

The Twelfth
Acolyte Reader

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Kit

by I. L. Ingles

"It must be terrible being a girl," panted Kit suddenly, between two bouts of urgent, noisy breathing.

Leroy, being preoccupied, was very surprised to hear – or half hear – this unprompted remark. How could someone think of girls at such a moment? It was only minutes ago that, finding his face no more than ten centimeters away from Kit's, he had blurted out the request he had been longing to make all term... "Please, Kit, can I kiss you?" – and Kit, instead of saying "Don't be daft!" or hitting him, had sucked in and let out a pressure-cooker hiss of a breath, and enfolded him in a smothering embrace. Kit was a big boy! For an instant they had just stood there, but only for an instant; because, a few seconds later, Kit had lowered his hands and done a wheel-clamping job on Leroy's buttocks and started rubbing himself up and down against Leroy's legs.

Leroy had found it necessary to do the same to Kit. They had been in the middle of this absorbing activity when Kit had made his peculiar observation. A response seeming to be required, Leroy replied "Why are girls terrible?"

"Don't be daft! I didn't say girls are terrible. I said it must be terrible being one."

"Why?"

"Because of not having what we've got and not being able to do this, stupe." Kit pushed his thighs emphatically against Leroy's.

Leroy felt a flutter of pleasure, an anticipatory tingling in his privates, under the pressure of the thing that had suddenly become so hard and prominent between Kit's hips. Never before had Leroy had anyone behaving like this with him.

"Of course," panted Kit, "we should really be doing this on my bed, with all our clothes off."

Leroy was astonished. "We can't," he whispered. "Your mother or step-father might come in."

Kit did not answer. Abruptly he began to puff and shake. His hands left Leroy's bottom and hugged him fiercely round the waist. Now it was Leroy who was being kissed, over and over again, on the neck and forehead. Kit started to stretch up and down, quicker and quicker. Then, letting out a low moan like the distant siren at the chocolate factory, he clutched at himself with one hand between their bodies.

This obliged Leroy to clutch at his own body. Kit appeared to have forgotten him. Leroy felt a sense of loss. It wasn't anger, just that something had not gone quite right, had not finished properly. He unzipped his jeans, did what was necessary, and hastily zipped them up again, lest any of the gummy ooze should mess them up outside.

He realized that what he was experiencing was part of what people called "being in love". That was why he always wanted to kiss Kit, but such an intensity of response was overwhelming, and totally unexpected. He had been really scared asking for the kiss, scared of losing the only friend who really mattered.

Leroy felt confused. When he had been young, people's reactions followed understandable patterns. If you insulted them, they hit you, either with fists or with horrible words like "dirty nigger". If you hashed up your work, one teacher would sympathize, another pin you to the wall with sarcasm, but you always knew which teacher

would do what. If you didn't help with the washing-up, you lost your pocket money – but, now that he was thirteen, things didn't seem to have any pattern. You refused to do 'women's work at that sink' and your mother simply said "Well, Leroy Ishmael Painting, if that's how you feel, I'll do it myself. I'm sorry for your wife, if you ever catch one."

Leroy frowned. Now it had proved just as unpredictable with Kit. You asked someone for a kiss, someone big and strong and confident – and, fine, instead of treating you with contempt as you feared, he said and did a huge lot more, not just kiss. Leroy sighed... a huge lot more, but not quite enough.

Kit seemed to come out of some distant, private world. "Sorry, Leroy. I apologise."

Leroy smiled. "Apologise" was just the funny sort of thing Kit Davies would say. He'd always known what to say or do. "Apologise? What for?"

Kit blushed, another unusual occurrence. "For... hugging you like that... without asking. Even if people love each other, you're supposed to ask."

Leroy felt a second fluttering sensation, but this time it wasn't between his legs. At the word "love", his heart ricocheted around inside his ribs. That *he* loved Kit he had no doubt whatsoever. Now it sounded as if Kit might love *him*. They had been friends for ages and used to sit in the same double desk.

Used to. Then one afternoon Mr Malone, who always wasted half his lessons talking about popes when he should have been talking about real history, suddenly spotted Lipsworth and Basten holding hands in Basten's lap. This was new. Outside in the playground, they often held hands, and when walking home. No amount of mockery or

tellings-off had ever stopped them. They just said, "What law're we breaking?" and carried on – but never previously in the classroom.

"Basten, Lipsworth, stand up!" Malone had snapped, out of the blue. They had let go of each other and stood up. "Basten, you can sit here at the front. Lipsworth, you go in that corner at the back. The other two, swop seats." Everyone had seen the tears, like dew, trickling down Basten's beautiful cheeks.

Leroy had found himself being looked at by Kit, whose skin was turning redder and redder with one of those rare blushes.

"And I think I'll move some other people too," Malone had sneered. "Davies, you swop places with Dexter," and a moment later Leroy had found John Dexter sitting beside him instead of Kit. "Malone Afternoon" was the worst afternoon in Leroy's life.

Leroy didn't believe that anyone, even now, guessed he liked boys. It was true he had blushed then, when he saw Kit's face turning redder, but surely that was not enough to give you away? Everyone knew that the Pope didn't like boys to like other boys, but surely even Popes could not give their Catholics long-distance powers to home in on offenders in foreign classrooms?

Kit, of course, had never revealed anything of his sexual feelings – until now. That afternoon he had simply got up mouthing, "All the other teachers let us sit with our friends."

Leroy still did not know for certain if Kit was 100% turned on by other boys, or just experimenting or feeling randy, as they stood staring at one another, each conscious of a mutual awareness of their sticky briefs and the unspoken need to re-assess their friendship. Nevertheless it had been Kit's blushing on "Malone Afternoon" that had given Leroy his first rationalizing hope, climaxing in the sudden soaring determination to beg for a kiss.

It had also occurred to Leroy that terrible afternoon to wonder whether Malone disliked seeing white and black boys sitting together. Dexter was as black as Leroy himself, and very clever. You couldn't like Kit Davies for being clever. He was pretty slow at schoolwork. You liked him – loved him – because he was big and strong and kind and always knew what to do. Leroy looked at him now and replied, "No need to say sorry. I started it."

Silence. Then, eventually, "Do you think Basten and Lipsworth...?" Kit's voice sounded less confident than usual.

Leroy, feeling that he had picked up some of the confidence Kit had mislaid, nodded. "You wouldn't hold hands publicly and put up with what they have to, unless you were serious."

More silence. Then Kit ventured "Would you hold mine?"

A rich glow suffused Leroy's body and spread outwards to fill the whole room. A circlet of pretty Christmas-tree lights twinkled about Kit's head, and there was music in the air, though the truth was that it was a cold rainy afternoon unworthy of the name Summer, and Kit would have looked odd festooned in fairy lights – but, beyond the vision and the mundane reality, there was a greater truth. Kit wanted him. Well, if Basten and Lipsworth could do it, so could Painting and Davies, though it was much more complicated being two different colors. Still, it couldn't be all that easy for Lipsworth either. Jews didn't marry Gentiles.

"Yes, I would," Leroy mumbled, "if you were really serious."

Kit's face turned a fiery crimson. "You know what I said just now...?"

"What?" Downstairs the clock struck five. Tea time.

