a friend's house for a Christmas party.”

"I thought you might have gone to Hardwick St. Mary to see Simon and the boys."

"No."

"I wonder if they had a good time. I hope they did. I thought about Adam a lot. My dad says he can come to us next year if he wants to."

"I am sure he will," said Charles. "You'll be able to ask him today."

"You mean use your phone?" asked Ben.

The sound of a car drawing up caused them both to peer through the windows at the icy outside world.

"It's them!" Ben shouted. "Simon and Mark and Adam! Why didn't you tell me they were coming?"

"You didn't give me time."

"It's a shame Howard isn't here. Shall I open the door?" He didn't wait for an answer but sprinted out to welcome his old friends again. Charles, despite his worries, smiled. It would be better, he thought, if Ben were not told the reason for their visit.

But Simon had other ideas. When the two men were alone in the kitchen and the boys were in the lounge talking excitedly about their holidays, Simon and Charles talked in low voices about Richard.

"I think we've got to involve the boys and that means Ben too," said Simon. "He's mad about Adam. He knows all about the island. If Richard only knew it, Ben's just as great a threat to him as Adam and Mark."

So it was that all found themselves sitting in the lounge that evening, the early euphoria gone.

"But we aren't going to say anything," said Adam. "Richard must be mad if he thinks we'll go round telling everybody that we were prostitutes."

"Point taken," said Simon, "but he's worried that you might let it slip one day, hence his attempt to blackmail Charles."

"I'm responsible for that really," said Ben. "I introduced Alex and Gareth to Charles. By God, I'll have those two duffed up every day for years."

"You will not!" said Charles. "It wasn't your fault at all. It's my fault. I was stupid. As soon as Simon confirmed that the mysterious Mr. Kirby who invited me to the party was the infamous Richard, I should have kept well clear."

Simon felt that to apportion blame was pointless. The discussion continued.

"Does this Furth man know about the villa?" asked Simon.

"Yes."

"So, if you were to hold a special villa-opening party or something and make Alex and Gareth the guests of honor, he'd probably come?"

"I imagine so. He's their official guardian now. He's genuinely fond of them."

"About the only one who is," growled Ben.

"That's not fair," said Simon. "We don't know anything about him. Charles seems to think that the boys are fond of him. It's Richard who is the foul one. I was just thinking that if we were to get Mr. Furth and Richard to this party together... I don't know what we would do though."

"Smash their heads in, throw them into a hole and bury them deep!" said Mark.

"I've got a better idea," said Ben. "Richard goes for boys who are unhappy at school, right? That's how he trapped Adam and Mark."

"Right," said Mark, bitterly.

"Well, suppose Richard were to meet somebody at this unveiling, somebody really good-looking who said he was unhappy at school and wanted to run away..."

"He's hardly likely to say, 'Come with me. I'm taking you to an island,' there and then, is he?" Adam objected. "You are stupid sometimes, Pudgy."

“No, of course not. But he would keep in contact with the person and do what he did to you – gradually persuade you.”

“I don't think he would dare touch another boy from Combleton School. Getting us two must have been risky.”

“But suppose the boy was really good looking? Really exceptional? The sort of boy that everybody's got the hots for?”

“Like Howard, you mean?” said Mark.

“No. Not Howard. I was thinking of Atkinson.”

Adam and Mark collapsed with laughter. Adam choked, spraying Mark with Coca Cola.

“Atkinson the Rugby captain? We are talking about the same one?” asked Mark, still laughing.

“Yes.”

Adam put down his glass. “Pudgy, dear old friend, we know that Atkinson looks like a teenage film star. There's hardly anyone in that school who wouldn't give a term's pocket money just to touch his hammer handle. I don't mind admitting that when I was there I used to wank off to Atkinson. So do many others, but Atkinson, I regret to say, is aggressively hetero. He is also, as far as I know, very happy at home.”

“He might be happy at home,” said Ben. “But you are wrong on the other count. Don't ask me how I know. I'm not saying. But if we could persuade Atkinson to go along – and I think I could – Richard would go barmy trying to get him. And then... we just wait and see what develops.”

