



Chris Kent's

The Real
Tom Brown's
School Days

An English School Boy Parody



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THE REAL TOM BROWN'S SCHOOL DAYS

THE REAL TOM BROWN'S SCHOOL DAYS

Parody Novel
in the English Tradition
by

Chris Kent

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FOREWORD

Boys often embraced homosexuality either with a passionate but quiet sincerity or as an amusement shared between friends, a distraction from the rigours of school life. It seems to have had little or no effect on actual sexual orientation either then or later.

Alisdare Hickson, *The Poisoned Bowl Sex and the public school* (Duckworth Press)

Sometimes at a school like E..., a boy appears of such exceptional beauty and sexual fascination that he becomes a legend. It happened while I was there. The boy's name in this case was S.... R.... Everyone was talking about him, and most were lusting after him. Besides his unearthly beauty, he also had a great gift as a footballer, and when he was on the field with his house eleven, older boys from other houses would often gather round just to watch his exquisite flying figure, groaning with longing as he tossed the tarnished gold of his hair back from his forehead, or charged into the scrum with arms flying. He appeared to have the unconscious power to uncover a hidden vein of pederasty in the breasts of the most normal seeming male.

John Lehmann, quoted in *The Poisoned Bowl*

It was a long time before I was able to discover any great joy in life and not until I was almost forty did I tell anyone about my school-day passions. For years I hated the happy memories, the frustrating contrast of past and present. One day I could take no more and I burnt all my diaries, meticulous records of every day school life. In retrospect I regret that but at least I still have David's football sweater which he used to wear in goal.

An anonymous contributor to *The Poisoned Bowl*

All this acting it up — making a joke of it even to myself — it was only a way to pretend it wasn't true. But it is.

Julian Mitchell, *Another Country*, Amber Lane Press

The Real Tom Brown's School Days

CHAPTER 1

Special Friendships

*His head throbbed, his heart leapt,
and he could hardly keep himself
from springing out of bed and rushing
about the room.*

Tom Brown was not amused. He was enjoying himself immensely, but he was not amused. If one more master told him that Dr Arnold wished to see him in his study, he would scream. He really would.

Tom remembered what our Saviour had said and turned the other cheek. Dreamily he applied the bar of soap to it, wondering if he should do his bum hole again. He'd done it twice already. That should be enough. It should be as clean as a whistle by now. Anymore would be indulgent, and indulgence led to sin. Tom's semi-tumescent penis told him how close he was already to sin. He took his hand away from the danger area and applied the bar of soap to his chest. His nipples tightened and rose in response to his caresses. Drat! It was no good. Was there nowhere safe on the body of a twelve-year-old boy?

The shower turned from warm to luke-warm to bloody freezing as Tom roughly twisted the brass handle. He hopped up and down on the spot turning his face up to the spray. It hit him like a handful of needles. Blinded, he dropped the soap, staggered out of the tiled cubicle, tripped over the raised step and went headlong across the bathroom.

"Whoa, Brown, steady as you go."

Tom felt himself supported by a pair of arms, strong arms, arms with hairs on them. He risked opening his eyes which still stung and looked up into the face of Lawton Major, the senior prefect in his House. He blushed profusely.

"Sorry, Lawton Major. Tripped in the shower. Lost my balance. Thanks."

Lawton held the boy at arms length, his hands resting on Tom's shoulders. A smile crinkled the skin round his eyes. Tom found it difficult

to look away from those eyes. He had known that green eyes existed but he'd never seen them. Certainly not eyes like these: green with pinpoints of hazel. Big green eyes. Tom knew they were big. His own were big. He'd been called Bush Baby at junior school. He wondered if Lawton's eyes were bigger than his. He blushed again as he followed the senior prefect's eyes. They drifted from his face, downwards across his chest and tummy, downwards across his hips, his groin, his growing bits, legs, feet. They began the return journey, seeming to drink him in as they travelled across his naked, dripping self. Could eyes drink? Of course they couldn't. But there was that song. How did it go now? Uh, "Drink to me only with thine eyes..." or something like that. Anything like that would do. Anything to take his mind off... his penis! It was a little more than semi-tumescent now. Disaster! Catastrophe! Tom was getting a stiffie, a full-blown hard-on, and right in front of the senior House prefect.

Lawton put the junior out of his misery. Grabbing a towel from a rack, he began to rub Tom down vigorously, beginning with that thick mop of brown hair that asked to be cut. Oddly enough, neither boy found the senior's action out of the ordinary. It would have been different if any other boys had been around but they had the bathroom to themselves. The number of sopping towels hanging from the rack told them it was unlikely there would be any other late-comers that evening. Tom found it comforting to have his hair towelled dry so roughly. This was the way his father had always done it, and as with his father, he submitted to Lawton's rough caresses.

"Now then, my young cavalier, why so late? Everyone else is in his room. Reading hour started ten minutes ago."

Tom's shoulders trembled as he explained. His voice trembled, too. "Sorry, Lawton. Out practising. Cross country. Camp next week, you know." The towel moved down across the boy's shoulders, his back, his chest. He kept on talking as Lawton moved around and dropped to his knees in front of him. "Want the House to do well. Can run a bit. Ran for my junior school." His voice trembled as he felt Lawton's hands though the towel. They were drying his hips, his stomach, his bottom — surely not between his buttocks — at least he was clean in there, clean as a whistle. Hands and towel ran the length of each leg. Then up to his crotch. Tom's big brown eyes widened as the hands dried his naughty bits, each stroke of the towel a caress. He wasn't semi-tumescent now; he was as stiff

as a poker. There was nothing he could do. Lawton was a senior prefect. Tom was a sprat, a squirt, a junior, lowest of the low. He also realised there was nothing he wanted to do. Tom Brown closed his eyes, a hand on each of Lawton's shoulders, balancing himself.

"There, that's you done, Brown. Get into your kit. You've got fifteen minutes SR left. I want to see you on your bed in two minutes." Tom opened his eyes. Lawton was striding from the bathroom. He turned and smiled. If Tom hadn't been stunned, he would have smiled back, but considering he still had a stiffie like a plate that might not have been in order.

Tom scrambled into his underpants, corduroy shorts, socks and slippers. He pulled on a regulation light blue Aertex T-shirt, not sure at all whose it was. He stepped to the sinks, found his toothbrush, squirted on some paste and brushed his teeth vigorously. Tom peered into the mirror, wiped away the steam and peered again. Big brown eyes peered back at him. Oval face, high cheekbones, normal lips, arching eyebrows, a few freckles, a nose that some called snub but his mother called cute. Did all that add up to a 'bumboy,' a question that had been bothering him? He'd never thought of himself as a bumboy. He wasn't even quite sure what a bumboy was, but he recalled a conversation in the dorm. "Lane won't get the cane. He deserves it, but he won't get. He's Cornish's bumboy, so he won't get it." Another voice chimed in. "Better than being Mr. Clifford's tart." That had started it. Pillow fight! A real corker! Tom had joined in without the slightest idea what it was all about. He didn't care. A pillow fight was a pillow fight. You didn't really need an excuse, and once one had begun, it was open to all-comers.

There was a mystery to be solved. Why was Lane Mr. Cornish's bumboy and who was Mr. Clifford's tart? He'd started to ask, but that had only set off the pillow fight again until Lawton strode into the dormitory and asked for quiet. He got it, immediately. That was the trouble with public school. It was full of mysteries. Life had been so simple at junior school. You went in the morning; you came home in the afternoon. But here school life did not end at 3.15. It went on into the evening, into the night, and you'd hardly put your head down, when the gong clanged and it started again.

It had taken Tom a few weeks to settle into the routine of the boarding house. He was an organised soul. He liked the rhythm of the day. It was still

difficult to get used to some things. Mass showers in the morning and evenings remained a little uncomfortable. Twenty naked boys leaping around the bathroom did not make for order. Often there were two to a cubicle where it was bad form to close the curtains; sometimes two to a bath. Each bath could have taken three juniors comfortably: huge, iron, claw-footed Victorian relics that took twenty minutes to fill even with both taps going full blast. Tom was not particularly modest; he had two younger brothers at home and they often shared the bathroom, if not the bath at home. But these were bigger boys, the oldest juniors touching fourteen.

Some of them had hair, a lot of it, in those places where, in theory at least, Tom would have lots by the end of his junior years. And some of them had big cocks, very big cocks. The word made him blush again. He was used to willy, even penis was fine, but there was something strange, alien, menacing about “cocks”. They belonged to the world of men and Tom was perfectly happy being a boy. Of course he was used to erections; he’d been having them for years. But they’d nothing to do with him. They just happened. In bed, at the breakfast table, in class, at church. He just tucked his stiffie to one side, the left side, and got on with his life. But erections in the bathroom were of a different order. He couldn’t believe how casual the boys were about their erections. Some of the bigger boys waved them about like trophies. Others made vaguely menacing advances to the smaller, prettier cherubs who laughed and ran around the bathroom chased by a cock that looked like a club in the grip of its proprietor. And there was the afternoon when someone whipped back a shower curtain and one boy was kneeling on the floor in front of another one and... The bigger boy had whipped the curtain closed and, amid raucous cheers, shouted a variety of curses that made Tom’s hair prickle on his neck.

His mind returned to Lawton... on your bed in two minutes.” How long ago had that been? Day dreaming again. Tom ran a comb through his hair. It broke. He threw it into the sink, left the bathroom, turned right and sprinted the length of the corridor. He took the stairs three at a time. Too late. Lavender polish. Slip. Slide. Crash landing.

Lawton caught the boy in mid-flight and held him. “Brown!” There was a note of exasperation in the prefect’s voice. “I said two minutes, not twenty minutes. You’ve missed SR completely. My study 7.35. Now get your slippers and get along to tea.”

More mysteries. SRH, Silent Reading Hour, was not an hour at all; it was half an hour. And dinner was tea, though it was taken at 7 each evening. And now Tom had to be at Lawton's study at 7.35: lines, standing out, the slipper, the cane? It would not be true to say that Tom was not frightened. He was. But not very frightened. And he deserved the punishment, so he would take it, whatever it was. At least it would be during Prep, and of the few things in life that Tom Brown found stultifyingly tedious, Prep topped the list. Sitting there, trying by sheer willpower to make the hands of the clock move faster, was Tom's idea of Hell. Compared with Prep, a few strokes on the bottom from Lawton was Heaven. Tom wondered if his buttocks would be bare. Would he be bent over an armchair? Would Lawton finger the target before he struck? Would he be allowed to keep his shirt down at the front? Would Lawton see his penis? That: wouldn't matter much. He'd seen it already. And he'd seen in it in a state that only Tom himself had seen before. Tom wondered...

With a start, the boy realised he'd been day-dreaming. Twenty past seven. If he didn't get to the dining room, he'd be slippered or an empty stomach. He jumped to his feet. Drat! he had another stiffie. Where had that come from? No, don't think about it, just get to dinner. Tea, I mean, tea. Bloody hell!

Trust Lawton to be late when I manage to get here on time, Tom sighed. He had bolted his tea. Sprinted to Prep. Obtained permission (a formality) from the duty master to attend the senior prefect's study. Leapt the stairs two at a time to the top floor, sprinted to the far end of the senior corridor, brushed himself down, straightened himself up, and rapped smartly at Lawton's door. No reply. He checked his watch: 7.35. He knocked again. No reply. He waited. He shuffled his feet and waited. He shuffled them some more and waited some more. Perhaps Lawton had forgotten. Perhaps he wasn't coming. Perhaps he should go down to Prep. No, anything but that. Not Prep.

Tom tiptoed along the corridor. He peered down the stairwell. He listened for footsteps. None. He listened again. A door opened. He turned. Lawton was at his study door. "Brown! You're late. Get along here smartish." Tom broke into a sprint, checked himself, then sprinted again. It was a long corridor running the full length of the house. He arrived at Lawton's door, apple-cheeked and audibly panting. "Get in."

Tom stood on the carpet in front of Lawton's desk. He let his glance slide around the room. No sign of a cane. The slipper then. The senior prefect wore slippers, leather slippers, and a dressing gown, a rather tatty, woollen dressing gown. At 7.30 in the evening? Another mystery. Surely he wasn't wearing pyjamas underneath his dressing gown. "This place is a mess. I'm having a shower. Tidy it up." And Lawton was gone.

Now to the average boy, Lawton's room was anything but a mess; it was in depressingly good order. But Tom Brown was no average boy when it came to messes; order was his passion, his obsession, and he immediately saw what Lawton meant. That picture was not straight. There were ashes in the hearth. The waste paper basket was not empty. Shoes had been thrown in a heap. A school blazer lay on the couch. "This beats Prep any day."