"About... loving... in the nude." Kit was having difficulty getting his words out. "Well, now that you've told me you want me to be a... do-it-yourself Kit... like a model you get all the bits for... well... when you

get a new kit, you have to... take all the wrappings off first... so, if I let you take all my clothes off, would you let me take your clothes off and we do lovers' things naked together?"

Kit had tried to make it into a joke – his way of being serious, so Leroy plucked up courage, and asked, "Do you really love me? Why didn't you tell me before?"

Kit shrugged. "Why didn't *you* tell *me*? You never kissed me before, either! I can't go around asking people. Look how they treat Basten and Lipsworth." Instead of his usual confident self, Kit sounded belligerent and unhappy. "Anyway, we always do everything else together, don't we?"

Leroy sensed that Kit's confidence was returning – in a rush. "In fact," went on Kit, "I could ask Mum if you could stay here for the night."

Leroy hesitated. In a mere quarter of an hour, the whole world had changed. "What about your step-father?"

Kit grimaced. "Owen does anything Mum tells him. I think he's scared he'll never get another woman, little baby. Can't imagine what Mum sees in him."

Something told Leroy that it was now or never. "Okay," he grinned, "you ask her." Everything felt better, now that Kit was behaving in his normal, self-assured way.

"And," grunted Kit, "I won't be asking you to hold hands in public. We'll keep it to ourselves."

"Do you hate him?"

"Not really, not actually hate," replied Kit thoughtfully, "but he's such a wet leek. If Mum wanted a Welshman, why couldn't she marry one of their rugby players? Dad was enormously strong until... I suppose Owen could be worse. He doesn't actually hit me, like some step-fathers might, but he always says 'Yes' to Mum, even when she's

being stupid, and she always listens to him when I try to make them see sense."

Kit consulted his watch. "We'd better get undressed. He'll be back from his shift soon. He always comes up at ten o'clock after Mum to say good night. He kisses my forehead."

The two friends stared at each other. Since coming back up to the bedroom, with Kit grinning roguishly whenever their eyes met, they had studiously avoided any reference to kissing or love, even when making up the mattress on the floor as a bed for Leroy.

All through the evening, Leroy had found himself catching Kit's eye and blushing. 'It must be like this when virgins have their honeymoon,' he thought. Kit had kept glancing at the alarm clock, and very very slowly, like a delayed end to afternoon school, the time had approached when they would be able to prove to each other that they really were more than "just good friends". They had thought about nothing else for hours.

Kit bolted the door. "In case Mum comes in while you're not decent! She always comes up first. She usually reads me poems. Says they're 'uplifting'."

"Poems?"

Another of those once-rare blushes. "It's not like in school," Kit mumbled. "I just listen. Then she kisses me and says 'God bless you'. Suppose she thinks she ought to *kiss you*?"

"Don't mind. My mum always does. Bet lots of boys get kissed. Must be terrible not having a mother or father."

Kit drew in a breath, but managed to control himself; then, after an awkward pause, announced, "I've invented an undressing game. We take our shirts and shoes off, then stand kissing mouths, and try stripping off our other clothes without taking our lips away!"

The two friends tottered about, giggling, prizing off each other's jeans and socks. Then came the moment when, their mouths still glued together, each boy was left in nothing but a pair of clinging, bikini briefs and a sudden silent, unexpected embarrassment.

Kit broke the impasse, and their Siamese-twin-lips oneness, with a quick tug at Leroy's briefs. Leroy shivered, sure that his skin was now turning an even deeper black. Kit shook with laughter. "Sorry, can't help it," he croaked. His fingers, when jiggling the briefs down, had discovered the fullness of Leroy's condition. "Now pull mine off."

Leroy obeyed, and was surprised to see that Kit looked as innocent as when they changed in P.E. "Go on, touch it!" In a few seconds there was no difference in their state, only in the proportions.

Kit goose-stepped into the walk-in cupboard, and returned with a pair of gossamery see-through, pajamas. "They're a bit big," he wheezed, "but you won't be keeping them on for long, will you?"

Desire surged up in Leroy, fiercely, like the sudden burning temperature you got with flu. Not that Kit was beautiful. He couldn't compare with Basten. Basten resembled one of those breathtaking, ancient-Greek statues, except that he was alive, and had fabulously beautiful, delicately pale skin. He would have been worth launching a thousand ships for, like those Greeks did for that Helen! When he was in the nude after P.E. you wanted to look at him all the time and touch him and put a spell on him never to get dressed.

Kit was different. Kit, like Lipsworth, was big and powerful, with a white person's ordinary-color skin. Great motorways of muscle marked out the countryside of his arms and thighs, and he had an enviably broad chest like that of an Olympic oarsman. In fact, the various parts of his body were a whole crew of splendid, burly rowers working admirably together in delightful unison. Already he had quite a garden of dark pubic hair – very dramatic against his white

skin. Leroy wondered if his own little flower bed was even visible against its black wall.

"Are you boys ready?" Mrs. Davies called from the kitchen.

Kit flicked his wrist. The gossamer pajama jacket flew up into the air, plummeted, and hung suspended like a clinging nuthatch at the end of the rigid branch projecting from Leroy's thighs. Kit, giggling inanely, hooked the pajama trousers over his own branch, lined up his stocky trunk, swiveled, and deposited the jacket's mate neatly beside it on its now horizontal perch.

When Leroy, still unrespectable in the see-through pajamas, had made himself safely eye-proof by diving into his bed on the floor, Kit donned an even less respectable pair, unbolted the door, shouted "Okay!", dived into his own bed, and made faces at Leroy, reflected in the huge wardrobe mirror.

"Hullo, boys. I'll leave this on the desk. I thought you might like a little squash in the night." Leroy heard Kit trying to stifle a giggle. "And, instead of a poem, I'm going to read the Bible, because, when I phoned Leroy's mother about him sleeping here, she said she always reads some to him at bedtime."

Leroy blushed sable. Why on earth hadn't he mentioned the Bible business? He liked Mrs. Davies. She meant well. The trouble was, she was also more than a bit thick.

As it happened, Leroy found the reading quite inspiring – all about friends laying down their lives for those they loved. Mrs. Davies did kiss him – just below his left eye. Until today, he had never been kissed by a white person. Now two had kissed him within six hours.

Ann Davies withdrew, and at thirty seconds past ten, Owen came up. "Had a good day, boyo?" he inquired of Kit, with a token nod in Leroy's direction.

"Smashing," grinned Kit, and waited for the good-night kiss. It was not forthcoming.

"I'll just pop out to the toilet," grinned Kit, the instant Owen's departing footsteps became inaudible. Kit was all grins this evening.

On Kit's return, Leroy nipped out too. As he came back along the landing, he met Owen, carrying a load of ironing. Owen raised an eyebrow, lifted up Leroy's borrowed pajamas at the shoulders, and observed dryly, "Rather big for you, aren't they? You'd better leave a pair of your own here, if we're to have the privilege of seeing you regularly, and – talking of 'seeing' you – it might be an idea if you put on a dressing-gown. You're rather old to be wandering around somebody else's place in see-throughs. Mustn't embarrass the ladies, must we?"

Safely in the bedroom again, Leroy switched off the light and slid between his sheets. "Have to wait till they settle down," hissed Kit. "Don't go to sleep. What was he saying?"

From his bivouac on the floor, Leroy snorted his indignation. Who on earth would go to sleep on such a red-letter night as this? "He said these pajamas were too thin and I should wear a dressing gown."