Chapter Twenty

"I can't understand you," said Atkinson, peeling off his rugby shirt.

"I always thought I was a pretty easily understood sort of person," said Ben. "What's so mysterious about me?"

"Well, this sort of thing. You coming here and, er... you know."

"I don't mind doing it. You like me doing it, so what's the problem?"

"Well, you're not gay. I can tell that. You never hang around afterwards, do you? I mean, er, you're off like a frightened rabbit as soon as I've come."

"Would you like me to stay around?" asked Ben. He hoped that Atkinson wouldn't. The room smelt disgusting. Perspiration on its own Ben could handle, especially if it was fresh. Stale perspiration mixed with sour milk and boot polish could hardly be described as as an olfactory treat.

"Only if you want to. I'd like to get to know you better. You're a wise sort of chap."

Atkinson flung the jersey into a corner and put his right boot on the bed to undo the laces. Ben gazed at Atkinson's muscular white thigh and felt his penis stir.

Atkinson removed the other boot and left an imprint of the muddy studs on the bed-cover. "Sure you've got time?"

Ben would have found time even if the building was on fire but looked at his watch. "I think so," he said. "I'm due down at Lord Charles' place later but he can wait."

"What do you do down there? That nipper in your room goes as well, doesn't he?"

"Howard? Yes. He goes to talk about the renovation of the cottage. Charles is restoring it to its original condition. I'm only going on a social call to see if he needs any help with the party. He's having a bash to celebrate the finding of the villa and the treasure."

"I wouldn't mind going to that," said Atkinson. He gazed out of the window and Ben stared at his behind. In a few minutes the shorts would be off. These conversations before anything happened were so tedious!

"You'll be invited," said Ben. "Of course you will."

"There's no reason to invite me."

"Don't be daft. You're the Captain of Rugby. It was two of your players who found the treasure. And you can be sure the Headman will insist. He's going and he thinks the world of you."

"So you keep saying. I wish he'd show it. He's forever sounding off about something wrong in the team."

"Well, take it from me, he really admires you. He's always telling Lord Charles so."

The fact was that, as far as Ben knew, the Headmaster had only met Charles on about two occasions but Atkinson didn't know that.

Atkinson turned away from the window. He had the most delightful nipples: perfectly setting off the boy's powerful pectorals with their deep brown aureoles.

"Better get started, I suppose," said Atkinson casually. Ben smiled. Something like a cucumber had suddenly appeared at Atkinson's crotch.

He faced away from Ben and dropped his shorts. Then he unfastened the peculiar athletic support he always wore and flung himself face-downwards on the bed. “Do my legs first and then work up to my behind. It was a hard match,” he said.

Ben would have liked to have made a pun upon the word 'hard' but contented himself with rubbing Atkinson's legs and inhaling the delightful odor which drifted into his nostrils from the boy's still-damp body. “Who were you playing?” he asked.

“Shenchester College.”

“And you won?”

“Yes.”

The massage was working. Ben had got to know Atkinson well. When Atkinson replied in monosyllables about something as important to him as rugby, Ben knew that he had other things on his mind. “I saw you talking to that new boy the other day,” he said, moving his hands up to Atkinson's white muscular rump. “What's his name?”

Atkinson mumbled something that sounded like “fish cakes”.

“Eh?” Ben kneaded the gloriously firm muscles.

“Chris Yates,” said Atkinson, as if reluctant to mouth the words.

“Oh yes. He's good looking, isn't he?”

“Mmmm.”

“Going to invite him to join the Colts?”

“He doesn't seem interested in rugby.”

“I'll bet he'll join, though, especially if you ask him.”

Atkinson groaned and shifted his position slightly. Ben smiled. He'd watched Atkinson from his window. There was no doubt that the Rugby Captain was smitten with Yates. He had actually waited for a quarter of an hour for Yates to come out of Prep, after which the two of them had walked round and round the playing field. The problem was that Atkinson would never admit it. Neither would Yates: Ben had tried.

“That feels great,” Atkinson murmured into his pillow, and Ben knew, without seeing it, that Atkinson's formidable penis was beginning to swell with pleasure. He stopped.

“Ready for the next stage?” he said.