Tom tore into the room as Napoleon had torn into the Austrians at Marengo: organised, orderly and irresistible. History was Tom's favourite subject; it had so many lessons to teach. Chaos collapsed before him. Order was restored.

The door opened. Lawton came in, a bath towel round his waist, dressing gown over his arm. He let the dressing gown fall to the couch. Tom picked it up and hung it on a door peg. Lawton looked around and gave a satisfied murmur. He undid the bath towel and let it fall to the floor. "Tea." This was not a request, but for the moment Tom stood non-plussed. They'd just had tea, or was that dinner? Since the towel had dropped he had a problem keeping his eyes on Lawton's, but then he noticed Lawton's finger pointing behind him. The younger boy turned. Ah! A teapot in the hearth and beside it an electric kettle. He stooped and plugged the lead in. He looked in the pot. Yes, there was tea.

"... done a good job." He realised Lawton was talking to him. He turned. The older boy was towelling his head vigorously. For a moment he thought about taking the towel and doing it for him. "... tea? Or do you want to go down, to Prep, I mean?" Tom shook his head, then realised he could not be seen. "Tea, please, Lawton, if it's not too much trouble." Lawton's finger was erect again, no, not erect, pointing. "Sit..." The rest was muffled. Tom sat on the couch. He could hardly sit in the senior prefect's armchair. He sat directly facing the older boy's crotch.

He couldn't avoid it any more. Lawton had big eyes and a penis to match. It swung heavily between his thighs. His arms were hairy. Tom remembered that, but not as hairy as his crotch. Thick black hair stretched

across his groin, then crawled down the inside of his legs, disappearing under his balls. Tom was fascinated. The big cock kept on swinging, keeping time with the towelling of the prefect's hair. Tom wondered if Lawton got stiffies. That must be a helluva sight if it was that big when it was soft. Big balls, too, very big. How did Lawton get that lot inside a cricket box? Tom leaned forward for a closer inspection just as Lawton whipped the towel from his head, wrapped it round his shoulders and began towelling them. Both boys went beetroot red. Lawton turned away and kept on towelling. Now his buttocks swung in time to the towelling. Tom's eyes opened wide, not at the sight of the swinging buttocks, perhaps not entirely at those, but at the realisation he had another stiffie. Not now, please, not now, I've got to make the tea, I've got to stand up. He wrestled his penis to the left.

"... my fag." Lawton was talking to him again. What was he talking about? Fags? Cigarettes? Surely the senior prefect did not smoke. The towel hit him in the face. "Wakey, wakey, Brown. I asked you if you'd like to be my fag." Lawton was wrapping the dressing gown around him. The damp smell of his body filled Tom's nose. His hard-on hardened. "Pour the tea." He stumbled to the hearth, bent almost doubled, and quickly kneeled. He stirred the tea. "It's not quite ready." He played for time. Lawton was in his armchair.

"Well, how'd you like to fag for me?" The shilling dropped in the gas meter of Tom's mind. Fagging, that's what they called it. It was slave-labour really, but if you were a junior you had no choice. It was tradition, and the entire edifice of the public school system stood on the foundations of tradition. "Course, you'll have to miss an half hour of every Prep after half term. Getting my tea and toast ready."

"I'll do it. I'll be your fag." Lawton was taken aback by the boy's enthusiasm. Still, he was senior House prefect, so Brown obviously realised the honour being done him. As for Brown, he was doubly delighted; not only would he miss half Prep every evening but the gist of this Sunday's compulsory letter had been done for him. "Dear Mum and Dad, I'm going to be a fag...? That would do. The usual request for a food parcel, the inter-House rugby scores, and a Your loving son, would be more than sufficient. Tom sat in the hearth, eyes shining.

"What a curious chap?" thought Lawton. "A bit all over the place, but he does make me laugh. Good-looking, too. Though some of that hair's got

to go.” He pushed his own hair into place. For some reason he wanted, to look well for this boy. Why, he didn’t know. It was as mysterious as his impulse to dry the boy this afternoon. What if someone had walked in—another prefect, a master, another junior? Lawton watched the boy stir the tea. “Shit! I’m getting a hard-on.” He blushed, relieved that Tom was facing the other way. He pulled his erection up against his stomach.

What was happening? He’d never been a bumboy when he was a junior, not that invitations hadn’t been issued, and he’d never taken one as a senior, not that surreptitious offers hadn’t been made. It was all rather silly, all rather dangerous. And why now? For a rather common little oik who made him laugh. But those eyes... Stop it! That hair... Stop it! That smile... “For Christ’s sake, stop it!”

“Uh, stop what? Sorry, Lawton, I’m just making sure the tea’s stewed properly.”

“Stop calling me Lawton.” Lawton was desperate. “My name’s Robert. My friends call me Rob. You can call me Robert. Not outside, of course. But in here, when you’re fagging for me. And I’m going to call you Tom, and if you don’t like it, you can lump it. Speaking of which, two lumps for me.” Tom giggled. “And stop giggling. You’re not a girl. No, you’re certainly not a girl.”

Now if Tom Brown had been your average, well-drilled public school junior, he would have been horrified. No junior in his right mind ever addressed a senior prefect by his first name, not unless he was lying under him or on top of him. Even then it was trespassing on the bounds of familiarity. But Tom was new to the system. He had been dismayed to find that so many of the boys, young and old, addressed each other by their second names. Even when they lay in bed at night. It came as a relief to find that someone wanted to call him by his first name, and that he could call him by his first name. He poured the tea. “One for yourself, Tom, biscuits are in the tin.” He ran Robert round his mouth several times: Robert, Robert, Robert. He liked the name, liked it better than Rob. He’d once had a dog called Rob; it went deaf, it got distemper, it died, but he didn’t tell Lawton that.

Tom rose (his hard-on had eased) and passed a chipped mug of tea and two digestive biscuits to Lawton, to Robert. He took his own mug, a chipped partner’s of Robert’s, and one digestive biscuit to the couch. The boys looked at each other over the steaming brims.

“Now Brown — Tom — tell me about yourself.”

“Well, Lawton — Robert! — what would you like to know?”

Tom proceeded to describe an entirely ordinary boy. The more he spoke, the more fascinated Robert became. Tom was not a product of the prep-public school system. In fact, he had arrived at School a year late from the despised state system. The boy’s grandfather had died in Australia leaving him pots of money with the single condition that Tom went to a good public school for his secondary education. With misgivings, his mother and father had agreed, and Tom found himself abruptly uprooted from his town school to a mansion ‘somewhere in the south of England’.

“It’s all a bit new,” said Tom, “but I’ll get the hang of it in time.”

Robert passed the biscuits. “I’m sure you will.”

So began one of the strangest friendships in the school, one of the warmest, one of the most special, and one that stayed out of common sight for a remarkable time, given that there were boys and masters who were dying, almost literally, to get into Robert’s flannels and Tom’s corduroys,

Later that evening, as Tom lay abed in his six-boy dorm, the muffled conversation went something like this. “And he didn’t slipper you.” (Lance Clifton) “No, he didn’t.” “And you didn’t have to do lines?” (Fitzroy-McKean—nobody had asked his first name) “No, I didn’t.” “And he didn’t try it on?” (Graham Carruthers — every school has one) “No, he didn’t.” (To be entirely truthful, Tom did not understand the question, but he didn’t like the smirk in Carruthers’ voice, so he opted for a negative.) “Well, damn and blast, what did he do?” (Theo, Tom’s best friend) “He made me his fag.” “O hard luck.” (Lance Clifton) “Slave labour.” (Fitzroy-McKean) “Lucky you.” (Graham Carruthers)

“G’night, Tom.” (Theo). “G’night.” “G’night.” “G’night.” “Shut up in there!” (Duty master).

Tom Brown lay in bed playing the bathroom and study scenes on the screen of his imagination. His hand slipped into his pyjamas. He manipulated himself to erection. At least he was in charge this time. He reconstructed Robert’s body. His gaze ran over every inch he could remember. He tried to imagine what Robert’s erection would look like. Scary! His own erection was throbbing. His balls were tight up in his groin. The head of his cock was slippery, the shaft sweaty. He withdrew his hand and sniffed his fingers. There was a new smell, a strange smell, and he knew what it was: it was sex. With a terrific effort of will, he kept both

hands above the duvet. He imagined Robert's big green eyes, the dimple on his chin, his smile. Tom fell sound asleep, sucking his thumb. The smell of sex comforted him.

Robert Lawton lay in bed working his hard-on. He desperately tried to focus on the assistant matron. She wasn't pretty, she wasn't young, but at least she was female. He couldn't hold the image. It kept dissolving into Tom. He fought and fought, but as the cum raced up his shaft and spurted onto his hands, he gave in, he gave in — and thought of young Tom Brown.

Tuesday morning meant a double period of English. Nobody was late for English. Tom and his Form scampered across the lawn to the former stables which now housed the English block, ruled over by Mr. J.P. Cornish. The air was warm, the grass still burned from summer, and the lake sparkled in the distance. More than one boy sighed. What a waste of a beautiful morning, what a waste of a beautiful day. But nobody was late for J.P. Cornish. They scampered and scrambled into the block.

The English master was by no means conventional; there was never any knowing when he would leave the beaten track and invite his Form to attempt something hatefully novel. It was on such occasions that Tom Brown groaned and figuratively beat his breast. His view was that, as he was English, it was absurd to make a study of the subject. English or Prep, Prep or English? Between his dislike for either phenomenon Tom could not have stuck a pin. Nor was Tom enamoured of Mr. Cornish. Not that sir was unkind to him, but some of the looks he received from the English master made Tom feel as if he were being undressed by those unblinking grey eyes. Now if it were Robert Lawton... Tom attempted to kick himself under the desk but succeeded only in kicking Theo.

"Ouch! What was that for, you blighter?"

Any response Tom might have made was cut short by an announcement from Mr. Cornish. "I want you each to write me a poem. You may choose your own subject, your own metre and your own treatment. All I ask is that each one of you produces something. I shall regard with an evil eye only those boys who dare tell me they are unable to do anything."

"May it be on any subject, sir?" asked Peter Lane, brushing his blond fringe from his eyes. Tom perked up. Peter Lane was said to be Mr. Cornish's 'bumboy'. Tom still wasn't sure what 'bumboy' meant, but it had

something to do with bums and boys, a connection he hadn't made at his junior school.

"Yes, Lane, any subject." Did Tom catch a note of warmth in Cornish's voice? The English master was not in the habit of repeating himself but had made no objection to Lane's request for confirmation.

"Now I shall give you boys half an hour and no more to come up with preliminary sketches for your poem..." He placed his gold hunter on his desk "...the remainder to be done in your own time. Deadline Friday 2.30. I'd like these for the weekend. Lane to collect them in and bring them to my study. Any subject. Those were my words. The world is before you."

The mere thought of trying to write poetry brought out perspiration on Tom's brow. He cleaned his nib on a wad of blotting paper and found his mind as blank as the pristine sheet of paper before him. Perhaps not entirely blank. He risked a study of Lane whose head was already bent over paper, blond fringe concealing his face, pen scratching away. The boy pushed his fringe back yet again. Tom continued his observations. Straight hair, blond fringe, strong eyebrows, colour of eyes indeterminate. Small ears, small nose, symmetrical face, widish lips, rather red, small chin, dimple (not nearly as deep as Robert's, Tom felt with some satisfaction). Medium height and strong shoulders. An entirely ordinary boy, and not especially bright if he had to visit sir for extra tuition two or three times a week. What was so special about Peter Lane that he could be Mr. Cornish's bumboy? Exactly what qualifications did you need to be a bumboy? Tom sighed and returned to his blank page. Unconsciously he edged closer to Theo until they were sitting thigh to thigh. Theo bumped him back in friendly recognition.

Tom was not the only one observing Peter Lane. Mr. Cornish glanced up from his papers. He was having difficulty with a piece of Solon. Sixth century Greek pederasts could be a bugger to translate: Boys in the flower of their youth are loved, the smoothness of their thighs and soft lips is adored. Should that be is or are adored ? His gaze fixed on Lane, chin resting on hand. He let his imagination drift back to the first time he'd known, the smoothness of the boy's thighs and the softness of his lips.

Late June, a few days before the end of term the end of the school year. He'd been on duty in School House. The boarding house was uncommonly quiet, nearly every boy having taken the opportunity of Saturday afternoon in town. Cornish wandered among the dorms. The smells were intoxicating.

Boy smells everywhere. He picked up a pair of underpants here, a jock strap there, holding them tightly across his nose and mouth, breathing in the smells of boyhood.