"God! I never thought," whistled Kit, and burst out into another fit of the giggles.

It seemed hours until the key turned in the lock of the door at the end of the landing. Kit's bed squeaked. A ghostly figure materialised out of the gloom. Feet scuffed across the carpet, the bolt was slid home and, after more scuffing of feet, the curtains were opened a crack, just enough to let in a moon laser without endangering anyone's privacy.

Kit – standing bathed, not in Christmas-tree-light artificiality, but in a sheen of living silver – had already stripped. Silence.

The silence was surely a challenge? Nervous despite himself, Leroy sloughed off his pajamas, stepped clear of the mattress, and shuffled forward to be embraced. They stood pressing together for half a minute or more. Leroy never forgot that first experience of naked flesh against naked flesh over the whole length of his body. Then, like a forward passing the ball, Kit flung him onto the bed, and Western-rolled up beside him. Discarding the blanket, they made a cocoon for themselves with the top sheet, reveling in a mutual fantasy of being alone in a safe, exclusive world of their own. They luxuriated, sometimes stretching out at full length, sometimes curling up into a warm sweaty ball of squeezed flesh, each content for a while to explore the details of his lover's body, and be similarly explored himself.

"We're like twins inside our mother's belly," said Leroy. "Do you think twins hold and stroke each other like this?" He was tracing circles with his left hand over Kit's back and bottom.

"Not old enough," sniggered Kit. "I wish we'd known ages ago we loved each other." His right hand was probing deep into Leroy's buttocks. "This is much better than just looking at people in the changing rooms, and thinking." They caressed each other in silence for some time; then Kit, no longer able to hold back, muttered "Let's do something. I'm bursting."

A door shut at the end of the landing. Leroy jumped. Kit giggled. "Only Mum. She always forgets her squash." Another giggle.

Leroy listened carefully, and heard a faint sound of voices. "You don't think they'll hear us and come and check?"

"Not if we're reasonably quiet," chuckled Kit. "You have to really concentrate if you want to hear. On Saturdays I set my alarm and wake up at twelve. I creep along and listen outside their door. Makes me go all goose-pimply, thinking how that's how I got made. When I

hear them, I feel all funny and have to rush back and toss off – only it's boys I think of... Usually you." He paused, then whispered, as if in church, "Doing oral!"

Leroy shivered. He had never heard his parents in action. He must fall asleep too quickly. These sexy disclosures and the probing of fingers into his most intimate places had started to affect him, so he replied quickly, "How do you want to do it now? I'm bursting too." He wondered if he would have to argue with Kit. Oral! Having Kit's thing in your mouth would take some coping with.

"This first time," said Kit with a sort of catch in his voice, "I'd like to see how it feels with your prick up my bum. I've got a huge asshole. Then, when you've finished, I just want to hug you and rub. After that we'll set the alarm and wake up in the night and do... oral!" Again that suppressed, reverential whisper... and, as if everything had been agreed, Kit rolled over onto his front.

Leroy did not argue, however. Life was too urgent. Pulling and pushing at Kit's behind, he made several false starts in his efforts to become one flesh with this friend who had so amazingly turned into a lover. It was somewhat off-putting at first to feel him wincing with discomfort, and on one occasion to hear a definite yelp of pain, despite the generous dimensions of the Mount Kit Davies tunnel entrance. Just in time, to the accompaniment of much pillow-smothered giggling from Kit, they succeeded – and Leroy was embarked on the most delightful series of sensations he had ever known. With the echoing rhythm of a passing local train in his mind, he thrust rhythmically into the hot tunnel, accumulating more and more speed and pleasure until suddenly his locomotive was out of control, rushing headlong downhill, and was then utterly derailed, and he found himself clutching hard at Kit's waist to make sure that this time they did not become separated and ruin the ecstasy.

"That was great," Kit declared respectfully when Leroy disengaged, and lay recovering beside him. He shoved Leroy's back down onto the mattress, clambered up on top of him, and began rubbing himself frenetically against the passive black body, like a crazy carpenter in a sudden fit of madness, heaving his plane up and down a block of ebony.

Leroy lay motionless. Then, two or three seconds later, he felt a warm stickiness spreading across his stomach and trickling over his hips. Simultaneously a slobbery mouth began wet-mopping his face. To his surprise, instead of feeling disgusted, he was filled with a wonderful sense of joy. Kit and he were becoming an indivisible partnership and these were the glues which were sealing them together for ever. Tonight marked the beginning of their new life – and it wouldn't matter even one hoot what Kit asked him to do when the alarm went. "God," breathed Kit, "no wonder people talk so much about sex!"

Ann Davies sat in the kitchen, trying to gather up her troublesome thoughts, which had been flying about in all directions, like the slippery granules of garlic she was always spilling into the sink when they should have been dropping into her Pyrex. 'If I added another twenty centimeters,' she mused, 'Hilda Swansbury'd be bound to believe I'm trying to hide something.' The trouble was, Ann Davies didn't know whether she really was trying to hide anything or not.

What Ann did know, was that Mrs. Swansbury was a gossiping old busybody and could make life extremely uncomfortable for everyone. She also spoke evil words about black people, something Ann could not tolerate. Color prejudice had a very powerful effect on Ann, who, prior to meeting her late husband, had been going out with a charming Jamaican and might have married him, had he not been obliged one weekend to return quite unexpectedly to Kingston on a

banana boat. Mrs. Swansbury's reference to "nasty little savages creeping about our houses!" had made it necessary to slam the door in her face. Later, performing the sacred rite of peeling potatoes at the sink, Ann realized that slamming the door constituted a setback to stable community relations, and did not reflect well on herself, but she was not prepared to have her son's friends insulted as nasty savages, little or otherwise.

The timer pinged. Kit had preemptively announced that he would be "in a rush for tea" because he was going to the pictures with Leroy and it was Saturday and he hadn't got any homework worth bothering with and it "could be done while you're at church tomorrow." Ann thought it odd that they should want to endure the hassle of catching buses to a cinema miles away, when there was a video in the house. She had not mentioned Madam Swansbury's latest neighborhood-watch report. It might spoil Kit's evening, and in any case Ann was confused as to what she should say, or even believe. Kit was her only experience of dealing with thirteen-year-old boys and the whole matter seemed extremely complicated. You never knew how such creatures would react, even yours. They swept into your house, especially your kitchen, like a swarm of monster mutant locusts – or they were like young Painting, embarrassingly uncommunicative.

"Hi, Mum. Egg ready? Can't wait for toast. I'll just have bread and cheese and tomato sauce and some seed cake, and pickled onions and a banana, and have a proper meal when I come back. We've got chocolate to keep going with."

Ann looked at him with swelling affection. He was so like his father had once been: strong, well-built and full of life. When this boy grew up, he would help her sort things out, tell her what to do. He was already quite thoughtful... making his bed, doing the washing-up,

sometimes, and even cleaning the bath after him. Of course, Owen was very good at giving her an exciting time in bed, which Ray had become unable to do – and which could hardly be expected of Kit! She had loved Ray deeply, still did in retrospect, but it had been a great burden that for so long he had not been able to satisfy her needs.

It had been quite awkward sometimes. Kit would ask, "Why can't I have a brother?" and it would be necessary to think of a reply suitable for a young boy. You couldn't say, "Well, I'm sorry, Kit love, but your dad's become impotent," or even, when Kit was older, "It's because Dad's dying of cancer, darling." Eventually, of course, Ray had lost his physique completely, and become exhausted from years of increasing pain, and Kit had had to be told.