“If you like.” Atkinson turned his head to one side and addressed the wall as he always did. He turned over. Ben's surmise had been correct: Atkinson's tool was iron-hard and stood upwards from its luxuriant bed of black hair. The bright purple head protruded slightly from the enveloping foreskin. It was a magnificent prick – large, straight, artistically sculpted. Sitting and waiting in that stinking room for Atkinson to return was worthwhile when one was confronted by the nicest male organ in the school. The fact that its owner had so many hang-ups didn't matter.

Ben reached down and grasped it. Atkinson closed his eyes. Determined to make the session last as long as possible, Ben moved the skin up and down as slowly as he could.

“Go a bit faster,” Atkinson ordered.

Ben ignored him. He cupped Atkinson's huge testicles, each the size of a golf ball, in his left hand. “I'll bet Yates would be impressed if he could see these,” he said.

“Mmm. He's not going to, though.”

Which, thought Ben, was a great shame. Chris Yates was a pretty little boy with pointy lips and a delightfully pert bottom. Sadly, he seemed determined to keep both to himself.

Ben sped up. Atkinson moaned. The tip of his prick glistened slightly. The funny thing about Atkinson was that, although he ejaculated in huge quantities – it was always more than a mouthful – he produced

hardly any pre-cum.

Ben put his lips over the head and breathed in deeply through his nostrils. That scent, compounded of perspiration and adolescent pheromones, was the sexiest thing he knew. His own penis became even harder and began to throb powerfully in his trousers. He lowered his mouth, feeling the shaft glide against his lips. His tongue felt the veins. The more pliant glans touched the back of his throat. He withdrew his head slightly so as not to choke and then began his 'nodding donkey' routine, sliding his lips up and down the shaft and letting his tongue play with its sensitive underside. Now to the wonderful scents of Atkinson's groin was added the sweet odor of teenage skin coated in his own saliva.

“Aaah!” said Atkinson.

Ben sucked hard.

“Mmm,” said Atkinson.

Ben sucked again.

“Oh! Ah!” Atkinson began to pant. Any moment now. Ben lifted his head and flicked his tongue against the slit. Atkinson grasped the sides of the bed.

Slowly, Ben lowered his head again. Several weeks of this practice had accustomed him to Atkinson's physiology and response. He would spunk up any time now...

He did. With a gigantic heave, which would have driven Ben's tonsils down his throat if he had any, and with a loud moan, Atkinson came. Three huge spurts of thick, warm semen filled Ben's mouth. He tried to swallow it all but, as always, some dribbled from his mouth and landed on Atkinson's hard, flat abdomen.

Hoping that Atkinson wouldn't notice his own erection, Ben stood up.

“I still don't know how you can bring yourself to do that,” said Atkinson.

“My pleasure. It helps you and that makes it worth while. I'd better go now. Charles will be waiting for me.”

“Sure you won't have a coffee or anything? I've got some bread and butter. We could make some toast.”

“No thanks.” Ben had seen the comestibles in question in Atkinson's cupboard.

The party was held on the fifteenth of March. The Ides of March, Charles said, seemed to be the ideal day to unveil a Roman villa. The Gods, it seemed, were of a different opinion. Rain lashed down on the marquee which had been erected to protect the one properly excavated room, and it flapped in the strong wind. The trenches which delineated the walls, giving a tantalizing impression of the building's vast size, filled with water. Teams of archaeologists, assisted by boys from the school, had worked until late in the evenings for some weeks struggling in the mud to present as much as possible to the representatives of the world's press.

Hotels in the neighboring towns were full. Every householder in Combleton had been pressed to accept paying guests. Television personalities rubbed shoulders with farm laborers in the crowded bar of the local pub. Boys at the school were crammed into other dormitories so that guests could make use of a few small bedrooms. Ben and Howard had no objection to giving up their room to two German television people; Charles had said they could sleep at the cottage. It seemed to the powers that be a sensible arrangement: Howard had helped Charles plan the party and Ben had prepared the press-releases on his computer. Atkinson was slightly put out when his room was commandeered; even more so when the entire school domestic staff descended upon it to clean it thoroughly. Charles came to the rescue by offering Atkinson the sofa in his lounge and apologized for not being able to provide accommodation more suited to a person as important as the Captain of Rugby. Ben arranged for the new boy, Chris Yates,

to carry Atkinson's bag to the cottage. As it happened, the catering firm was there at the time and Chris made himself so useful to everybody that he, too, was invited to sleep at the cottage.