On the first floor, junior boys, he'd been surprised by the sounds of a shower going full pelt in the bathroom. He entered to find Peter Lane stepping from a cubicle, towelling his head vigorously. He stepped over and turned the shower off. "Waste not, want not, young man."

"Sorry, sir, didn't realise anyone was here."

"And why is anyone here, Lane? Hasn't the entire House gone into town?"

"Yes, they have, sir," said the boy, towelling shoulders and chest. "I'm just out of San. Hay fever." As if to confirm the ailment, the boy sneezed. "Sorry, sir." He continued to towel himself, apparently unaware of the effect he was having on the master. "Bit breezy in here, sir. Can we go to my dorm? I'd like to ask you something, if that's permissible?" Cornish followed the boy to his dorm. Lane moved to the window and drew the curtains. "Keep out the breeze, sir." He continued to dry himself, drawing the blue-striped towel up each leg, bunching his genitals as he dried in the space between his legs.

"Well, Lane, how can I help?"

"It's that comprehension you set us, sir. I'm having trouble with it. Thought you might go through it with me. I'll just get the book, sir." The boy leaned over a bed and began fishing down the side nearest the wall. "It must be here, sir. I was doing it in bed last night. Fell asleep before I got finished. It must be here. Could you help me, sir?" The boy dropped the towel and buried his head down the side of the bed, his pink, innocent bottom high in the air. Cornish moved across to him. His hand moved towards the twin objects of his desire. Fingers brushed skin. He drew back as if he'd touched a hot plate.

The boy stood and turned. "Can't seem to find it, sir. Maybe later. Well, better get my teeth done." He flashed two rows of perfectly even, perfectly white teeth. "You can come and talk to me while I brush, sir. I'll show" you what you can do with a little toothpaste. It's really cool."

Returning with a jerk to the present, Cornish resumed his work with the papers in front of him. He had been working on Greek boylove since he'd left Oxford ten years earlier. He flipped through the papers and found the quotation he was looking for: Schoolboys are hardly so well-educated in

kissing, their embraces are awkward, their love-making is lazy and devoid of pleasure. Whoever had written that, and he suspected it was Achilles Tatius, had never known a boy like Peter Lane.

His gaze drifted across the boys. Tom... what's his name? Brown, yes, Tom Brown. How could he forget a name like that? There was a good-looking boy, all the more attractive because he seemed unaware of his beauty. The boy looked up. Their eyes met and held. The boy blushed and lowered his head. "Yes," thought Cornish, "I like to test the originality of my boys. Possibilities lurk within every one of them, and I must explore new ways of giving these possibilities the chance of realisation." He returned to his papers refreshed by the possibilities young Tom Brown offered him.

Tom sighed. His paper was still blank. He felt Theo nudge him with a thigh. He sighed deeply again. He felt Theo's hand brush his thigh. Tom thought nothing of it. It was comforting, he felt Theo's hand brush his thigh again, this time the hand stayed there. Brushing, caressing, comforting. He turned to Theo. Their eyes met. Theo's face was expressionless. Tom smiled. Theo relaxed and smiled back. He turned his face back to his exercise book. The hand remained where it was, squeezing gently. Tom felt his cock stir. He sighed again. Another of life's little mysteries was in the making, but not that day.

Tuesday and Wednesday flew by. Still Tom's exercise book lay unsullied by a syllable of poetry. It was not until Thursday evening that a solution of sorts presented itself. Called to Robert Lawton's study to make tea during Prep, Tom was far from his naturally cheerful self, staring gloomily into the hearth even as the senior prefect made light conversation.

"What's up, old boy?" a slightly exasperated Robert asked Tom. "Something getting you down? Why so morose this evening?"

Tom had never heard the word 'morose' but he knew it applied to him. "I'm sorry, Lawton — I mean Robert — it's this damnable poem I have to write for Cornish. I don't like poetry. And I can't write poems, I just can't." The boy's vehemence impressed Robert. So did the tears forming in the junior boy's eyes. For a moment Robert found it hard to breathe. He knew that Tom was good-looking. He was honest enough to admit to himself that was part of the attraction. But at that moment the boy was close to beautiful, and Robert Lawton was not quite sure what his response to beauty should be. He wanted to slip from his armchair, slide down onto the

carpet next to the boy, and press him back until he was lying beneath him. Then Robert could lean over him and look into those big, beautiful eyes, and then he could...

Pull yourself together, Lawton. What's wrong with you? He knew other senior boys indulged in juniors. Until now he had not been seriously tempted. What was it about Tom Brown? Robert had even investigated the topic; in the sealed section of the library, reserved to masters and prefects, he'd found a history of Ancient Greece that dealt with the subject. One observation in particular had amused him. Apparently Athenian vases showed that only the adults were supposed to derive satisfaction from intercourse with boys, the boy usually looking as if he were solving some academic problem. Robert laughed. Tom had an academic problem, but Robert did not propose to help him solve it by bugging him on the carpet during Prep.

"Stop worrying. I'll write a poem for you." It had popped out just like that. "I'll write it so badly, it could only have been written by you." Robert completed his offer—with a grin.

"O, would you Robert? Would you really?" Tom's eyes shone. In ordinary circumstances, both Tom and Robert would have shunned anything that smacked of the dishonourable. But these circumstances were not normal. Tom was desperate, and in his own way Robert was desperate, too.

During tea, the boys considered the morality of what they proposed to do. Neither was entirely happy with it, but they could forgive each other this one lapse. "After all, it's only poetry," mused Tom; a sentiment Robert could not wholly agree with since he was proposing to read English Literature at Oxford.

Tea over, the boys sat side by side on the couch, scratching out possibilities on scrap paper. Once again, Tom felt another boy's thigh pressing against his own; this was real comradeship. He half-hoped Robert's hand would drop on his thigh to brush, caress and squeeze, but even Tom realised the implications of such a gesture from the older boy. He knew that Robert liked him, but a senior prefect couldn't: like a junior that much — could he? Autumn, nightingales, ancient mariners, Arthurian knights, the wind, the sea, the woods by night. One by one, Robert took Tom through a whole range of possibilities, each one seeming more absurd to the younger boy who finally collapsed in a fit of giggles.

‘You see, I told you, they’re all silly!’ Tom lay back on the couch, giggling uncontrollably. ‘A poem about conkers might be good, but a poem about a chestnut tree — daft, simply daft.’

‘Look here, Brown, I’m doing all this work and...’ Robert looked down at the junior boy, lying there, laughing, tears in his eyes. ‘Right, that’s it, Brown, you’ve asked for it and now you’re going to get it.’ Robert threw himself on Tom, his fingers tickling the boy’s sides furiously. Tom gasped out laughter, tears running down helpless cheeks. ‘Oh stop, do stop, Robert!’ He tried to wriggle his way out from under the older boy, laughter coming thick and fast from both of them. Robert pinned him down with his body, stretched Tom’s arms above his head. Tom was not about to surrender. He bounced his body up and down, wriggling as hard as he could. But it couldn’t last. Finally, he collapsed under Robert and lay there panting, gasping for breath, chest heaving. Robert, too, was breathless. He lay alongside the boy, listening to their hearts pounding.

How many minutes passed, neither boy could say. This was so comfortable, so warm, so secure, so right. Even the hardness in their crotches...

Robert had a hard-on. Tom had a hard-on. It was impossible to ignore one’s own, and just as easy to detect the other boy’s. Tom moved to free himself. His erection brushed Robert’s erection. The heat from each boy’s cheeks burned into the other. Robert moved his hips in small circles: again and again his erection brushed the hard penis beneath him. What to do? This was an impossible situation for both of them. Tom closed his eyes. Robert smelled so good, felt so good. He wanted to lie there forever, or at least until Prep was over. And if Robert wanted to do things to him, well, Robert was a senior prefect and Tom was his fag. Who was he to question the order of things? Perhaps if Tom had opened his eyes and smiled, Robert would have done what his body was telling him to do. But the closed eyes added a note of uncertainty. What if Tom was disgusted by him? What if Tom only wanted out of the room? What if Tom never wanted to fag for him again?

Robert sprang up and straightened his erection. ‘Right, Brown, you deserved that. Now up you get. I can’t concentrate with you lying there. In fact, I can’t concentrate with you in the room at all.’ Tom sat up. He daren’t look down. He knew his stiffie was pressing against the fabric of his

corduroys, but to look down would only draw attention to it. "Now get back to Prep, and let me get on with the poem. When do you need it?"

"Tomorrow afternoon, 2.30, please, Lawton." Tom stood up. Robert did not.

"Well, I'm off for the weekend tomorrow. Leaving after lunch. So just pop in here and get it. It will be lying on my desk. I'll type it on the Underwood in the library. No handwriting involved. Now off you go."

Tom stepped towards the door.

"And, Brown..." Tom turned to the boy, "... it's Robert to you."

Tom grinned.

"And, Lawton..." Tom opened the door, "... it's Tom to you." He closed the door behind him and skipped all the way back to Prep.

Tom could hardly wait for Friday morning to go by. He caught a glimpse of Lawton in the Quad and was studiously ignored. Tom was not disturbed; that was part of the unexpressed understanding. Immediately after lunch he made for Robert's study. The boy was gone, but as his fag, Tom had unrestricted right of entry. The room seemed curiously bare without Robert, and Tom felt a painful twinge of what life might be like without the presence of his mentor.

"Where is it?"

Robert's desk was cluttered with paper, some handwritten, some typed. Tom rummaged about in the papers. The poem, the poem, where was the bloody poem? His eye was caught by a short piece of verse, typewritten. It looked like verse to Tom. Short lines, half a dozen of them. He quickly scanned the lines: pomegranate, peach, fig... in a word fruit. Yes, this must be it. A short poem about fruit would be fine. At 2.25 precisely he handed the poem to Lane who was clutching a sheaf of papers. The boy sped off towards the English block.

Friday afternoon, 2.30. School was over. There was a free hour till sports at 3.30. Tom was relieved and elated. How could he repay Robert? The study was a mess, at least the desk was. He would give the room a thorough tidy-up. Robert liked everything neat and tidy. He would be delighted when he returned on Sunday evening. He would know who had done it. Tom glowed in anticipation.

Peter Lane walked into the English block. It was quiet and empty. The cleaners would not arrive until Saturday 1p.m. He hoped Mr. Cornish would be there to receive the poems from him. He hoped the English master would

read his first; he had spent hours on it. He wanted to please sir who'd grown a little remote, a little distracted of late. Peter was eager to please the man who gave him so much pleasure.

He was in luck! Mr. Cornish was at his desk. "Ah, Peter, good lad, just put the poems done there. I'll have a look at them in a moment." Peter put down the papers. "Friday afternoon, sir. I'm free till half past. Tidy the room, sir?"

"Yes, go ahead. Not too much noise though."

Cornish glanced at the boy. My God, he was pretty, temptation made flesh, but wild, unpredictable, precocious. Those looks, that body, that smile spelled danger. He picked up the poems. Most of them would be second rate, the rest third. He flicked through them. Most were brief, dismally or mercifully brief, depending on your perspective. And the briefest was by... Tom Brown. That was the name scrawled above the half dozen typewritten lines. Let's see.

The English master read the poem. His incredulity grew. He read it again. Was this a joke, a warning, a threat? He read it once more:

A pomegranate just splitting, a peach just furry,/ a fig with wrinkled flesh and juicy bottom,/ a purple cluster (thick-berried well of wine),/ nuts just skinned, from their green peelings — these/ the guardian of the fruit lays here for Priapus:/ for this single shaft in the wilds, the seed of trees.

Cornish found himself trying to recognise the poet, but it was almost impossible when in translation. He shook himself. "That's not the point. The point is, where did Brown find it? Does he understand what it's about? And if he does, why hand it in to me?" He looked around the room. Where had Lane gone? He heard the boy's voice from the stock room. "Sir, can you give me a hand, please? I need a hand."

"I will give him a hand," thought the English master, happy to be distracted for the moment from the mystery of Brown's poem. "I will give the boy a helping hand, but that is all. I give my solemn promise." He stepped towards the stockroom like a man mounting the gallows steps.

Meanwhile, Tom was happy, busy and happy. Most of the papers on Lawton's desk were in some kind of order now, probably all wrong, but they looked in good order and that was half the battle. Tom wanted to lie

along the couch. He wanted to remember what it felt like. Robert on top of him, pressing him into the crushed velvet, their hard pricks pressing against each other. Tom already had a hard-on. He didn't care anymore. It was his hard-on. If he wanted to lie on the couch and play with it, whose business was that but his? And if he wanted to dream of Robert while he was touching himself, that was his business, too. One more piece of paper to pick up.