Ann sighed. She had heard that people could inherit a proneness to cancer. She couldn't bear to think that Kit's sturdy life and body might degenerate, like Ray's. Kit had, she thought, taken everything very well. Some boys objected violently to their step-fathers, especially when they were so different from the natural father. Recently he had grown a little argumentative, but that was only puberty.

Well, the hungry lamb was looking up and waiting to be fed. Owen must sort out the Swansbury business. It was anything but uplifting, quite disgusting in fact. Ann prayed that Owen would not find the insinuations too embarrassing. He was very sensitive and, whatever might be said about Welshmen, he never lost his temper, which was more than she could say for herself.

Kit lay back, letting his mind wander. He was feeling pleased with himself because, for the first time, he had told his mother that he really enjoyed having her read poems to him. He could admit it now, knowing that Mrs. Painting read the Bible to Leroy. Tonight Mum

had picked out a poem called The Little Black Boy by her favorite, someone called William Blake. Afterwards she said, "I sometimes wonder if boys like your friend have the same unacceptable idea invisible in their heads – you know, the idea that they are basically inferior, or created to be other people's servants?"

Kit had never considered the matter. Nobody could possibly think Leroy inferior! In fact, the real puzzle in Kit's mind was: how had his mother, who was so ordinary and not particularly competent, become so fond of poetry? Perhaps she'd had a good teacher at school, like old Baddeley in German, or perhaps she could cope with the poems better than with the *Guardian's* crosswords Dad had been so stuck on. Suddenly Kit realized that he knew very little about her, except in certain obvious areas like housework and racial prejudice and the neighbors. In future he would start noticing. Tonight he had noticed how, as she leaned over to kiss him, her big breasts had bulged out of the top of her dress – and she wasn't wearing a brassiere! This had inspired him to picture Leroy and Basten and Lipsworth in the nude, and then to imagine himself offering two biscuits to Basten (fully-clothed). In the fantasy Basten smiled and said "Thanks, comrade!" and Kit's legs had done the goose-pimple.

Forcing his thoughts to return from fantasy to reality, Kit pulled the sheet up round his neck, so that only his head stuck out. The film he and Leroy had seen was merely a re-run of an old one, but it was brilliant. Tarzan and Boy had looked really good. 'I wonder if...?' Boy was something! Tarzan and he were lucky to have each other.

Kit let his mind dwell on Leroy. It wasn't because Leroy was especially beautiful that you liked him. He wasn't. It was something else, something mysterious. It drew you to him and made you want to protect him – or was it because Leroy was clever? Lipsworth was clever too, wasn't he? but it didn't make you feel empty when

Lipsworth was absent. 'It probably makes Basten feel empty, though, and Basten probably couldn't care less when Leroy's out of the room! At least I won't have to fight them for him! How could anybody want to fight Basten? It would be like smashing a beautiful vase – and Lipsworth would then crunch you up too.'

Knock, knock. "That's new," grunted Kit to himself. Nobody had ever been that polite to him before. "Enter, whoever you are," he yelled, though it was obvious who.

"Hullo. Sorry I'm late. I was chatting with Ann." Owen Davies bolted the door behind him and sat down on the edge of the bed.

A faint breeze rippled the curtains, drawn together across the open window. There was the hint of a storm in the sultry air. Tonight, at ten-past ten, it was as dark as if it were midwinter.

Owen's right hand was idly smoothing out the wrinkles in the folds of sheet covering Kit's knees. Kit tried surreptitiously to shift his legs and dislodge the hand. He wanted desperately to laugh. Owen had forgotten to do himself up after going to the toilet. The part of penis visible through the middle of the bright yellow underwear dimpling between the shiny zips of the blue trousers made his front look like one of the exotic butterflies coffined in the Senior Science lab. It would be unkind to laugh. It might embarrass the man. Kit had once suffered for weeks following a similar mistake at school. Some of the boys had pointed it out to the girls immediately he re-entered the classroom.

"Your mother wants me to have what she calls 'a serious talk' with you."

Kit's throat tightened. There had been a 'serious talk' last year, immediately after the marriage. Mum had sent Owen to advise him about masturbation. The man had taken half an hour on the subject,

but half an hour of talking tonight could be disastrous. It could spoil The Plan.

Actually Owen had been well-informed and reasonable, and had ended up by saying "I'll tell her there's no sign of your being mad. I don't believe I'm exactly crazy, and I started playing with myself long before your age, boyo!" Kit now recalled the conversation vividly.

"Well," continued Owen, "you know you were a little disappointed when Ann said it wasn't convenient to have Leroy coming to sleep here tonight, because twice in one week was too much?"

Kit nodded. He felt uncomfortable. He didn't like Owen saying "Ann". A real father wouldn't have done it. Kit wanted it to be only "Mum" or "Mother" now. He had tried very hard with the new situation, even agreeing to change his surname to Davies, but he could never bring himself to think of Owen as "Dad". It would be a sort of treachery. Treachery was despicable.

The curtains made another little bibbling sound in the breeze. The storm was almost here. "Well," Owen went on, "there was another reason, which is why she's going to lengthen your net curtains."

Kit frowned. What on earth was the man wittering about? If only he would get on with it! "What's wrong with my nets?"

"Well," grinned Owen conspiratorially, "you're a big boy now. So is your friend, and you stuck your heads up above the parapet."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, boyo, that old Ma Swansbury had a head-and-shoulders view through your window when you and Leroy were exchanging kisses – and the old bitch decided it was her duty to reveal all."

Kit went numb, and for some seconds he felt neither the faint draft frisking his chest, nor the fingers which were doodling on his knees. Then the whole of his body started tingling. His mouth became dry,

and his throat was tight again. He had to force himself to speak. "You mean... she could see us over the top of the netting?"

"Exactly, laddyo, so Ann feels that you and I should have a little conversation about your chumminess with young Painting."

St. Stephen's struck the quarter. In the unsteady breeze the chime wobbled away into nothingness. In eleven seconds St. Peter's would echo it in the distance. Kit had indeed been upset about his mother's refusal, but at the cinema Leroy had proposed and worked out The Plan. Now Kit understood the situation. His mother was scared of the neighbors – scared of having a homosexual son. It wasn't fair. She had Owen to love, and the two of them certainly enjoyed their Saturday-night romps, and probably other nights too.

Owen cleared his throat, "Well, was the kissing serious, or were you just larking about?"

Kit's chest felt bruised, but he must answer. To say it was "just larking about" would be a betrayal of Leroy for certain and of himself too, probably. Now that he was faced with the challenge, he was pretty sure that he did love Leroy. "It was serious, of course. So what?"

Owen went over to the door, and checked the bolt. Kit watched nervously. Was he going to be thumped... at his age? They wouldn't dare.

Owen returned to the bed. "So, my big boyo, are you gay, or just feeling suddenly sexy these days, so sexy you have to do a little 'serious' experimenting?"

Kit shook his head to drive out the sound of his heart pumping in his ears. How had it got there? He must shake out any treachery too. "Of course we're gay. I wouldn't have kissed him back otherwise."

Owen grinned. "I see... so it was Leroy who started it?"

"Yes, but I was glad." There, that was one in the eye for treachery!