"It can't keep raining like this," said Howard, peering out of the cottage window at the arriving cars. Rain clattered against the window panes. Occasional bursts of hail sounded like machine gun fire on the glass.

"I'm afraid it will," said Charles.

"Porsche coming up the road," said Ben. "Must be film people. Reporters don't have cars like that. Funny, it looks like... It is! Simon! What's he doing here?"

"And he's got someone with him," said Howard. The car parked some distance away from the cottage. The driver got out, pulled his coat collar up and assisted his passengers to get out.

"It's Mark and Adam!," Howard yelled. "It's Mark and Adam. Mark! Mark!" He jumped up and down with excitement then, without stopping to put on a coat, he ran out through the rain to greet his friend. They fell into each other's arms. Adam, slightly embarrassed, caught sight of Ben and waved. Ben waved back, unsmiling.

"Is that wise, Charles?" he asked. "Simon always said that they shouldn't come here again. If the newspaper people find out who they are..."

"No problem," said Charles. "Simon has fixed things. Let's go out and meet them properly."

Dodging a bevy of cameramen who had laid siege to the house for some days, vying with each other to obtain the best pictures of Charles, they walked out into the rain.

"Hi, Pudgy!" said Adam, simply.

"I wish I'd known... I didn't expect... Nobody said..." Ben stammered.

"Nice surprise for you," said Adam. "You're sleeping here, aren't you?"

"Yes. They wanted our room for guests."

"Then I'll give you an even nicer surprise tonight," said Adam with a grin.

Another car drew up. A man and a boy climbed out.

"Doctor Sawyer and Colin," Adam explained. "Friends of Mark's. The kid's interested in Roman archeology."

They all went into the house. Charles looked at his watch.

"Better get started," he said.

What had been Charles' garden and paddock was now a sea of mud packed with people. Archaeologists explained things to uncomprehending press-men. Alex and Gareth were the center of attention.

"They deserve their moment of glory," said Charles, grimly.

"Their beloved guardian should be here soon."

The speeches were held in the marquee. Everybody except Charles seemed to want to say something. "It's the boys' day," he said. "Let them tell you how they found it and let the experts explain it. I just happen to own the land."

From a distance came the "flop, flop, flop" of an approaching helicopter. At first, everyone ignored it. The sound became louder. The mayor of the nearest town, who was in the middle of an impassioned speech about the lack of Government spending on archeology, looked irritated and raised his voice.

The noise became louder. Ben looked through a gap in the canvas. "It's coming down," he said. "Must be some big-wig."

Charles detached himself from the crowd and, followed by the usual retinue of photographers, went outside into the driving rain.

"He's landing in the manor field," said Ben. The interested response he expected was not forthcoming.

He looked round. Simon, Mark and Adam had gone. He shrugged his shoulders and looked out again. The three of them were stumbling along after Charles with their heads down against the lashing rain. "I'm bugged," he muttered to himself. "You'd think they'd never seen a helicopter before."

The machine landed. A gray-haired man whom Ben had never seen before climbed out and shook Charles' hand. Photographers' flash-guns and the navigating lights of the aircraft combined to make a surreal firework display. Then, to Ben's surprise Simon, Mark and Adam approached the steps. A shadowy figure appeared in the doorway as if to welcome them. Then a flash went off.

"Fucking hell!" said Ben.

"Watch your language, son. Ladies present," said a man standing near.

"Shit!" said Ben, even louder. The man in the doorway was Richard! Convinced that Adam and Mark were about to be kidnapped again, he dashed out of the marquee and sprinted, as best he could through the mire.