Tom picked it up. He would not have given it a second glance, but he needed to determine the best pile for it. It was a sheet of typewritten paper. There was a small piece attached to it, a handwritten note addressed to... to him! To Tom... to:

Dear Tom,
Here's the poem.
It's not much good, so it should do fine.
Good luck.

It was unsigned. It didn't need to be signed. Tom read the poem. It was about rugby in the rain. It jogged along like a nursery-rhyme, but two of the rhymes didn't work. It was awful, gloriously awful. Tom himself would have found it difficult to write anything worse, if he'd been able to write a poem at all. But if this was his poem, what had he given in to Cornish? He had to change the poems over. He had to get the first back.

Tom raced down the boardinghouse stairs. He sprinted across the Quad. He ran across the grass, a privilege reserved only to prefects. His luck was in. The English block was in sight. School seemed deserted.

Tom ran into the English block. He hoped no one was there. He felt sneaky going into his Form room like this, but that's where Mr. Cornish kept his papers, and he had to exchange the poems. The room was empty. Tom stepped over to the desk. The poems were there! Perhaps sir hadn't looked through them yet. He leafed through them till he found the six typewritten lines. That was his scribble at the top. He stuffed the poem in his pocket, took out the new one, smoothed out the paper and slid in into the pile. There! It was done! He might be in trouble for trespassing but he hadn't lost Robert's own poem.

His attention was snagged by noises from the stockroom, vague, indeterminate noises, little grunts and moans. Some light, some deep. He

stepped to the closed door. What were those sounds? Tom was reminded of the only poem he'd ever liked. Something was "whiffling and burbling" behind the door, and apparently enjoying it too. Tom stood awhile in uffish thought. Instinct told him not to open the door. And mystery upon mystery, he found himself getting an erection.

Resisting temptation, Tom hurried from the block, back to Robert's room. He hoped Robert wouldn't mind. He lay down on the battered old couch; the smell of the older boy enveloped him. He tried to resist temptation, this time his own memories. [O, dear Reader, how he tried!] But he was only human, only a boy, and the lump in his trousers carried more weight in the scheme of things than the lump of grey matter in his skull. He sighed, gave in, and squeezed his cock to full erection.

The feeling was good, and it was getting better all the time. He knew something was going to happen, it shouldn't but it would. He was helpless to stop it. He pulled his prick free from his underpants and shorts. He'd never seen it so hard, so red, so... beautiful. His mind was full of images. Of Robert and himself, of Robert stretched out on top of him, their hard-ons rubbing together. He wished Robert were here now, naked, with a hard-on, on top of him, and he was naked, too, and he had a hard-on, and their cocks... "Oh... oh... oh..." Tom swung his hips round to face the back of the couch. His cock was spitting white stuff, liquid, spurts of creamy white liquid, no, not white, silvery, gooey... and it felt good, no it felt fantastic... and he never wanted it to end... he wanted it to go on and on and on...

He lay there exhausted, hips drawn back from the mess he'd made of Robert's couch. His hard-on had faded but the stuff was still dripping out. He stuffed his cock back into his underpants. He could wash them out later. That stuff did wash out, didn't it? He lay there and looked at the mess. The stuff, his stuff, was sliding down the crushed velvet fabric. It didn't disgust him. Maybe it should, but it didn't. But he needed to clean it up. He had to get up and clean it up. Tom lay there fingering himself, but gently. Why was it so sensitive afterward? Why did it still feel so good? He felt it hardening again. No, he couldn't! He mustn't! He didn't! With a supreme effort of the will, Tom slid from the couch, keeping well away from the goo. He had to clean that up right away. Then it would dry in time before Robert got back on Sunday. It had to clean up. It had to dry. Please, oh please, let it clean up and dry. If it does, I promise I'll never do it again. Even as he made the promise, Tom knew he couldn't keep it.

Not all promises can be kept. Mr. Cornish was learning that, too. He sat in the empty stockroom, cursing and celebrating his weakness with little Lane and his “problem.” His thoughts drifted back to young Tom Brown.

Brown, Tom Brown, what kind of boy was he? If he was anything like that little prig in Hughes’ novel, he would be of no interest at all. But this Tom Brown was different. He had a sense of humour, a shy one, but it was there nevertheless. That was one of his attractions. But the poem. What to make of the poem? He fished through the pile again. Here it was, headed Tom Brown. He read it again.

And again.

Had he been hallucinating? This was not the same poem. This had nothing to do with the vice of the Ancient Greeks.

Playing rugby in the rain/ For some of us it’s just a pain

He could not face the poem again. It was truly awful. The rhyme in the last two lines were either a feeble attempt at assonance or the boy had no ear at all. There was nothing for it; he must summon Brown. He must determine what the boy knew, and how and when he knew it. From there, he would do whatever needed to be done. He had heard there were teaching opportunities in Greece. Teaching English as a foreign language to young, olive-skinned, brown-eyed... Stop it!

Cornish summoned Tom during Prep and plunged to the heart of the matter.

“Brown, you did not write the first poem you submitted to me. Who wrote the lines for you?”

Tom shuffled his feet but stood his ground. It was warm in Mr. Cornish’s study. The heavy curtains were pulled. Lamps were lit on either side of the master’s desk. Tom remembered a painting he’d seen in a book: When did you last see your father? it had been called. He knew exactly how the boy in the painting felt. And he was being asked a far more difficult question.

“I’d rather not say, sir.”

“Good for you, Brown. Betraying a friend is a far worse crime than one you have committed. And there’s no need for you to betray your accomplice. I have determined where the poem came from. I recognised it by what we literary people call internal evidence. There’s only one poet I know with quite that satiric touch. I digress. But why what particular poem? Did you read it? Do you understand it?”

“I’d rather not say, sir.” In truth, what Tom meant was he hadn’t the faintest idea what to say. He’d lost track of the conversation a while back.

“Good for you, Brown. I can accept that. Some secrets are better kept. You can keep a secret, can’t you, Brown?”

Brown nodded. That was the answer expected of him. Masters were always happier with the answer they expected.

“Now we come to a more delicate matter.” How handsome this boy was. There was nothing of the girlishness that made, correction, that had made Lane so attractive. This was a handsome boy who dearly would make an even more handsome man.

“I shall be straight with you, Brown, as you have been straight with me. I believe you exchanged the poems this afternoon. Peter Lane was working for me in the stock room. He usually does on Friday afternoons. (Damn it, why had he said that?) What you may have heard, or think you may have heard, was nothing more or less than that. Comment, please.”

Tom’s brain was working furiously. He had to think. What answer did Cornish want?

“Were you there?” asked Tom. “I didn’t see anyone. To tell you the truth, sir, I was so worried about the poem that I couldn’t think of anything else. But, sir, you have my sincere apologies for barging in like that — if I disturbed you, I mean. It’s none of my business, so I’ve put the entire thing out of my mind.”

Tom was stunned. That was the longest speech he’d made to a teacher in his life.

“Well done, Brown. The truth is always best. I wasn’t actually there at all though you may have heard Lane fooling around. I was simply testing you out. Let’s put this entire business out of our minds. I include the business of the poems, too. We need not discuss it with anyone else. Do you understand me, Brown?” Tom Brown nodded. He was mightily relieved. He would not get Robert into trouble after all, and he had managed to wipe his stuff from the covering on Robert’s couch.

Cornish extended his hand to the boy. They shook hands; the matter was over. “And one more thing, Tom. I really enjoyed your rugby in the rain poem. Not a bad effort at all — for a beginner. Keep it up, my boy, keep it up.”

CHAPTER 2

Fire in the Camp

He turned on his side and slept, tired of trying to reason, but resolved to follow the impulse which had been so strong.

Theo Rycroft was not a happy boy. This was surprising since it seemed he had every reason to be happy. For Theo Rycroft was in love. He did not recognise it as such; he would have denied it, and his denial would have been sincere. Nevertheless, Theo was in love. And with whom was Theo Rycroft in love? Why, Tom Brown, of course. Theo admired and respected Tom, was discreetly affectionate towards Tom, shared Tom's dorm, sought Tom's company, and, joy of joys, Tom liked his company. Indeed, they were as close as Siamese twins, except for half an hour every evening when Tom disappeared into Robert Lawton's study to carry out his fagging duties. It was an odd time to be fagging, during Prep, but there were odder arrangements in the life of the House, and nobody thought it odd enough either to speculate or comment on.

Yet, Theo Rycroft was not a happy boy. October had come round again and with it O.T.C. camp, the source of Theo Rycroft's unhappiness. Perhaps Theo was a bit young for the rough-and-tumble of camp life. The boys in his dorm were twelve years, going on thirteen. Theo was a young eleven-year-old whose birthday and I.Q. had allowed him to scrape into the year above. He was by nature a nervous, highly-strung boy. Whatever the cause, the O.T.C. camp which had been such an unmitigated joy to every other boy in the House the previous year — or so it seemed to Theo — had been a torment to him.

A year had passed. O.T.C. camp was upon the House again. Comments were passed, but Theo said nothing. Since last year's camp he had done a lot of hard thinking, and he was determined to redeem himself at the forthcoming camp. This year he had Tom who burred excitedly about how wonderful it all was. His enthusiasm was infectious.

It was a thrilling march to the station in full kit, with the band at their head. All the town came out to watch them pass. Theo swelled with hope and pride.

The first few days in camp passed happily enough. Then on the sixth day came Theo's turn to be mess orderly. He had been dreading this day, for the whole tent would be against him if he allowed their rations to be "scrounged" by quicker and more enterprising orderlies.

Each tent held five boys and those same boys sat together at a small table in the big mess tent. The boys took it in turn to be mess orderly for their own tent, and it was their job, when on duty, to procure for the others the very best knives and forks, the biggest rations of meat and two vegetables, and the biggest portions of bread and honey that could be snatched. The better the table was provisioned, the more popular that particular boy became. Theo knew this, and he was one of the first to have his table laid with sharp, clean knives and forks.

"The table looks topping," Theo whispered to himself as he bolted out to the cookhouse for hot plates of bacon.

"Oh no," he groaned when he came back with the first three piping hot plates. Some wretched cadet, coming in late, had swapped his faultless cutlery for seven pairs of rusty knives and forks. Theo put the hot plates down on the table and dashed around the tent to find the culprit. Of course, everyone denied having touched Theo's table. The boy rushed across to the baskets where the cutlery was kept to get some more. There was nothing left — absolutely nothing — but a couple of rusty knives without handles and a few bent spoons. Theo trudged back to his table. To his horror, the three plates of bacon had been scrounged!

Theo swallowed hard to keep back the tears. After all, he was only a little chap and he had struggled so hard to make his tent mates pleased. What could he say when they were summoned by the gong?

"What's up, Rycroft?" asked a cheerful voice behind him. "Somebody bagged your grub?" Theo nodded miserably. He daren't trust himself to speak.

"Nevermind!" said Robert Lawton, the most popular prefect in the whole school. "I'll come with you to the cookhouse to see fair play."

"Knives and forks, too, Lawton," gulped Theo. "I'd managed to bag a decent set but while I was at the cookhouse somebody changed them for these old things." Lawton turned his face quickly to hide a smile. It really

was too bad. Of course, the senior prefect knew perfectly well how unpopular Rycroft's conduct of last year had made him, but he had watched the boy closely during the past week and had begun to have a higher opinion of him. An opinion reinforced by the generous comments Tom made whenever reference was made to Rycroft during his visits to the study.

With the best of intentions, Lawton proceeded to put his foot right in it. "C'mon, old chap, don't be such a cry baby. This isn't last year, you know."

That did it. The dam burst. In a flood of tears, Theo ran from the grub tent along the lines to his own tent where he threw himself face down on his sleeping bag.

"Ah, grub must be up. Good, I'm starving." That was Graham Carruthers. "Obviously something else's up." That was Fitzroy-McKean. "And I bet Rycroft's screwed it up." That was Lance Clifton. "Well, let's get along there, or we'll end up with nothing." That was Tom Brown's voice.

Theo lay there in utter misery and listened to the boys stampede from the tent. He was alone. Even Tom had abandoned him. Quite right, too. He was useless, worthless, hopeless. His efforts to stop crying only doubled the flow. The sobbing would have broken anybody's heart, except that of a public school boy.

He felt a hand on his shoulder. Someone was sitting beside him. That only made things worse. "Go away, go away," he sobbed.

"Shan't. Not till you come with me." It was Tom! He felt his friend's hand on his shoulder. He had failed Tom; that made things worse; he pushed his face into his pillow and sobbed harder.