Silence. Kit stared defiantly into his step-father's challenging eyes. "Nasty Ma Swansbury claims she saw you with your arms round each other's shoulders, without shirts on, kissing passionately," murmured Owen. "Ann wants to know... did you do anything else?"

Kit's face, to his fury, seemed to burst into flames. Could his mother really have asked such a thing? But he never lied to her. Miserably he admitted the truth. Treachery. He had given Leroy the impression that they would keep it to themselves – and here he was, yielding to Owen just as Owen yielded to Mum. Who was the wet leek now? The evil was, it would be equally treacherous to deny that Leroy Ishmael Painting and Kit Davies were the world's latest top-of-the-averages lovers, sealed in semen. Leroy had even said something daft about laying down his life for him. Stupid old Bible readings!

"Don't fret, partner." Kit gazed at Owen in surprise. "Partner" suggested some unguessed-at link between them. Already the alarm clock was showing twenty past.

Owen smiled. "I can talk to Ann. There's plenty of boys like you in the world, and you can bet your bottom dollar she'll be on your side, not Ma Swansbury's."

Kit felt relieved. He relaxed a little and stretched his legs. Owen leaned forward, and Kit thought, 'Good. He'll kiss me and go. The Plan won't be wrecked.'

Owen leaned another degree closer. "There's something else." Kit felt the sheet separate a fraction from the edge of the bed. A hand crept in, and rested on his thighs. He began to shiver.

"Well, well," chuckled Owen. "All bare! How romantic! Anyway, what I was going to say was that I'm gay too – or, to be precise, bisexual."

The hand slid up the left thigh. Now Kit understood the reason for the bolting of the door. Helplessly he felt the blood surging into his

penis, levering it up, centimeter by centimeter.

Owen's voice lilted on. "I've been thinking, boyo. We'll have a little contract together. I'll charm Ann into letting Leroy stay here every Saturday, and I'll back you up against the Swansbury. I'll tell Ann you were playing the latest silly, kids' game, and I'll get her to fix up full-length net curtains for you, on the grounds that you're big now and need privacy, and I'll tell her that once a week I'll come up for what we might call a 'pastoral chat'. Okay?"

The fingers splayed out across the fullest width of the thigh. "Now, let's see... we can be here like this again next week, and what Ann isn't told, she won't worry about. Did you know that 'pastoral' means 'caring for', like a shepherd for his sheep? Well, you'd be surprised what those Christmas-card shepherds used to get up to." Owen stroked the soft, downy flesh of the thigh where it rounded into the crotch. "A contract, eh, then? It'll be instructive for both of us, and we'll have fun." He slid his other hand under the sheet.

Kit lay immobile, his tongue welded to the roof of his mouth. The two hands began to flutter lightly all over his body, except for his privates, which they scarcely touched.

Suddenly Owen hoicked away the impeding sheet. His fingers stole up to Kit's nipples traced a series of delicate patterns about them, and stole back down again. Then, after gliding around his waist for a few seconds, the two hands wedged the top of his right leg between them, and made a thigh and buttock sandwich of it, at which Owen nibbled for some time, before both hands skimmed up again and began to perform fairy-fingertip dances in Kit's navel.

Soon, however – as Kit had anticipated – the fingers drifted inevitably lower and lower, slid down into and tweaked his pubic hair, and then formed themselves into a cup around his testicles.

Mesmerized into immobility, Kit watched the right hand encircle his pump-handle penis, draw it up, and begin siphoning. His brain told him that he must not resist or shout out. His mother must never know. In any case how could a thirteen-year-old, even a strong one like himself, noiselessly overcome a grown man and send him packing?

Resignedly, Kit jammed his thighs together, released them, and pressed them tight again by turns, as quickening waves of libido surged through him. St. Stephen's struck the half hour. The Plan could now be nothing but a catastrophe.

Kit shut his eyes. His body was already taking over, but he refused to look on at his own surrender. He did not open them again until the last ejaculation had petered out, and he lay breathless and ashamed, waiting for the next unpredictable event.

The shame Kit felt was not for having done something immoral with this oversexed man. What alternative was there? Nor was he ashamed of having felt pleasure as he squirmed and jerked. Your body was designed to make you enjoy caressings and orgasms, unless it was defective. The evil was that, without Leroy's permission, he had let this man play in what was now partly Leroy's property, Leroy's new "Do-It-Yourself-Kit", and Leroy was soon going to know that someone else had been messing about with it.

Owen pointed down at himself, and the real explanation of those open flies dawned on Kit. They were no accident. "Do the same to me, quickly," Owen commanded. "I've been here long enough."

Eyes tight, Kit lifted up the yellow wings and took hold of the butterfly's body. Was this what Leroy's would be like when he grew up? He and Owen were of similar build.

Two or three minutes later it was all over. Owen kissed Kit on the lips, murmured, "Dry those tears. Nothing to cry about, laddyo!" and

went out. At that instant there was a knock at the window, the sound Kit had been dreading all the time Owen was in the room.

Leroy's head and shoulders parted the curtains, and he rolled in over the sill. Staring in dismay at Kit's forlorn expression and burning, glistening face, he whispered anxiously, "Why's the light on, man? Somebody could've seen me climbing in."

"Hiya, Basten." It was break-time the following Monday. Kit was in trouble in the Office, and Lipsworth had been kept in by the Maths teacher; so Leroy, armed with a Mars bar filed neatly into two during metalwork, had snatched the opportunity to seek out Hubert Basten, whom he found sitting alone, all melancholy, on a wall.

Leroy was anything but melancholy. Since his timid, fateful request to Kit for a kiss, he had come to think of himself as a different, radically improved person. First there had been the kiss itself and the dramatic response, followed by the larking about before bed; then the sight of Kit bathed in moonlight, Kit naked, waiting, all male and randy – and then, what really made a new person of Leroy... the dawning realization, growing stronger throughout that unique night, that he could satisfy Kit as well as find pleasure in him. Finally, after a last session in the early hours, there had been the mutual pen-knifing and rubbing-together of palms, in token of their being blood-lovers for life. Then, on Saturday evening they had held hands in the cinema; and that night, in fulfillment of the brilliant, blood-lover plan he had invented, he had found the courage to sneak out of his own house and shin up the drainpipe into Kit's bedroom – only to find him forlorn and tearful. It had not been Kit who was the strong one then. Kit had not been able to perform when Leroy had immediately intertwined himself with him. Kit had had to be comforted! Leroy had been surprised to discover that this did not

reduce his own pleasure in the slightest. All these things had made a remarkable difference to his understanding of himself.

"Hiya, Painting," grunted Basten. "Davies not out yet?"

"All break," snorted Leroy. "Silly fool! Not liking girls doesn't mean you have to push them about." Kit, most uncharacteristically, had shoulder-barged Dexter's sister, and her glasses had fallen off and bent.

"Like half a Mars bar? Did a high-tech job on it in metal-work."

"Don't mind. Thanks." Basten stared moodily at his sparkling shoes. He was a bit sissyish about clothes, everyone knew – but why not, thought Kit, when you had a beautiful elegant body and such perfect baby-like skin?