He never made it. Adam and Mark seemed to hand over sheets of paper and stepped backwards to avoid the rotor blades which had started to move again. A young man. Whom Ben had never seen before dashed out of the crowd and handed Richard a parcel wrapped in brown paper. Richard took it, looked puzzled, then tossed it inside behind him. He waved. The helicopter door closed. The rotor whirled, sending clods of earth and dead leaves flying into the air. Adam, Mark, Simon, Charles and the elderly man walked towards the marquee. The elderly man held his hat on.

"What's going on? What's going on?" Ben screamed, beside himself with fear. His foot slipped. He staggered for a moment and just managed to regain his balance. Like a huge gray dragonfly, the helicopter zoomed overhead. Its red and green lights lit up the clouds.

Suddenly – Ben was still trying to regain his balance at the time – there was a deafening bang. It reverberated round like a gunshot. Somebody screamed. People began to run from the marquee. Ben looked up. The helicopter was spinning wildly round the axis of its own tail. Black specks appeared in the sky around it and began to tumble to earth. The specks became bigger. Then the rotor disintegrated. One moment it was a helicopter; the next it was a falling lump of metal, shedding pieces. Ben stood quite still, too horrified to move.

"It's coming down!" said a man.

"Oh my God! Oh, dear God!" a woman screamed.

The helicopter hit the ground about half a mile from the marquee which, nonetheless, shook from the impact. Then from behind a half-demolished haystack there sprang a fire the like of which Ben had only seen in films. A gigantic fireball rose until it touched the clouds. A few seconds later, the shock wave hit the marquee, burying the few people still inside it in canvas.

"You all right, Ben?" Simon's voice shook him out of shock.

"Yes. I think so. It crashed, Simon. It crashed!" Tears began to run down his cheeks.

"I'm afraid it did, old son. Go into the house. Is somebody ringing the emergency services?"

"Yes," said a man in the crowd. "Nobody's hurt, thank God!"

"Except the crew. No chance for them, I'm afraid," said Simon. "They never had a chance."

"How many of them were there?" asked the man.

"Just two," said the elderly man who, a few minutes earlier had been a passenger in the doomed machine. "My pilot and Richard."

"I thought that's who it was," said Ben, thinking clearly again.

Chapter Twenty-one

“When are you going to tell me what it was all about?” asked Ben. Deep inside him, Adam's penis twitched again and the scent of newly discharged semen drifted out from between the sheets.

“Richard found us. I don't know how but it was something to do with Charles. We had to promise not to say anything about the island so Simon made us sign papers to say that we went there voluntarily even though Richard warned us not to go.”

“But that was a lie,” Ben murmured. He could feel Adam's cock stiffening up again. The exploding helicopter had frightened Ben badly, but it seemed to have had no effect on Adam.

“Of course it was. So was the bit about the island being a nice, well run establishment full of thoroughly decent, nice, properly-behaving boys.”

“So who was the old man who arrived with Richard?”

Adam explained.

“So, no more Richard,” said Ben. “He's gone for good. I'm sorry about the pilot but I'm glad Richard's dead. One thing's funny, though.”

“What's that?”

“I saw, just before the helicopter took off, someone rush out from the crowd and give Richard a parcel.”

“You did?”

“You don't think...?”

“Someone was planting a bomb?” Adam chuckled. “Could be.”

“Like who?”

“Maybe a brother of Martin, for a start.”

“Your friend on the island Richard killed?”

“Richard didn't exactly lack for enemies. Did you tell Charles or Simon about this?”

“No. I just remembered it now.”

“I wouldn't. Whoever did it deserves our gratitude.”

Ben sighed in agreement. “But it is too bad about the pilot. You're hardening up again,” he said. “I can feel it.”

“You will too in a minute, that's for sure. I'm going to screw you silly all night long to make up for lost time.”

“Adam and Ben are still awake. I can hear them,” said Howard with his ear against the bedroom wall. “I told Charles he ought to have made the walls thicker.”

“He's certainly changed the place,” said Mark lying back and gazing at the beams in the ceiling. “I like the furniture too. This bed is nicer than the one Simon had.”

Howard snuggled up against him and giggled. "How do you know?" he asked.

"Because, dear old Howard, when you were a very little boy, I lay in this same room and told Simon all about you. That's how everything started. It's funny when you come to think of it. Now here we are in bed together in the very same room."