Tom Brown was non-plussed. What do you do with a sobbing boy? He searched his memory. Ah yes. What his mother did. He began to stroke Theo's back, running his hand up and down the boy's spine. Then he ran his fingers into Theo's hair. It was very thick hair, almost black. He squeezed the boy's neck tenderly. Tom would not have used the word 'tenderly' but he remembered the effect of his mother's squeezing. How soothing, how comforting it had been.

"Budge up the bed a bit." Tom used his hips and bottom to heave Theo across the sleeping bag. He continued to stroke him. The boy was still sobbing, but they were little gasps now. How-soothing! How comforting! To him as well as to his friend. He liked Theo, he really liked him. His right hand stroked beneath the boy's ear; his left ran down his spine, ran down

his spine and over his bum. Tom frowned. He wasn't quite sure why he'd done that, but a little gasp from Theo told him that it was effective. Again, down the spine went his hand, across Theo's bum. He gave Theo's cheeks a friendly squeeze, first the left, then the right. It had gone very quiet in the tent. He was on the right track. Tom played with Theo's ear and the hair on the nape of his neck. He stroked his spine, his buttocks and squeezed his cheeks. He forgot how hungry he'd been. This was so soothing, so comforting.

Theo rolled over onto his back, an elbow shielding his eyes. Tom understood, he would not have wanted a friend to see the tears in his eyes either. Theo was still in distress. Tom continued stroking. This was more difficult. His mother had never stroked him 'sunny side up', so he would have to improvise. He began by circling the palm of his hand around Theo's chest; he could feel little through the thick fabric of the uniform. Try a bit lower. Much the same over his tummy. Tom looked along Theo's body looking for a likely spot to stroke. He was startled to see a hillock in his friend's trousers. Theo had an erection, a full one at that.

A few months ago, Tom would not have recognised the word 'erection'; he would hardly have recognised the physical phenomenon it described. But he was learning fast at public school. Robert, his mentor in most things, had spent several September evenings teaching Tom the facts of life.

[Reader, do not jump to conclusions. There was very little of the practical and nothing of the sordid in Robert Lawton's tuition. True, he had occasionally squeezed the younger boy's stiffie, but it was done in such a natural, good-humoured way that Tom took no offence and would not have minded further practical instruction. There were limits, however, and both boys respected them.]

Theo's erection rose like a challenge in front of Tom, who knew what tension a hard-on at the wrong moment could cause. He also knew the relief that was available, although he tried to make do with cold showers, prayers, and images of his dead dog Trigger. He ran the palm of his hand over the tent in Theo's trousers. Goodness gracious, the boy was hard. There being no verbal reaction from his friend, Tom ran his hand across the area again. Goodness gracious, the boy was big for an eleven year old. Little wonder he was so highly strung. Assured that he was not offending Theo, he ran his hand over his erection again, this time pausing to measure the boy's penis in little squeezes. Four inches! At least. And Theo only eleven years old.

Emboldened, he took a clean grip of the boy's penis and pulled it away from his body. Damn it! There was so much material in the way. Theo muttered something and pushed his hard-on at Tom's hand. Much of the instruction at camp this week had centered on signals. Tom was not about to miss this one.

He released Theo's penis, bunched the material over the crotch with one hand, and worked open the buttons of his flies with the other. They were big buttons in small holes. Hard going but Tom persevered. He slid his hand in and felt around with his fingers. Ah, there it was. He felt the heat through the cotton of Theo's underpants. A bit more searching and his fingers slipped into the opening of the boy's underpants. He was right. A good four inches and not that slim, either. Gently he manoeuvred Theo's hard-on into the light of open day, or at least into such light as there was in the tent.

Theo's prick pointed at heaven. It's a pretty' prick, thought Tom, who admired its pink flesh, smooth skin, loose foreskin and heart-shaped head. He began working the loose skin along the shaft, using much the same grip he had developed for his own. Yes, four inches in length, just over an inch in diameter, one little blue vein circling upwards from the base, foreskin that rolled back easily, a pinky-purple head that looked good enough to... Where did that thought come from? Tom blushed, pushed the thought away and worked a bit faster on his friend's cock. How soothing, how comforting, what fun! as his own prick ballooned in his trousers. The murmuring and muttering indicated that Theo was having fun, too. O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!

Actually, Theo couldn't decide whether he was in ecstasy or agony. Apart from his mother and the family doctor, nobody had ever touched his penis like this, not even himself. Here was his best friend playing with it, and here was he loving it. What did it mean? Why did it feel so good? Why did he want Tom to stop, and yet to go on forever?

He felt Tom pulling at his belt and raised his bottom to make it easier. His belt was open, his buttons open, his trousers open. His underpants were pulled down over his hips. He was utterly exposed. He felt Tom work the shaft of his willy with one hand while the palm of the other circled his tummy, poked at his belly button, ran flat across his pubis — oh, if only he had some hair there — then slip lower to play with his balls. It was wonderful, just wonderful. But it was too wonderful. Something was happening down there. Pressure, pleasure. Bright colours

danced behind his eyelids. More pressure, more pleasure. He was going to explode down there, he was going to fragment, into a thousand smithereens, like a careless hand grenade, and all the king's, horses and all the king's men would never put Theo together again...

He exploded, he fountained, he was spitting himself from the end of his penis! His bum rolled, his hips were rocked. He jerked to sitting position and buried his face in Tom's chest. He held on for dear life as his life came to an end.

"There, there, that's better." Tom had learned his lessons well. He held a large white handkerchief over Theo's cock as the boy came and came. With no little skill, he flicked the handkerchief around in one hand and caught the last few drops. He stroked the back of Theo's head with his other hand. Then, one-handed, he pulled the boy's underpants back up, then his trousers. Theo raised his bottom reflexively to help out. He pushed Theo flat again while he tucked in his shirt, did up his buttons, and snapped his belt closed. Theo lay on his back, his elbow no longer shielding his eyes, but supporting his head as he watched Tom do what had to be done.

At that moment the tent flapped opened. A head popped in. It was Lawton. He wrinkled his nose and brushed the air with his swagger stick. "Phew. You two should let some fresh air in here." Tom gave the senior prefect a grave look. Robert smiled and threw in a bar of chocolate, a very big bar. "You two have missed grub. That should keep you going. Inspection in fifteen minutes. Your mates are on the way back. Get yourselves organised," and he was gone.

Tom tucked the incriminating handkerchief in his pocket. "Feeling better, Theo?" His friend nodded. "C'mon then. Let's get this tent tidied. We'll share the choc while we're at it." Theo smiled, a smile that spread into a grin. He sprang from the sleeping bag. [Eleven year old boys have remarkable powers of post-orgasmic recovery.] "You're a proper friend, Tom Brown, that's what you are, a proper friend."

The next day dawned gloriously bright, without a cloud in the clear deep-blue sky. As the morning advanced, the heat became unbearable. The boys didn't care. Stripped of all but singlets and shorts, they stood in excited groups while distinguished guests took their places at the starting line which also served as the Finish. This was the annual Fun Run, and although honour was to be had in doing well, nothing was held against any boy who chose to stroll around the course as long as he completed it. The

course itself was a mere five miles and wound through the shady groves of St. Swithin's Woods. One could even choose one's own set of paths since, flagged as they were, they all arrived back at the Start/Finish tape.

The boys ran in pairs to foster comradeship. Theo was openly delighted when Tom chose him as his running companion. Neither boy was a slacker, but neither was dedicated to running, so a gentle jog through a leafy wood on a hot day suited both.

The groups were called to the line, sorted in pairs and given last minute instructions. A pistol was raised and a loud report sent upwards of a hundred boys disappearing into the woods. Many of the older boys took off at a terrific pace. Most of the younger boys trotted happily after them, secure in the knowledge that completing the course was honour enough. Tom and Theo were among this group.

Although the course was only five miles, the boys were soon stretched out in straggling lines. The numbers diminished as several pairs headed into the less obvious by-ways. Tom and Theo were going along fine, setting a comfortable pace that allowed them to chat for a few minutes before settling again into a steady rhythm.

The heat took its toll sooner than one might have anticipated. It was Tom who felt it first. His panting turned to a gasp. "Hold on, Theo, hold on. I never was one for heat, and I've got an almighty stitch." Theo slowed and stopped, anxious for his friend who so rarely showed any sign of weakness.

"It's no good, Theo, this heat is killing me. I'll have to walk for a bit."

The boys began to stroll, Tom limping slightly as he leant to the left in an effort to ease the stitch in his side. They'd been walking for about ten minutes, several pairs of boys trotting past them, when Theo touched Tom's arm. "Hold on a mo', Tom. See that oak. It reminds me of something. Remember, I was here last year. Follow me." Theo seemed so sure as he plunged to the right through some broom that Tom followed without question. The wood grew darker, cooler, and with fewer paths in sight.

"There, I was right," cried Theo.

In front of the boys shimmered a small lake, looking cool and inviting in the shadows and sunlight that dappled its mirror-like surface. "It's not deep," added Theo. "Last year, as a special treat, we were all allowed a morning swim on the last day of camp. It's only about three feet deep and the water's very clean. It feeds from that stream... where is it? ... yes, look, over there, on your left. And look, Tom, to the left of that."

To the left of the stream, which Tom heard rather than saw, stood a small wooden cabin. "They served hot tea and cucumber sandwiches from the cabin after the swim last year," explained

Theo. "Let's go and explore. Do let's."

"Fine by me," came the reply. "Anything to get out of this heat." That gave Tom the idea. "Let's go for a swim, Theo. Only five minutes. Nobody will know. And it's bound to help my stitch." His friend looked doubtful. "I'm sure we'd get into trouble if anyone found out. And besides, we don't have bathing costumes." That did it. Tom was not going to be denied a swim by anything as silly as a missing bathing costume. He marched resolutely in the direction of the cabin, calling behind him. "Don't be a wet sock, Theo. We're so far behind, nobody will be coming this way." Theo followed, still unsure.

Inside the cabin, which was open and remarkably spacious, Tom began to strip, throwing his vest and singlet onto the huge sacks piled around two walls of the room. "Wonder what's in these?" A quick examination revealed sacks of wood drippings. "Probably for mulch," he told Theo. "My dad's a great believer in mulch. Nothing better for keeping weeds down, he says." Tom was hauling off his plimsolls and socks.

"Come on, Theo, hurry it up. I can feel that water on my skin already." To give Theo his due, he was already out of his vest and his plimsolls and socks lay on the floor. "For goodness sake, get them off," laughed Tom stepping out of his underpants and chucking them in the direction of the rest of these things. "You're not playing shy, are you? I'm not going to see anything I haven't seen before. Unless you've got a stiffie, and I've certainly seen that before."

Theo blushed, sighed and pulled down his underpants. "Naughty boy," whistled Tom. If not in full erection, Theo was well on the way to one. "I don't know why you're so bothered. Everyone gets erections, that's the proper name for stiffies, hard-ons if you like, at exactly the wrong time. Look at mine." Tom faced Theo full frontal. He was semi-tumescent. He made his prick jerk a couple of times until it was horizontal in front of his friend. "We should measure these some time," suggested Tom. "You're a year and half younger than me, but your prick's nearly the same size. What do you do, play with yourself a lot?" Theo managed a laugh. "Just lucky, I guess. But I don't have hair like yours, Tom. You've got a quite a lot." The boy examined himself closely. "No, not a single hair. And none under my

arms either.” He raised and arm to show Tom an armpit as smooth as the chapel chalice. “Well, I don’t have that much,” said Tom, stepping closer and raising his own arm.

The boys were standing only inches apart. Tom reached and took hold of Theo’s prick. Both boys were almost fully hard, their pricks pointing vertically up their tummies. “We don’t need a ruler, do we. Let’s measure like this.” He moved in closer and pressed Theo’s prick against his own. The tip of Theo’s penis touched Tom’s pubic hair while the older boy’s prick pushed into the younger’s scrotum. The heat from their genitals made the warm air around them seem positively cool. With some difficulty, Tom wrapped his hand round both their stiff members and begin to jerk both at the same time. “We shouldn’t, Tom, really we shouldn’t,” stepping into Tom. He draped and arm over Tom’s shoulders and pressed his face into Tom’s neck. He had an irresistible urge to kiss his friend on the neck, but unsure of his reception, contented himself with pressing his closed lips against the sweet-smelling skin. “Why shouldn’t we?” whispered Tom. “We’re friends, best friends, (a twinge as he remembered Robert) and we’re not doing anybody any harm. Feels good, doesn’t it?” Theo managed to murmur something unintelligible.