Leroy's conscience was being a nuisance. It had already been mithering him, because he had felt secretly and wickedly pleased that Kit hadn't known how to resist Owen on Saturday night, and had been impotent until two in the morning. Leroy had found something very satisfying in being the stronger and more effective for once. Of course the betrayal didn't count. Leroy had told Kit so. "It's a pity you're not a komodo," he had teased, to comfort him. "They've got two pricks, a spare one for when the first needs recharging!" He wasn't sure if this rumor round the school about komodos was true, but at least his joke had raised a laugh from Kit. They had made love straight-away... or, rather, Leroy had... selfishly delighted that he was getting pleasure while Kit could only be a passive armful. Then they had gone to sleep curled up together until the buzz of the alarm at one fifty-nine, when they both woke up refueled for a second glorious session, and then refueled again for a third, before Leroy sneaked back home, and was let in by a very impressed fifteen-year-old brother. Leroy smiled to himself now, and the smile broke out into a giggle, as he imagined how piqued his lecherous brother would be if

he ever discovered that the ecstasies of pleasure he had been told about and gloated over were all with a boy.

"What's funny?" demanded Basten suspiciously.

"Not you. You're beautiful," replied Leroy, taking a huge risk. He edged closer till both of them were touching. Basten was actually blushing! 'What's come over me?' Leroy thought. 'Who would ever have dreamed that Painting, L. I. would be sitting flirting with the beautiful Basten, H.!"

Basten, as he told Leroy weeks later, had thought, 'This could be interesting.' He fixed an unblinking-lizard stare on Leroy, until the black boy was blushing too, and sweating. Hypnotizing him with the lizard stare, Basten observed, "If you called some boys 'beautiful', they'd think things. Better be careful. Lipsworth'd beat you up if he heard you."

Leroy started to tremble. What to do? Move away, pretending he'd been making a silly joke, and wasn't really interested in Basten at all? That would be a cowardly denial of the truth about himself. On the other hand, Aaron Lipsworth was extremely big and powerful. Tangling up with him would be idiotic. "Why shouldn't I say it? You are beautiful. Kit thinks so too."

Hubert exulted. He had got his hands on an undreamt-of secret. "Don't say I haven't warned you. Lipsworth's my minder. He calls me 'Pubes', 'Hube the Pubes'. If he found out you'd been touching my legs, he'd chop you into mincemeat and sell you for school dinners."

"I haven't," Leroy faltered, but his knees were at that very moment resting against Basten's, and Basten wasn't pushing them away. The knee-touching had been accidental, but Leroy didn't want to make the first move to put space between them.

"Oh yes you have," chanted Basten pantomimically, and shifted so that their thighs were touching. "If my minder saw you now, you

wouldn't be in French next: you'd be in hospital."

Leroy edged away. "Sorry."

"What for?" purred Basten softly, sliding close again. "I never said I didn't like it. You scared? You can call me Hubert, if you want."

"Course I'm not scared," Leroy lied.

"You and Davies perverts, like Lipsworth and me?" grinned Hubert.

Leroy felt irritated. "We might be like you, maybe, but we don't call ourselves perverts."

"Other people will." Hubert was satisfied. He knew what he knew. "You can put your hand up here on my leg if you want," he murmured, almost inaudibly. "Nobody's around."

Vanquished, Leroy let his right hand creep over Hubert's left thigh. It felt quite hot through its terylene sheath.

Hubert whispered "Would you and Davies like to join our Society? We've never got anyone from here into it, only from St. George's. Lipsworth's our Grand Master. It's a one hundred per cent secret society. There's a two-part initiation test. Lipsworth'd kill anyone who split on us. I could recommend you. He listens to me."

"What sort of test?"

"That's secret too. You get told. You have to agree first without knowing, and then go to the Baths to take Part One. We call Part One the 'Handshake'."

"I don't know if Kit'll agree. I'll ask him," muttered Leroy. "We've only just found out about each other."

"Join on your own, then."

"Never," sniffed Leroy irritably. He didn't seem to be quite in charge of himself. He had a suspicion that feeling Hubert's thigh was disloyal to Kit, but he couldn't force himself away.

"Look out. He'll see us," hissed Hubert. Aaron Lipsworth was hurrying across the playground. "Shall I ask him later on for you?" Hastily Leroy nodded acceptance of Hubert's offer and shuffled sideways from Lipsworth's darling, so as to make a respectable-looking gap.

Lipsworth cantered up to them, grinning triumphantly. "She let me out. Needed to go to the Ladies." Leroy handed him the other half of the Mars bar. "Thanks."

"Hubert says we can all go swimming together next Wednesday," whispered Leroy excitedly, "and Lipsworth'll do our initiation, if we want to join The Masons, and we can call him Aaron."

"What's The Masons?"

"Aaron's gang, for boys... like us. Masons are men who work on other people's 'stones'! You have to learn the password – 'cept it's not a word, it's a special 'Handshake', and Aaron'll show us at the baths." Leroy could hardly contain himself. He had achieved a success that Kit hadn't even thought of trying for. It had been he, Leroy Ishmael Painting, hitherto merely an unquestioning follower who, by asking for a kiss, had changed four people's worlds: four very special people, perhaps the only ones like it in the school. Anxious not to appear a stupe, he had said nothing to Kit about The Masons until now, in case Aaron rejected Hubert's suggestion. There wouldn't be much difficulty persuading Kit now, things having got this far.

Kit grinned. He loved seeing Leroy so animated. The black boy's face sparkled like cats' eyes on a dark road at night.

It was afternoon end-of-school on the first 'weekiversary', bar a few hours, of their coming together as lovers. They had hardly spoken to each other since Morning Assembly, because Kit was in weightlifting practice during lunch. The moment school was out, he had had to relate in graphic detail what Owen had done to him the

previous evening. The cat's-eyes had almost split their owner's head apart, they had grown so wide!

Leroy couldn't feel angry with Kit, who really had no choice but to obey Owen. Nevertheless, even hearing about Kit being hugged with nothing on, and wriggling around with another naked somebody, made Leroy feel all hot and hungry. Saturday evening seemed an awful long time to wait for. Determinedly, he diverted the conversation back to the mysteries of the membership qualifications for The Masons.

The "Handshake" ceremony took place under cover of a fake wrestling match which Hubert and Aaron started immediately the group entered the water. There were two other boys – Rumesh, a well-built, goldenish, half-caste Sri Lankan; and Michael, a silent, white bean-pole – already members, from St. George's, a school near Barbridge Market.

"The Masons is an absolutely secret society. Make sure you keep it that way," growled Aaron. "The rest of you go on assing about all round us like porpoises while I show Kit the 'Handshake'." They sploshed forward into the middle of the pool, where the water was up to Kit's nipples. "Okay, splash harder, you lubberly newts!" barked Aaron and, locking his left arm round Kit's waist, he whispered, "You do the 'Handshake' like this and you don't shout out, or it won't count." As he spoke, his right fist, invisible under the water, drove up hard into Kit's skimpily-trunked privates, then hung onto them like a puppy worrying a bone in a bag.

Kit almost fainted. He couldn't have shouted out, even if he'd wanted to. His breath shot hissing from his mouth, like air escaping from a puncture. He bent forward in his agony and would have gone under, had it not been for the arms encircling his waist, as Aaron

pretended to be wrestling with him, until Kit had recovered enough to gasp, "Are you going to do that to Leroy?"

"No," grinned Aaron, "Pubes will. He's Deputy Master. Are you okay now?"