"It's a sort of destiny," said Howard. "Tell me more about Colin."

"There's nothing more to tell. I suppose I missed you and Colin came along and, well.... You're not jealous, are you?"

"Of him? No way."

That was good. That was very good. Colin could never displace Howard, but the boy was, well, local and available during those long weeks when he and Howard were separated. He would have Colin, just as, he assumed, Howard would continue to have Ben.

"Anyway," said Howard, "I've got you again now."

"Does that mean what I think it means?" Mark put a hand on Howard's chest.

"It means whatever you want it to mean," said Howard. He lay passive and still. Mark touched his right nipple and pinched it.

"Does it mean this?" Mark whispered.

"Yes."

Mark leaned over and licked the nipple. It seemed, somehow, to get larger as he did so. He slid his left hand down Howard's smooth torso.

"Glad you've stopped wearing those awful pajamas," he said. "That was Ben..." Howard decided not to finish the sentence.

"You've got more hair now," said Mark.

"I nearly shaved it off once."

"I'm glad you didn't. It's nice." Mark's fingers closed around Howard's sturdy boy-prick. "So's this. Shall I suck it?"

"Let me do yours first." Howard turned over onto his side. "Why don't we do it at the same time?" Mark suggested. "It's good fun." He flung back the bed clothes.

Howard was so breathtakingly beautiful that he gasped. The boy's white bottom seen in profile was deeply dimpled and contrasted superbly with his smooth honey-colored skin. His prick hadn't grown since Mark last saw it but stood out proudly from its escutcheon of silky hair. What did it matter, Mark thought, if Howard still refused to let him go the whole way? Just to be able to hold him again would be an experience out of this world. To be able to take that gorgeous, firm prick into his mouth and feel it pulsating, stiffening, pushing and then spurting was more than he deserved. Whilst he had been lusting after Colin, Howard had been faithful to him, more or less. He made a mental note to thank Ben for befriending the lad. Dear old Ben. He was faithful to Adam – and Howard, who must have had many admirers at school, had learned from Ben's example.

"Shall I turn the light out?" asked Howard, reaching for the switch.

"No. I want to look at you. I think you're the most beautiful boy in the world."

"You're not so bad yourself," said Howard with a happy grin. "I wish my prick was as big as yours."

"I'm very glad it isn't." Mark got up and lay down again with his head at Howard's groin.

"Are you sure you don't want the lights off?" asked the boy. "Oh, okay then." The musky scent of pure boyhood drifted into Mark's nostrils. The light flicked off. Arc lights from the Manor field and the flashing blue light of a fire engine provided enough illumination for him to see the delicate folds of Howard's scrotum. He licked the shaft. It gave a tiny jerk. He gasped as Howard's lips engulfed the head of his own penis. They felt warm and wet and incredibly soft. He licked again. Howard groaned

slightly. Then, raising his head, he took the end of Howard's penis into his mouth and closed his lips round the tip. It pushed forward, He put a restraining hand on Howard's hip and let his tongue play on the tiny slit. The salty sweetness of a young boy not yet through his adolescence was the most wonderful taste in the world. His own prick was right into Howard's mouth. He felt Howard's nose on the inside of his thigh. Slowly, he sucked the boy in and felt the veins on the sturdy shaft brush against his lips. Howard groaned again. Mark put a hand on the boy's soft buttock. It quivered delightfully. He sucked more strongly and moved his fingers right over the silky cheek until his fingers were deep between both buttocks. Howard seemed to relax slightly; his lips moved back along Mark's prick and seemed to kiss the glans. Mark waggled his fingers. The muscles of Howard's arse relaxed even more. Could it be...? He pushed his middle finger forward. Wrong place. Down a bit. There! Howard shuddered as Mark's finger-tip found his tight rosette. Mark felt the boy's penis jerk in his mouth. Slowly, very slowly, he raised his head until the smaller boy's penis popped out. Its warm, wet head flapped against his cheek.

"Will you let me..." Mark asked. There was no need to continue.

Howard released his prick. "Do you want to fuck me?" he asked in a tremulous voice.