“Play with my balls,” whispered Tom. He felt cool fingers brush his hair, slide down the V of his thigh and tickle his testicles. Then a small hand cupped them, squeezing gently, oh so gently. Tom speeded his handwork; they did not have all afternoon. He wondered if they would ‘sperm’ together; he’d learned that word from Robert: sperm together, it sounded right somehow. Tom and Theo are going to sperm together.

They didn’t. They didn’t have time. Tom heard them first, Theo was too absorbed to hear anything. Voices coming this way, voices deeper than their own, voices kept low but still audible. “Hurry up, it’s over here. I’m sure it will be open.”

Tom pushed Theo away. He covered his mouth. He saw panic in Theo’s eyes. “Quick. Behind those sacks,” he hissed. “Grab your stuff. C’mon.” Within seconds, two naked boys were ensconced behind a dozen bags of mulch. Despite the heat, both were shivering. The door of the cabin opened. Footsteps. The door was eased shut.

“Come on, hurry up, we’ve only got about fifteen minutes. Then we’re back on duty. You do me first.” There was a familiar sound, the dink of belts opening, the rustle of fabric as trousers were pushed to the floor. Tom

recognised the voice. Deep, dark, slightly husky, well-spoken. It was a prefect. An officer cadet. Not Robert. But a friend of Robert's. Someone who visited the study now and then.

"God, I love your prick. Let me wank you a little first. I want, to look at it. I want to feel it, smell it, kiss it. I can't do any of that when it's halfway down my throat." That voice was much lighter, but it was broken, too. And if they were on duly together it must be another officer, another prefect. Thank goodness, it wasn't Robert. Should he risk a look? No, he daren't, not yet.

"Come on, suck it. We haven't got all day. You know I don't come as quickly as you... Oh, that's it. Use your hand, too. Jerk it. Harder, come on harder." The voice rose sharply for a moment. "Mind your teeth! ... God, that's good. Ah ha, that's the way I like it..."

Tom was racking his brain. It wasn't easy to concentrate with those wet, sucking, slurping sounds filling the air. It sounded like — was it Eric... Eric who? Got it! Eric Merry. Senior prefect in Cawdor House. Tall, dark, sort of Spanish-looking. Tom didn't have much idea what Spaniards looked like. But dark hair, brown eyes, olive skin, that was exotic enough to be Spanish. That was Eric Merry and he was having... his cock sucked! When you looked at it logically, there was not much else the other boy could be sucking. Tom felt his prick jump. Where was Theo? He looked down. Theo was at his feet, thumb in his mouth, eyes closed. For a moment Tom saw his own cock in Theo's mouth. His prick jumped again.

He risked a peep. God blind me! Eric Merry was standing side on to the hiding boys. Naked from the waist down. Kneeling in front of him was another boy, equally naked, slighter, fairer, his head bobbing furiously in the senior prefect's crotch. Tom could see Merry's penis, but only the last two inches or so. The rest was jammed down the kneeling boy's throat. Tom gulped. Merry's penis was at least three inches in diameter. How could his friend take all that without choking? Tom felt his own throat tighten. He leaned down and stroked Theo's hair. The boy looked up. Tom smiled and put his finger to his lips, then used the same finger to encourage Theo to get up onto his knees. For a moment Theo's face was level with his crotch. It was all Tom could do not to pull his friend's face into his groin, push his sweet red mouth down onto his hard, aching penis. Gently he urged Theo to kneel with him behind the sacks.

Both boys peeped over. Tom clamped his hand over his friend's mouth. He watched those big eyes open even wider. He gave him another 'sshhh' sign and took his hand away. Theo and Tom watched together, naked thigh to naked thigh. If they had thought of it, they might have slipped a hand round each other's erection, but they were in no state to think of anything. In front of them, the business was coming to a climax. Merry's head was thrown back. He thrust his hips fiercely into his partner's face. He was fucking the other boy's face. Tom could think of no better word. And the other boy was loving it, or so it appeared to the hidden observers. His lips were buried in Merry's pubic hair each time he took the boy's cock all the way in. As he slid up the shaft to the tip, he revealed five-six-seven-eight inches of solid flesh. Neither Tom nor Theo believed that anyone, let alone a boy, could swallow that amount of flesh without choking. Saliva and spittle ran down the penis, into the thick mass of hair, down the scrotum, down the inner sides of Merry's legs. The kneeling boy's head bobbed faster — faster — faster! Short stroked on the first few inches of the penis. Soon it was a blur. Merry's movements became more and more agonized, it seemed, and then the cock sucker's cheeks puffed out and he was gulping, gulping, as if, dying of thirst, he had tried to swallow too much water at the same time. A whitish liquid burst from the sides of his mouth. "It's sperm," thought Tom. "He's been spermed. Eric Merry's just spermed him."

The kneeling boy was coughing now, spluttering, spitting the excess sperm onto the floor of the cabin. Merry knelt beside him, stroking his hair, gently rubbing his back. "You shouldn't be so greedy, Michael. You're always so greedy. Come on, let me help you stand up." Eric helped Michael to his feet. The boy was recovering. He was smiling now, his lips swollen, red and wet. Tom could see the sperm on his lips and chin. Eric took Michael in his arms and kissed him. Kissed him, open mouth to open mouth, tongues probing feverishly. Tom and Theo ducked down and looked at each other. Best friends could kiss, really kiss, they'd never thought of that. They were distracted by voices.

"We just don't have time, Eric, we just don't."

"I know, Michael, but I'm not leaving you with a hard-on like that. I want to feel you inside me. Don't you want to?"

"Of course I want to. We haven't had the chance since the summer. What do you think I dream about every night? What do you think I'm

dreaming about when I masturbate? But if we start, I won't be able to stop. You know that."

"Good. Then I'll stop you. Look, I've got some Vaseline. Snatched it from Matron on Friday. Feel it. It's melted beautifully. Let me do your cock. God, Mike, you've got a beautiful cock. If this wasn't going ..."

"Stop that," the boy called Michael giggled. "You'll make me come all over you. Then you'll say it was my fault. Let me do you down there. Can I kiss it first? It's ages since I've kissed it."

"Be my guest." They were both giggling now.

Tom and Theo knelt together. They didn't dare touch their own pricks, let alone each other's. Above them they heard a kind of shuffling, then a quiet moan, then a definite series of groans. Tom risked a look and found his eyes six inches away from those of Eric Merry. Fortunately for both of them, Eric's eyes were screwed tightly shut. His head was bumping in Tom's direction. Tom caught a glimpse of another boy stretched out along Eric's back. Red hair, a freckled back, slim arms, a bouncing bottom.

Tom knelt down quickly, sat down and pulled Theo into sitting position behind him. He signalled Theo to keep still and silent. Above them, the groans, moans and the slap of wet flesh on wet flesh was deafening. Tom had been here before, but it was not quite like this. This time there was no delay as he worked out where Michael's penis was. My God, if it was half the size of Eric's, then. Eric was in real trouble. Tom's bumhole clenched involuntarily. He'd had a few enemas in his time, but this... . Phew!

On the other side of the stacked sacks, the groans climaxed in muffled scream, followed by a sweaty silence. The room stank of sweat and sperm and something else. It made Tom think of the junior urinals, but unlike these, this smell was not offensive; somehow it seemed part of the general sex smell.

"Fuck me." A sigh that came from the heart, or perhaps the bowels.

"I just have. And I loved every inch of it." That sounded like Michael Sweet.

Sweet! That's who it was. Michael Sweet, Dr. Sweet's son. Dr. Sweet, Headmaster of the entire School. Fuck me! That was the Michael Sweet, and he'd just sucked and fucked Eric Merry, Senior Prefect, Officer Cadet. Red hair. Freckles. Captain of the First XI had just sucked and fucked Eric Merry, Captain of the First XV. Surely that wasn't the way to sporting success!

“Come on, let me do your buttons. Let’s get out of here. We’re already late.”

“Kiss me first.”

“We don’t have time.”

“Kiss me!”

The sound of a prolonged wet kiss almost gave Theo a spontaneous orgasm. If only the intruders would get out of here. If only he was standing beside Tom again. If only they hadn’t barged in. Tom was going to do it to him again, he just knew it, and to himself. And he saw his best friend and himself coming, spurting, sperming together. That’s what proper friendship meant.

A door opened, a door closed. The silence was heavier than ever. Tom dragged Theo to his feet. “Let’s go, Theo, we’ve got to get out of here.”

“But don’t we...? Can’t we...?”

“Don’t be silly. We haven’t time to go swimming now. We’ll be lucky if we make it back in time for tea. Get your clothes on. Hurry. We’ve got to go.”

Theo felt as deflated as his prick. He sighed, and pulled on his singlet, keeping a watchful eye on Tom’s genitals. No, they were as deflated as his own. Still, they’d had an adventure together, and he’d learned a few things. He understood more about sex and friendship. Tom was his best friend; that meant they would have the best sex together. He was patient, he could wait — but not for too long. As they trotted through the woods, Theo bit his lip and worried a little. Just what were those two boys doing during their last few minutes in the cabin? It sounded like they were wrestling — surely not.

That night Theo lay in his sleeping bag puzzling over the same problem. He had seen Eric Merry put his penis in Michael Sweet’s mouth. Tom had kindly identified the Sixth Formers for him. But what had Michael been doing to Eric that caused him to moan and groan in that fashion? It was all a puzzle. More puzzling still was what he felt for Tom Brown. When they had stood there, Tom holding their pricks pressed together, Theo had been happier than he’d ever been in his short sweet life. He knew it was wrong; they had hinted so much at his prep school. But if it were so wrong, why did it feel so right?

Theo would have rolled over and gone to sleep if his cock had not been so hard it ached. It was also frightfully warm and humid. He kept his gaze on Tom, sleeping only two feet away. He could reach out and touch him.

And how he wanted to. It did not help that Tom had chosen to sleep on top of his sleeping bag, clad only in his underpants. He lay on his front. Theo could see the cleft in his buttocks, round, smooth, straining against the thin cotton. He reached out his hand, his fingers only inches away from Tom's naked thighs. If only... If only...

There was a blinding flash of lightning, followed by a deafening crash of thunder. Theo was terribly afraid of thunder and ducked down into his sleeping bag, shivering with fright. Around him he could hear the other boys stir in their sleep. How could they sleep through this cacophony? Roll upon roll of thunder sent Theo deeper into his bag. It seemed every moment that their tent must be struck, for the concentrated fury of the storm was gathered in a crackling, ear-splitting inferno overhead.

Suddenly a bugle rang out. The tent was filled with sleepy boys scrambling for their shorts.

"Hello!" said Fitzroy-McKean. "Up everyone. We've gotto get to the lines. What's it for, I wonder?" In a moment the boys were up. Fitzroy-McKean, Tom, Theo, Lance and Graham Carruthers. "Drat!" laughed Lance, "What rotten luck! I was having a helluva sexy dream." A glance at his distended underpants confirmed the nature of the dream.

The boys scampered out of the tent. Across the horizon hung a thick, black curtain of cloud, and from this flashed fork lightning almost continuously. Heavy drops of rain began to splatter the ground. Against this lurid background leapt great tongues of flame.

"Look! Colonel Sweet's hut has been struck!" somebody cried. "It's on fire!"

Colonel Sweet, who was of course the Headmaster in uniform, took charge of the boys. "Right, chaps, form a bucket line. You Sixth Formers man the pump. Look sharp, lads, the fire's catching hold."

Within minutes a line was formed, some twenty boys passing half a dozen buckets across a space of perhaps a hundred yards. The water was thrown unceremoniously onto the hut. Tom's group had been amongst the first on the scene and were delighted, though only juniors, to be included in the line. By this time, the rain was pelting down. Everyone was soaked but nobody bothered. It was still very warm. The fire was blazing. This was a real adventure.

"Sir! Sir!" The cries were uttered by a slim, red-haired boy who ran up to Dr/Colonel Sweet and tugged at his sleeve. A cardinal offence in most

circumstances. But this was Michael Sweet and he was obviously distressed. "Sir, father! Mortimer is still in the hut. He must have been asleep under your bunk. I can't find him anywhere." There was a hush amongst the spectators close enough to the familial pair to overhear the exchange. "Michael, pull yourself together. There's nothing we can do now. Only an idiot would think about entering that hut. Look how the fire has spread."

How noble of Dr Sweet. For Mortimer was his dog, his beloved dog, and though he was fourteen years old, incontinent, alarmingly smelly and almost blind, the boys knew how much he meant to the good doctor, especially since the unexpected death (choked on a wishbone) of Mrs Sweet some two years since. But no, the good doctor was not about to risk his life or that of his boys in a vain effort to save old Mortimer, however beloved.