Kit nodded, splashing water all around himself, feigning to be undaunted, hoping to hide his tears. Still fighting off waves of nausea, he swam up to Leroy and gasped, "It's dreadful, but don't cry out or you'll have to do it again."

The ceremony was then performed on Leroy. Kit watched in suppressed fury, seeing him collapse face-down in the water, hands and legs flailing wildly as panic eclipsed pain. Hubert, putting on a great show of conquering-heroness, trawled him to the side of the pool, and left him clutching the handrail and wheezing convulsively.

Kit butterflied to the side. "You all right?", but Leroy's face crumpled and he began to cry. So, in a desperate effort to hide the streaming tears, Kit – who was a powerful swimmer – seized him in a swirling embrace and swam off with him to the deep end, as if playing kidnapping. When they reached the far rail, he turned and swam slowly back again, and then pretended to fight him... until Leroy felt ready to rejoin the others.

"You've passed Part One... and without shouting," complimented Aaron. "Pubes and Michael shouted when they had it. There's Part Two as well, but we can't do that here."

Kit was surprised to find his anger dissipating. His sense of belonging, of having been selected for a very special secret society, was exhilarating.

That evening, after Kit had submitted with discomfort to the demands of the "little contract", he was told by an extremely smug Owen, "Won't be long before it's Wednesdays at six, instead of ten."

"Why?"

"You'll find out – and it'll be regular!"

Ann Davies was effervescent. When Owen had returned home on Monday night, he had kissed her exuberantly and exclaimed "McDonald's, six till nine, Wednesday evenings. All arranged, you only have to say Yes," – and because the idea was far from alien, she had said, "Yes" without hesitation, and kissed him back just as exuberantly. She had been longing to do something outside the house.

So, on Wednesday, when Kit came back from the baths, Ann had cried excitedly "You won't find me here this time next week!" Then she had told him all about it, concluding, "It's only a few pounds, of course, but that's not the point... I just want to do something different, be a different person. You shall have fifteen per cent. Single-Child Allowance!"

"Don't qualify! I is not a child. I is a young man!"

"Okay. Single Person's Allowance!" she had retorted.

Kit had nearly answered back that actually he wasn't single; he was married – to Leroy – but he gagged himself with a giggle.

"Start next week. So next Wednesday you can bring some friends round to tea and we'll have a little celebration before I go out."

The idea of fifteen per cent of Ann's wages as regular extra pocket money appealed greatly to Kit, and he smiled his acquiescence. It was ages since he had seen her all bubbly, and it made him profoundly happy, though the reason for such a depth of happiness was not clear to him. He just knew that it was so – and it would be fun to tell his friends to buy "Ann-burgers" at McDonald's, and even more fun to be his mum's customer himself. As for humoring her idea of a celebration tea, he would invite The Masons, and establish himself as a properly contributing member.

It was not until a minute to ten, when his mother had gone back down, and he was taking off his pajamas in readiness for Owen's hateful visit, that Kit suddenly realized the significance of Owen's smug "Wednesdays at six". Mum would always be out of the house then... for over three hours.

Leroy switched off his video of Wild Boy from Aveyron, and mulled excitedly over the details of the stupendous plan which had just burst upon his mind.

The "little celebration" was over. "What charming boys," smiled Ann lovingly – and a grateful Kit, relieved of the strain of playing host, smiled lovingly back at her. "Now, how about a dab of powder on the nose? Must look our best, mustn't we?" Ann fished in her handbag.

A frisson of alarm ran down Kit's spine, and he touched his nose involuntarily. Had Mum guessed? Had she changed her attitude? Once – before he had understood properly about himself – he had overheard her talking disparagingly to his father, his real father, about "Effeminate men and those awful homosexuals".

Ann dabbed her nose with powder, and Kit's moment of truth was postponed. He realized that she was all of a fuss with excitement at the prospect of going out to work. She was like a kid with a new computer game.

"Now, just let me get their names straight again. The really good-looking one is Hubert; the big macho fellow is Aaron, though he doesn't look very Biblical to me; the quiet, skinny chap's Michael; and the tall Sri Lankan boy is... oh, what was his name? Rumesh? Right?"

Kit nodded. "And there was Leroy," he pouted with pretended indignation.

"I knew him already. They're a really nice bunch. You can have them here whenever you like... and don't worry about that window. I'll advance you enough to pay for it."

"Thanks, Mum," grinned Kit, and was then embarrassed to find his face turning crimson; for a key had clicked loudly in the lock of the front door.

"Hi there, you two. Twenty to six, Ann, love. Time you were off."

"Your tea's on the hotplate, Owen. Back before ten, boys." Then Ann was gone. Desperately Kit ordered his face to cool down but failed.

Owen came back with a dish. "Had a good day, partner?"

"Broke a window at school, messing about." It was not the whole truth. The whole truth was that Patton had sniggered at Hubert in the changing-room, and Kit, when rupturing Patton's lower lip, had inadvertently ruptured the window too.

"Ah well, boys will be boys – and men will be men with boys," chuckled Owen. "Nearly six o'clock, but the night is young indeed! I'll just have a quick bath and then backsides up, eh!"

Kit's heart pounded against his chest, which seemed suddenly too small for it, as if under his skin there was a stretched network of strained muscles and jangling nerves. The skin of his thighs and upper arms had turned clammy and goose-pimply. 'There's nothing to worry about, stupe,' he reprimanded himself as he trudged upstairs. 'Everything'll be the same, just more of it, that's all,' but already he could hear water running into the bath.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Kit checked his posture. His mother had left fifty minutes ago for her second Wednesday spell at McDonald's. Tap, tap, tap. He adjusted his right leg. The rules Owen had laid down last week were strict. He would tap six times, by which time Kit must be waiting in position. This week Owen had brought home a little cane,

and dropped hints about his wishes never being flouted. Kit sighed. Any second now.

A draft of powder-fragrant air wafted across the room. Kit, crouching on the mattress, with his face turned sideways on the pillow and his bottom raised high, in line with the door, watched his step-father slide fast the bolt, and stand motionless, taking in the scene. "My, there's a sight for... Welsh eyes! You've excelled yourself." Owen's penis, rigid and ostentatious, and already condomed, bobbed up and down as he eased off his dressing-gown and draped it over a chair.

The fragrance was Yardley's "Roses", Ann's favorite. Kit burned inwardly with rage. "Roses" was Leroy's favorite too, since he had discovered it in the bathroom that wonderful first night.

Kit held his breath. He was tense and uncertain. He had done everything that had to be done. His bed, instead of hugging the wall, was right out in the center of the room. In addition to the sixty-watt ceiling light, there was a filigree of parti-colored Christmas-tree bulbs festooned around the lounge standard-lamp, filched for the purpose, bathing the room in a beautiful, soft warmth.

The bed had been stripped bare of top sheet and blankets and transformed into a royal throne, and in the middle of this throne was Kit Davies, boy king, also stripped bare. He was balancing in the required attitude – legs wide apart and buttocks uplifted as high as he could get them, ready to be possessed. No words were to be spoken, not one – until all the conditions had been fulfilled.

Owen leaped onto the bed, knelt in the V of the open thighs, and pushed his plug into the uplifted socket. Using both hands, he pinioned Kit by the ribs and thrust once, twice, three, four times – until the penis finally rammed in. Kit let out an unsuppressible yelp.

Apparently indifferent, Owen went on thrusting, varying his speed and force every few seconds until suddenly, half-lifting Kit into the air, he began pounding faster and faster at him with unbearable ferocity.