"Are you sure you want me to?"

Howard nodded.

"I won't hurt you, I promise," Mark whispered.

"That's okay. What shall I do?"

"The first time's always a bit difficult," said Mark.

"Yes, I know. Ben... er... told me."

Gently, Mark turned Howard over onto his front and parted the boy's long legs. "I didn't bring any stuff with me," he said, "but don't worry."

Howard grunted into the pillow. Mark knelt between his outspread legs, lowered his head and began to lick upwards from the boy's compact scrotum to the tightly closed orifice.

"That's nice," said Howard, lifting his head. "Do it a bit harder."

Mark pushed the tip of his tongue against the small roseate pucker. The musky scent was very strong now. The tiny mouth seemed to tremble slightly but remained tightly closed. Mark pushed harder. It seemed to yield slightly. He stopped, let his mouth fill with saliva and started again. There was no doubt about it now: he could feel the muscular ring relaxing along with Howard's fear.

The first fuck, Mark knew, was always a bit difficult. It had been in that very room but in a different bed that Simon had first had him. He remembered yelling as the monster cock drove into him – and that had been after Simon had spent ages fingering him and lubricating him first. It had been nice after that, however. He was determined not to hurt Howard. Howard was too beautiful – and too good a friend.

He dribbled more saliva over his fingers. "Try to relax," he said, and touched the pursed lips again. Howard remained quite still. He pushed slightly with his finger, "That's right. Just relax. I won't hurt you." He increased the pressure. Was it opening? Maybe. "There, relax," he said again and suddenly, his finger was in. He felt the warm tissues on his knuckle.

"Mmmm!" said Howard. Mark began to work the finger in further, moving it from side to side and up and down. Howard groaned. And then it happened – that huge convulsive judder that changes a timid, anxious boy, unsure of what he wants, into an animal-like creature craving to be fucked.

"Oh! Do it! Do it!" Howard moaned.

Trying desperately to keep control of himself and aware that his penis was dribbling pre-cum onto the bedspread, Mark turned Howard over. Howard seemed to know instinctively that he should raise his legs. Mark draped them over his shoulders, shuffled forward slightly and placed his swollen cock-tip against what a man on the island had referred to as the passage to heaven. "I love you, Howard," he

whispered.

“Do it to me!” Howard commanded. His eyes were wide open. His mouth gaped. Mark complied and slid his spit-wet, pre-cum-slathered penis slowly in.

To his surprise, Howard didn't yell. He groaned a bit as Mark's weapon drove into him; he writhed as the great, veined shaft rubbed against his super-sensitive prostate, but the scream which Mark had expected didn't come, just continuous moans of delight.

Still keeping himself firmly under control, Mark began to fuck the boy. Howard's legs slid against his collar bones. They felt cool and smooth. Howard shook his head from side to side. His hair flopped over his eyes.

Mark increased the pace. “Oh! Oh! Oh” Howard panted. The bed began to rattle. Mark put his hands under the boy's buttocks and lifted him slightly. Howard panted harder, sounding like a long-distance runner at the end of a race.

“Coming!” gasped Howard. A long white stream of spunk arched upwards from his stiff penis and landed on Mark's face and chest. More flowed downwards, landing where their two bodies were so intimately joined and gave added lubrication to Mark's thrusting member.

“Ah! Ah! Aaah!” Mark gasped. His balls ached. Howard was squirming now. Mark's tongue hung from the corner of his mouth. Sweat poured down his face from his forehead. He gave one mighty heave. Howard sighed – and smiled as jets of his best friend's semen spurted into him.

“At last!” Mark gasped.

“I hope not,” said Howard, wiping his face with the corner of a sheet. “We'll do it again later, that's for sure!”

“The lampshade is moving. Have you noticed?” said Chris Yates.

“A draft I expect,” said Atkinson. “It's a very old house.”

“Oh. Are you comfortable on that sofa?”

“Not very, no.”

“This mattress is okay. Do you want to swap?”

“Er... no thanks. Decent of you though.”

There was a brief silence.

“It's difficult to sleep with all this noise,” said young Chris. “What with the generators in the Manor field and that din from upstairs. What do you think they're up to?”