Something in Theo's mind snapped. Without a word, even to Tom, he dropped his bucket, broke from the line and ran swiftly towards the burning hut. As he ran, he heard a jeering laugh from the rest. "Run for it Rycroft! Chickened out again! Can't take the heat!" The insults spurred Theo on.

As he got near the blazing hut, officers, prefects, and boys in the ranks yelled to him to stop. Robert Lawton dashed forward. "Are you mad, Rycroft? Get back to your line!" But he was not near enough to catch the boy who paused just for a second to dip his handkerchief into a pail of water. Holding this over his nose and mouth, Theo plunged into the suffocating heat.

Seconds later Theo staggered out of the blazing hut, carrying the struggling form of Mortimer. Though the dog was desperately trying to bite him, Theo staggered on until he reached the Colonel. Panting, he dropped the dog, then fell exhausted to his knees. Just then a blazing flash of lightning lit up the field like day; the rain walloped down in torrents; and a deafening cheer went up from the astonished camp. Cheer after cheer rang out as Colonel Sweet helped the boy to his feet, held him steady by the shoulders, released him and saluted him. Theo had run into the hut a nobody — he had emerged a hero!

In a few minutes the rain achieved what buckets of water had not. The fire fizzled out and the boys were instructed, gently, to return to their tents. The excitement was over.

Not quite. Rain had flooded a corner of the Tom's tent. It was a small patch, but sufficient to render Theo's sleeping bag useless for the night. The

boys hauled the sodden bag out of the way and secured the corner of the tent.

Theo stood and shivered. "I don't mind too much. If someone lends me a sheet, I'll just curl up in another corner," he said.

"You will not!" said Tom adamantly. "Look how you're shivering. You're probably in a state of shock. You shall have my sleeping bag, and I'll sleep in the sheet."

"No, Tom," protested Theo, "there's a chill wind getting up, now that the rain's come. I shall sleep in the sheet. I'll manage. Believe me, I'll manage."

"No! I won't hear of it," insisted Tom. "You will sleep in my bag, and I will sleep..."

"In your own bloody bag, too. Or none of us will get any sleep."

It was Lance, ever the realist, who had spoken. "Tom's bag's big enough for all of us," laughed Lance. "He's the only one who's brought a double bag. So you two had better sleep in it, and let us all get some sleep. And if it's still too cold, you can use this. Believe me, it's warm enough in here." Lance turned his back on his chums, bent over, pulled down his underwear, then pulled the cheeks of his buttocks apart. Everybody laughed. Graham Carruthers chirped, "By the looks of that, Lance, there's enough room for all us." There was merry uproar in the tent. No doubt wrestling would have broken out if Lawton hadn't put his head round the tent flap. "C'mon, you lot. Even heroes have to go to bed. So get to bed NOW, and good night, the lot of you." Only Tom noticed how Robert's eyes lingered on him; he blushed in pride.

Embarrassment broken, there was a scramble for the bags. Soon all five boys were Lucked up in the four usable bags. Tom had managed to drag his to the back of the tent. He scrambled in, then threw back a flap for Theo. "Get in, Theo, there's lot of room, and you're only a little 'un." Only when Theo got in did he realise Tom was buff naked. He jumped at the touch of skin against skin.

"Sorry, Theo, my underpants got soaked in the rain," he whispered. "I'm not risking pneumonia for the sake of a little modesty. And neither are you. Get those off. We can slip them back on in the morning before the others see." Theo, struck speechless, did as instructed and wriggled out of his wet cotton underwear. He lay there, keeping a discreet distance from his friend, wondering if he'd died in the fire and gone to Heaven.

It would be worth it if this was what Heaven was really like. With a sigh, he realised his willy was hard again.

Theo worked to control his breathing, forcing it to become slower and deeper. It was not that he wanted to fall asleep, but as he listened carefully to Tom's breathing, he knew it was encouraging the older boy to nod off. After what seemed endless hours, but blissful hours, lying there feeling the heat from Tom's body, Theo slid his fingertips towards Tom's side of the bag. He could feel himself flush all over in anticipating the moment of contact.

With a shock that sent a shudder through his body, the boy's fingertips encountered warm, naked flesh, a hard edge which must have been the right side of Tom's pelvis. Even that contact was enough to make his balls tighten in his scrotum. His fingers dared all. He slid his hand over the wall of Tom's pelvis down the soft slopes of his stomach. His fingertips burned as he touched hair, soft, pliant hair that felt like the silk hair on his baby brother's head. He held his breath. Almost there. His fingers touched another ridge, but this was soft, not hard. Another tremble shook Theo's body as his fingers traced the length of Tom's cock.

Tom's cock was laid out straight up his belly. Even soft it was as large as Theo's hard-on. He let his fingertips run the length of his friend's penis, stroke his balls, then rise to play in his pubic hair. With feather-like touches, he stroked it again and again. This was enough. If this was all, and it lasted forever, it would be enough. In his silent excitement, he even imagined Tom's cock was getting longer, stiffening, hardening. And it was! Theo couldn't turn back, he couldn't take his hand away now. Gently he squeezed Tom's shaft with his fingers and thumb. There was no doubt about it. It was longer, harder, hotter. Now he could feel the head of Tom's penis. The foreskin was moving back down the shaft as the head pushed its way forward. He wrapped all of his fingers round the shaft and felt the heat of the blood-engorged penis against his fingers. Four inches easily. No, five! And hair, too! Why did he have to be so small and puny! Why couldn't he have five inches — and hair, too? Then Tom might be really interested in him. Theo lay there squeezing, running the meat of his thumb around the head of Tom's cock. How wet and slippery it had become! He slid a hand down to feel his own. How hard it was. How wet and slippery the head of his cock was, too...

Suddenly Tom rolled over in his sleep to lie flat on his back. For a moment Theo panicked and almost let go of the sleeping boy's erect penis. Tom grunted and fell back into the rhythms of sleep, leaving Theo with far easier access to his penis, his balls and mysteries beneath them. 'Thank you, oh, thank you,' sighed Theo. Gently he began moving the loose skin up and down the rock-hard penis. He remembered the thrills it had given him. He wasn't quite sure why he was doing it. Tom was asleep; could he feel it in his sleep? Would he think he was dreaming? What really mattered was what the feeling did to Theo. He couldn't understand it. Why did playing with Tom's cock make him, Theo, feel so good? This was enough. He needed no more. This was enough.

But it wasn't. He had to see Tom's cock as well as touch it. He'd never seen Tom's cock, well, not erect, not hard at any rate. He just had to see it. Even if he woke Tom and got a punch in the nose for his cheek, it didn't matter. He had come this far. He couldn't stop now. Still jacking Tom, Theo eased down the bag inch by inch, millimetre by millimetre, until chest, stomach and hips were bare. He raised himself on one elbow and gave the bag a final tug. There Tom was — exposed. Entirely smooth except for a small but dense bush of thick hair, black in the moonlight, just above his cock. His cock! His beautiful cock! What was it about these five inches of hot, hard flesh that was so beautiful? Everything about Tom Brown was beautiful. His balls were like plums, encased in warm boy-velvet. His tummy was hot, smooth, delicious to the touch. Smooth and sweet enough to lick.

Theo lowered his lips to Tom's stomach and planted a row of tiny kisses around his belly button. He felt the tip of Tom's cock brush his cheek. He had to taste him. No matter what it cost he had to taste him. Theo closed his eyes and inched his mouth towards Tom's stiff prick. He felt it touch his lips. That was enough! He dropped his open mouth over Tom's penis and sucked most of it deep into his throat. He felt his lips brush the silky hair.

He neither gagged, nor choked. When breathless, he raised his head and sucked the top two inches with his lips. The taste, the smell, the feel was wonderful. Never had there been anything like this in the whole history of the human race! Theo felt he was taking Man's first steps on the Moon. He was Columbus sighting the Americas. He was Marco Polo stumbling into Xanadu.

The boy rolled his tongue around the head, savouring the tangy goo, swallowing it mixed with his own saliva, his own mouth juices flowing freely. And Tom was helping him! In his sleep, he was jerking his hips up and down, not much, but enough to force his cock deeper into Theo's mouth, then to pull it back to the tip again. Even the tiny moans and groans he made in his sleep added to the thrill of it all. As he moved his hips up, Theo slid a hand under his cheeks, grabbed one of them, squeezed, kneaded, massaged, encouraged Tom to drive up into his hot, wet mouth, oh so young, oh so willing. He seemed to feel Tom's penis thicken and lengthen still more. He pushed his head hard into Tom's groin, forcing the boy's cock deeper into his throat. He wanted all of it even though he knew he couldn't handle it. He knew what would happen and he wanted it, all of it. He wanted Tom's sperm to spurt into his mouth, down his throat, into his tummy. He didn't care if he got pregnant. They'd run away together. To California. They'd bring their love-child up there. Theo explored every millimetre of Tom's penis with his lips and tongue, feeling the small indentations and creases along the underside of the cockhead, tonguing the tiny slit from where the boy's juices would spout.

Tom's cock was fat and hard now. It seemed to be swelling in Theo's mouth. Tom was bouncing more now, his hips jerking upwards, then downwards, like a puppet on a string. And suddenly it was there: hot, wet, squishy, gooey, spurty, squirting into his throat. He could feel it, thick creamy gobs hanging from his tonsils and the back of his throat. At first it was a stream, then it became hot spits and spurts. There was a lot of it, an awful lot of it. Theo had to slide it from his mouth, he was choking, but he held the head of Tom's cock between his lips as the load emptied into him. Held it there until the squirts subsided into slow, oozing drops that Theo held on his lips and tongue, savouring the taste, the bitter-sweet tangy taste of his friend, Tom Brown. He loved Tom Brown.. He loved Tom's cock. For one mad moment, he considered biting it off and swallowing it. Then it would be with him forever. But Tom would be angry. Tom might not forgive him. Then lay there, holding Tom's penis to his lips, giggling at the silliness of his imaginings.

But he was tired now. It had been a long day, such a long day. He wanted to sleep facing Tom, but it was awkward with Tom on his back. And his own stiff penis. There was nothing he could do about that. He might wake Tom, and anyway what could he do with his sperm? It was lovely

stuff, but it was messy. Could he get his own mouth down to it? Don't be silly. Just ignore it. It'll go away when you fall asleep. Oh, but there's nothing so lonely as falling asleep with a hard-on. Theo resigned himself to a little bit of loneliness; it was a small price to pay for the joy Tom had given him. He began to roll the other way.

Theo felt a warm hand on his shoulder, pulling him back towards Tom. As he turned, he realised that Tom was lying there facing him. And Tom's eyes were open! Fire flew to Theo's face. He looked so young, hardly more than nine or ten. Tom smiled, the lines crinkling his eyes in that special way. He pulled Theo's face closer to his on their shared pillow. Faces only an inch apart, the boys lay there, the silence broken only by the patter of rain on the tent and their own breathing.

Tom's hand slid between Theo's legs. His smile broadened. The boy was as hard as ever. He wrapped his fingers around Theo's penis and began jerking him, all the while looking into his friend's eyes. If you'd counted ten slowly enough, you might have made it before Theo came. He whimpered, his legs jerking straight out below him, as the second wet orgasm of his life splattered against Tom's belly, chest and nipples. With his free hand, Tom covered Theo's mouth as the boy whimpered, wriggled, thrashed and came in two long spurts of hot cum. Tom held onto the boy until he stopped his involuntary spasms. Then Tom pulled Theo tightly against him and moved his body, skin to skin, until both boys were splattered with cum. "There, we've spermed each other," whispered Tom in Theo's ear. "Now let's get some sleep." Tom and Theo snuggled into each other.

Across the tent came a loud whisper. "Thank fuck for that. Maybe we can all get some sleep now." That was Lance Clifton.

"Yes, Lance and I are considerate. We tossed each other off this afternoon." That was Graham Carruthers.

From Fitzroy-McKean there came only the sound of gentle snoring.

CHAPTER 3

Highland Games

“Well, he is a plucky youngster, and will make a player.”

“Erotic is when you do something creative and imaginative with a feather. Perversion is when you fuck the duck itself.”

“That’s not original,” observed Sweet.

“No, but it’s funny,” laughed Merry.

“Not for the fucking duck,” grinned Lawton.

“Correction. Fucked duck, not fucking duck. Pass the bottle, Michael. Just because you pilfered it from your father’s study does not entitle you to hold onto that bottle as if it were your prick.” Eric reached for the bottle. Highland Park Single Malt Scotch Whisky. 43 vol. Nectar of the Upper Sixth, if not for the gods themselves. He poured a finger of the amber liquid into his mug. He held the bottle up to a light. Three inches left. They’d got through nearly a litre in an hour. They must be drunk.