"Now!" yelled Kit. There was a loud clatter and, to his unspeakable relief, he was instantaneously dazzled by flashing lights that for a moment made the room as bright as day – but Owen could not stop. On and on he drove, until, abruptly, he emitted a sort of whinny, and collapsed. Kit rolled away and, with a nervous grin, gazed up into the goggling eyes of The Masons, gleefully doing their ad hoc duty as "Gentlemen of Kit's Bedchamber" – Leroy's creation, Hubert's phrase. Each Mason was stark-naked, unless you counted cameras as articles of clothing. The Masons grinned back triumphantly. Owen Davies was not grinning. He was flabbergasted, and frightened.

Kit surveyed his "Gentlemen" with amusement – black Leroy glistening with sweat; Michael, shivering, reed-like; Aaron, a Tarzan by comparison, his circumcision straining at the seams, and Hubert, very flushed, a sight for anyone's eyes. They were no gentlemen at all, these Masons – each gazing down with unashamed lust, his penis cocked ceilingwards, stiff and crude. Hubert was using his as a peg for his mini-camera! Self-controlled Rumesh didn't have an erection, but he was staring down with undisguised interest at Owen, whose condition was definitely not that of a gentleman.

"Action!" rasped Aaron suddenly. The boys spread out so as to focus from different standpoints; then, cameras flashing, took more pictures of the bodies on the bed.

"Leroy." Leroy perched himself beside Owen's head. Click.

"Pubes." Hubert jumped up onto the bed, and lay between Kit and Owen. Click, click, click.

"Rumesh." Kit and Hubert rolled off the bed, and Rumesh took their place beside Owen. Click, click, click.

"Me!" roared Aaron. Owen, his naked body scissored between the Grand Master's bare, muscular legs, was surrounded by giggling youths, flaunting their nude virility on and about the bed, as Kit took more photographs.

"We've got enough pictures and witnesses to have you sent down for years, prisoner in the dock," proclaimed Aaron. Owen turned horribly pale and began to sweat.

"You're on trial!" shouted Hubert. "Aaron is the judge."

The Masons placed themselves on either side of their brawny leader. "You are charged with having sex with Kit Davies," Aaron intoned, "and, for that, all his friends could be jealous and punish you by beating you up. Worse, you forced him to do it, which is against everybody's principles, so you could be beaten up again or be handed over to the police. Which do you choose – being judged and sentenced secretly by us, or being handed over, and getting all that publicity, as well as prison?"

Kit stepped forward to protest. Aaron turned towards him. Their eyes met, and Kit retreated.

"That's blackmail!" snapped Owen.

"So's forcing Kit to have sex with you, because he didn't want to upset his mother," barked Aaron. "It's not easy for mothers when their sons are gay. Mine cries. Let alone if their husbands rape boys. 'Child Abuser'! Tabloid headlines. How about that?"

"Thought he enjoyed it," grunted Owen defensively, "and it helped me to be more relaxed and sexy with my wife, but you lot wouldn't understand that."

"I suppose," piped up Hubert, seeing Kit's eyes fix angrily on Owen, "any mature boy our age would enjoy the actual feeling when

he was climaxed. But forcing Kit was immoral. He actually hated doing it."

"Shut up, Pubes," glowered Aaron. "Who's Grand Master? Mr. Davies, do you wish to be punished by our Society, The Naked Masons, or be reported to the police?" the boys grinned. "Naked" was a real Grand Master-stroke! Aaron was brilliant.

Owen looked around. "If I let you 'punish' me, as you call it, does that mean you'll never reveal anything about...?"

"Of course," said Kit, "or we wouldn't be an honorable society. Besides, when we grow up, we might be like you."

"Okay," scowled Owen. "Go ahead. Was all this your idea, Kit Davies? How did these boys get in here, anyway?" Owen's voice sounded as if he were trying to humor them; but he knew that they knew he needed to keep his activities secret far more than they theirs.

"It was my idea," smirked Leroy, "and getting in was easy. We just climbed through the window, and hid in the cupboards."

"Punish him – the 'Handshake'!" exploded Hubert, unable to hold himself quiet any longer. Kit and Leroy stared at him in horrified disbelief and then at Aaron.

"You can't..." began Kit, but Aaron nodded to Hubert.

Hubert looked down at Owen and said, "It's the same as our initiation ceremony. It doesn't hurt... much. And you mustn't shout out, or you get it again. Ready?"

Owen was swallowing convulsively. He realized that something very unpleasant was going to happen. Every Naked Mason could see the fear in their prisoner's eyes.

"Well?" snapped Aaron.

"Anything you say," croaked Owen.

"Stand with your legs apart," commanded Aaron, and nodded to his Deputy. Hubert stepped forward eagerly.

Kit, appalled by the prospect of having to live with Owen afterwards, begged Aaron to invent an alternative, but was shouted down. "No treachery," muttered Leroy.

Hubert's right hand came up with merciless satisfaction. Owen let out a terrible cry and folded over, clutching at his privates, then sank down writhing and moaning on the floor.

"He shouted," muttered Hubert disgustedly.

"Leave him," ordered Aaron. "I expect it's worse for old people." He bent down, and with no apparent effort lifted Owen onto the bed. "It was the fairest punishment we could think of, Mr Davies," he murmured, almost apologetically.

"You're all crazy," wheezed Owen, "crazy bloody sadists!" But Aaron, who seemed suddenly to have developed a soft heart, sat beside him and tried to explain, in the way unpopular punishments were justified by teachers to schoolboys, that it was only right to get serious retribution when you had seriously offended. Then he added, with a conciliatory smile, "Rumesh likes the idea of having sex with men, not only boys. Talk nice to him and he could be yours in future, if you want, instead of Kit."

Rumesh stared down at Owen, who was sitting pale-faced on the bed. "There's never anybody at my house Wednesday evenings, if you're interested, Mr. Davies. Picture palace night."

"Not sure," replied Owen cautiously, "but I might come and see where you hang out."

Aaron smiled again. "Now we have to have Part Two of the initiation. I initiate Kit. Pubes does Leroy. Then Kit and Leroy choose someone each to do, and..."

After Hubert and Aaron had finished, Aaron announced, "Now these two've got to choose somebody to do. Okay, Leroy? Here's a condom, who do you choose?"

"You," replied Leroy, blushing purple, and not daring to risk more than a sidelong glance at Hubert's disappointed face.

The doorbell rang. Kit, unthinkingly imagining that his mother was back, hurried into his clothes, and ran downstairs – reappearing after a couple of minutes, his face one huge grin. "Mrs. Swansbury. She asked if my mother was in. I said no. She said, was my mother aware that I was having boys in to my bedroom through the window? I said my mother'd told me I could have boys any time I liked. So now I'm going to." He surveyed his grinning friends.

Hubert, lying on the carpet, turned from delicate-white to snooker-ball red. He knew without being told, and rose to his feet.

"On the bed," mumbled Kit sheepishly.

Aaron handed over Vaseline and a condom. "Okay," he frowned – he hated anyone even looking at Hubert.

Hubert, his face still a shining, brilliant red, clambered up onto the mattress, and made himself as accessible as he knew how. The Naked Masons gathered round. There was a spattering of applause. This was going to be the perfect end to a perfect day. They all knew it was.