“I've no idea. Mucking about I guess. It's been a rotten day for them. I expect they're letting off a bit of steam.”

“Sounds to me as if they've got some girls up there and they're screwing.”

“Well, we know they haven't. Lord Charles wouldn't allow it.”

“Perhaps they are screwing each other,” said Chris with a giggle. “That's what's making the lamp swing, not air.”

“Don't be disgusting! They're not like that.”

“There was a rumor going round that Ben Hill is gay,” Chris persisted.

“Of course he isn't. Neither are Adam and Mark. I knew them both before they ran away from school.”

“They'll have to take down that memorial plaque to Mark in the chapel now, won't they?”

“No. I heard Lord Charles and that Spencer chap talking to the Headman. Their families don't want to have them back. Adam's dad isn't interested and Mark's mum has married again and his new step-father doesn't want him.”

“Probably because he's gay,” said Chris.

"I've just told you. None of them are. Gays are disgusting!"

"What do they actually do?"

"How the hell should I know?"

"I just wondered. I've got to learn. My dad keeps telling me to keep away from them. I don't even know how to tell if a chap is one."

"There aren't any in our school so you've got no problems."

"There's Tiddler Trapping Night. Is that gay?"

"Of course not. That's a school tradition. It's quite different."

"I used to like that when I was in the Junior School. Do you remember Simon Read?"

"Yes. He left last year, didn't he?"

"That's the one. I wanked him twice in one night."

"You're not supposed to talk about it. It's against school tradition."

"I didn't think it mattered talking to you. You are Captain of Rugby, after all. I expect you know exactly what goes on every Tiddler Trapping Night."

"Maybe I do, but I don't talk about it."

"It must be quite nice to be wanked by someone else."

"It is. Go to sleep."

"I quite like wanking senior boys but nobody's ever done it to me," Yates persisted. "Some boys like you to suck their things. Did you know that?"

"I've heard about it, yes." Atkinson turned over and the sofa creaked.

"I wonder what it feels like?"

"No idea."

"Are you sure you're comfortable on the sofa?"

"I just said I wasn't. Why do you keep asking?"

"Well, I was thinking. There's room for two of us on this mattress. You could sleep down here with me if you like."

There was a long silence. Atkinson shifted again.

"Could do, I suppose," he said. He clambered down from the sofa.

"There's only one pillow, said Yates, "but if I take my pajamas off and roll them up, I could use them as a pillow and you can have mine."

"That's decent of you. Thanks," said Atkinson and, as Chris Yates undid his pajama buttons, he threw the pillow which Charles had provided behind the sofa.

Eerily lit by arc lamps, men labored in the manor field. The domed perspex cockpit, burned and smeared with what looked, in the strange light, like brown sauce, was lifted carefully to join the other remains on the back of a lorry.

"Not much left of the pilot," said one man. "Nothing whatsoever of the other bloke."

"I'm not surprised," said his colleague. "He'd have been in little bits before the fire got to him. We'll be lucky to find a bit of finger nail. Look at the size of the crater. Anything left of him is buried pretty deep."

"What's up?" asked Chris. "What can you see?"

"Nothing," Atkinson replied. He stood, naked, in the bay window. "I thought I saw a man in the front garden but there's nobody there now."

"Do you think he saw what we were doing?"

“Of course not. The lamps in the Manor field make it lighter outside than it is inside.” He returned to the mattress on which Chris lay. The boy was wiping his stomach with a handkerchief.

“Well you know what it's like to be wanked now,” said Atkinson. You wanted to know what it was like to suck cock. You can start on this one.”

Upstairs Mark and Howard were at last asleep, wound around each other in an intricate knot of eight limbs, four buttocks, four lips and two breathing mouths. In the next room Ben and Adam slept on, too, but joined in a different manner: Adam's penis, though softer now in post-orgasmic relaxation, was clasped in the warm, soft tissues inside Ben's anus, neither organ nor orifice willing to give up possession of the other.

A new day was starting but its noise and commotion hadn't yet impinged upon these two couples: as dawn began to break through a clearing sky, they remained locked together as though to defy their separate identities and time itself.