Merry, Sweet and Lawton were beyond the stage of knowing just how drunk they were. The study was warm, a fire glowed in the hearth, courtesy of Tom Brown, and a dozen or so candles lit the room. It was two o’clock on a Sunday morning. The House was asleep, the Duty Master gone. Life could not better be.

Mid-term was a week gone, the Inter-House matches were in full swing; there was much to discuss. And in the early part of the evening, the discussion had been sensible. Merry and Lawton, Captain and Vice-captain of the First XV respectively, were deep in knotty argument when Sweet looked in. They glanced around, nodded, and went at it once more. Sweet curled up in the armchair, set down a brown paper bag and its contents with a thump on the scarred coffee table, and waited an opportunity to join in.

“We’ve got to play the game as it is set down in the book, Merry,” Robert was saying. “You may bleat to your heart’s content about the value of the unorthodox and all that, but so long as I’m organising the House

juniors, we'll stick to the book. Every junior must play in at least two House matches. That's the tradition."

"Quite," said Merry dryly, "but if you'll allow me to get a word in edgeways..." and proceeded to emphasize his point. Sweet helped himself to a biscuit and listened keenly for possible flaws in the argument on either side. He was not a playing member of the Fifteen. As a matter of fact, his eyesight was defective, and, as a man may not wear spectacles on the rugby football field, his role, perforce, was that of spectator only. Short-sighted as he was, however, there were few points in the play that escaped his notice. It had not escaped his notice that Lawton's study, as usual, was short of tumblers, cups and mugs. He wandered out and downstairs to the junior dorms, into a bathroom, and secured three tooth mugs. He gave them a perfunctory rinse and wandered back upstairs.

The argument was in full flow. Michael extracted the bottle from the paper bags, poured three measures of whisky, handed out two, and sank back into the armchair. "I suppose it's young Lane we're talking about now," he put in presently. "Same old story — passing in his own twenty-five, eh?"

"That's right," said Eric eagerly. "You saw what happened on Saturday. He deliberately passed out to Clifton, Clifton muffed and knocked-on; there was a scrum right under the posts, and of course, all Birnam's had to do was push us over the line and touch down. We can't take risks like that. Our juniors are lighter than theirs."

"Prettier, too," murmured Michael.

"I admit Lane had a bit of bad luck," said Robert.

"Hard luck!" expostulated Eric. "Luck had nothing whatever to do with it. It was deliberate, rank, bad play. I say, Mike, this whisky's splendid stuff."

"It's a single malt. Highland Park, 43. From the Orkneys. Father's special stock. He buys it by the case; never bothers to count the bottles."

Robert took up Peter Lane's case again. "Even you must admit that it was hard luck, Clifton dropping the pass like that. There was nothing wrong with it — we all saw it — and the man had lots of room to clear. You know Clifton, total scatter-brain at times." The Captain of the First XV adjusted his dressing gown. "That," he insisted, "had nothing whatever to do with the case. It's a matter of principle, this passing in your own twenty-five business. We're not going to have it in any House teams. I've already

warned young Lane. If it happens again — well, a good spanking never did any junior harm. Now who have you in mind for captain?” The last question was asked with a straight face, though if Robert had been more observant, he would have seen the wink Eric gave Michael.

Robert swirled the liquid in his glass, breathed in the fumes, let his eyes water a moment, sipped a little, coughed and said, “I was thinking of young Brown actually.”

“When are you ever thinking of anything else these days?” laughed Eric, supported by Michael who pursed his lips and blew Robert a kiss.

Robert blushed furiously and swallowed the remainder of the whisky in a single gulp. Finally managing to control a fit of coughing, he protested. “Come off it, you know he’s the best player in the juniors, utterly fearless, and he thinks the game, too.”

“Great legs as well,” chimed Michael.

“Have you seen that bottom?” added Eric. “I did shower duty last night. I almost grabbed him right there and then and had him on the shower room floor. Talk about peaches and cream. Makes me wish he were my little man.”

“You two are disgusting,” said Robert, passing his glass to Michael and trying to keep a small grin of pride from his face. To hear Tom praised even in those terms made him glow. And if he were strictly honest, at least with himself, Tom did have great legs and a beautiful bum. Every weekday evening the boy arrived promptly at the start of Prep, made a fire, a pot of tea, tidied the study, and waited for Robert’s arrival. The older boy was rarely late. Time spent with Tom was a pleasure, and the more time they spent together, the more freely they opened up to each other. The marvelous thing about Tom Brown was that nothing went out of the room; no matter what was said — since so little untoward was done — Tom kept every confidence they shared to himself. The study might have been their personal coral island.

Eric and Michael noted Robert’s discomfiture and switched the conversation to other possibles for Saturday’s crucial Inter-House match. Once more, if Robert had been observant, he would have noted that Michael had poured him a double this time. Still, other boys seemed safer territory, and Eric Merry did take rugger very seriously.

As the night wore on into the early hours of Sunday morning, the boys had relaxed and got looser and looser. Michael stoked up the fire on several

occasions until they had no choice but to heave their dressing gowns over the back of the couch and take to the carpet. The whisky, the candlelight, the company made the boys' faces glow. It was good to be alive, it was good to be young, it was good to be together.

The boys lay stretched out on the carpet, heads towards the fire that was now banked low. Eric and Robert lay on their sides facing each other across Michael Sweet who lay on his back catching drops of whisky in his mouth as he tipped them from his mug.

"Did you know that freeborn boys wore gold balls around their necks when young, so that Greek men could tell which boys they could use sexually?"

"That was when they were nude, Eric," said Michael from below.

"Who? The men?" asked Robert.

"No, the boys," said Eric. "If they had their clothes on, they'd know right away. Freeborn boys and slave boys wore different outfits in ancient Greece."

"Can you just imagine it?" whispered Michael huskily. The whisky and the images were getting to his throat. "You're in the baths in Athens. You see a group of naked boys. And then you say, 'Look at the balls on those boys!' Bet that got a laugh."

"I suppose it did," added Robert. "The first hundred times people heard it."

"Don't be such a stick-in-mud," said Eric. "The Greeks had their boys and you've got Tom Brown. Love or lust. What's the difference?"

"I resent that," said Robert, emptying yet another mug. "Tom Brown's my fag. That's why he's in my study every night. He lights my fire."

"Bet he pokes it, too," giggled Michael. "I'd let him poke mine any day. Would you consider hiring him out?"

"You two are disgusting," said Robert. "You're a pair of... degenerates." He had learned that word on Friday afternoon. It was a pleasure to use it.

"Depends what you call disgusting," smiled Eric. "Do you call this disgusting?" he glanced down between them. Robert's glance followed. Eric, who was propped on his left elbow, had his free hand in Michael Sweet's pyjama flies. He was manipulating the boy's penis. It was brutally clear that the boy had an erection. There was a sharp intake of breath: Robert's. How could he have missed this before?

"You don't have to stay if you don't want to," whispered Eric.

“This is my study.”

A murmured ‘good’ came from Michael. “Open my buttons, please, Rob. It’s so warm in here.” As if mesmerised, Robert slipped open the buttons of Mike’s pyjama tops. His finger tips trembled as he touched hot, smooth skin. He edged the boy’s pyjamas apart until his chest and stomach lay bare. Beneath, Eric undid the knot at the boy’s waist. Mike raised his hips and let the pyjamas, wild-silk, crimson, slide away from his groin and buttocks. The boy’s body was laid bare to Robert’s fascinated gaze.

How slim Mike was — not skinny but slim, his chest, hips and legs making an almost single line. His chest was like sculpted ivory topped by prominent pinkish-brown nipples. His stomach was as flat as a mill pond, his navel curving upwards like a dash of whipped cream. Robert looked at Mike’s face. The boy’s eyes were closed, a smile playing round his lips as Eric stroked his penis to full hardness. Robert had never realised how orange Mike’s hair was. It was silly to call him a red-head. His hair was packed in tight orange curls, the same orange making two elegant slashes above his eyes. Orange hair, orange eyebrows, orange eyelashes. Freckles, of course. The ivory skin, suffused with an orange glow as if the colour had seeped down from his head, was scattered with orange freckles that made Mike look absurdly young.

“Stroke his chest. He likes that” Robert stroked Michael’s chest with his fingertips. He became adventurous and let the back of his fingernails run over the boy’s upraised nipples. “Mmmm, I like that.” He had averted his gaze from the boy’s groin but now he had to look.

He all but gasped. He had expected an erection, but not of this size. The boy’s penis was slim, not skinny, slim, but it was a full seven inches long. How could such a slight, slim figure carry around a whopper like that! And something else surprised Robert. Mike was circumcised; his foreskin was not dragged back down the shaft: it just wasn’t there. A neat scar about an inch and a half below the head showed where the scalpel had done its job. How elegant it looked. How hot, hard and urgent it made the boy’s cock seem. The same ivory skin, tinged with purple and red, ran down the shaft, darkening as it reached the boy’s ballsac. Robert could see the boy’s testicles shift in their scrotum as Eric gently jerked Mike’s cock. Seven inches! His was only just over six and he was more strongly built than the boy who lay beneath his gaze.

Michael reminded Robert of a small marble statue in Mr. Cornish's study. An ephebe, sir called it, letting his finger run the tight little buttocks. Greek beauty at its most classical, sir said. But that ephebe did not have a cock like Michael Sweet! Robert's finger tips traced a line into Michael's groin and brushed the flame of orange hair at the base of his penis. Like wild silk, silk aflame.

"Go on, hold it, it won't bite you. It might spit at you, but it won't bite you." There was warmth in Eric's invitation, and Robert placed his fingers where Eric's had been until he gripped Mike's cock. He was surprised by the steel beneath the skin; the hard core beneath the soft, sweaty skin that he jerked along the shaft. Still propped on one elbow, Robert's face hovered over Michael's stomach as he flogged the boy off in a rhythm that his own penis knew so well. There was a gentle push at the side of his head. He did not resist. He sank down until the side of his head lay on Mike's left thigh, his face only inches from the hot shaft he was jerking. Across the boy's stiff cock, his eyes caught those of Eric Merry. He blushed a little, sighed then gave in. He must be drunk, very drunk to be doing this. Yes, that explained it all. Did it? Why was he getting so much pleasure out of giving pleasure to this beautiful red — no — orange-headed boy with the huge, hard erection? He jerked Mike's shaft and looked into Eric's eyes.

"This is what he really likes," whispered Eric. His tongue came out slowly and licked across the head of Michael Sweet's penis. He looked into Robert's eyes, then licked the blood-engorged head again. Eric licked and looked, licked and looked. "Go on, Rob, try it. Sweets to the Sweet." Eric's tongue licked the length of Robert's hand. Robert snatched it away. Eric continued to lick along his friend's cockshaft.

Tentatively, Robert put out his tongue, and with the tip merely touched the tissue of Mike's cockhead. Daringly, he gave it tiny licks. What was that taste? Sweet and bitter at the same time. He licked boldly now, letting the tip of his tongue round the scar tissue of Mike's circumcision. He wanted to kiss the boy's cock. And if he wanted to, he would. He pursed his lips and kissed the head. It was gooey now, sweaty and slippery. He wondered if he could get the head of the boy's cock in his mouth. He knew that was dirty, but he didn't care anymore. He opened his mouth into a wide circle and placed it round the head without coming into contact with it. A slight pressure on his head encouraged him down. He did not resist and his mouth enclosed two or three inches of the boy's shaft. God, it was hot and hard

and big. It filled his mouth as he strained his jaws to take more and more in. He was drunk now, really drunk. He was not responsible. Eric and Mike would understand what had happened. He was drunk, he was not responsible, he tightened his lips around the boy's shaft and began to suck on it in earnest. How soothing it was, how comforting. How long had he been waiting to do something like this? Suddenly he thought of Tom. It was Tom lying beneath him. It was Tom's penis in his mouth. He was giving this pleasure to Tom. His young friend's smiling face danced behind his eyes as his head bobbed over the crotch of the boy below him.

Robert felt a tug at his pyjamas. Someone had opened the drawstring. Someone was tugging his pyjama bottoms down. He raised his bottom. That's what you did, wasn't it? Someone tugged your pyjamas down and you raised your bottom to help them. He felt the palms of someone's hands press on his stomach. It was such a good feeling. Then a hand curled round his erection. He was hard, stiff, he had been for...as long as he could remember. Fingers edged back his foreskin. He could feel the coolness on the head of his penis.

He sucked Mike deeper into his throat, fighting a gagging reflex, releasing him, then sucking him into the hilt again. He wanted to brush that flame-coloured hair with his lips. That was a challenge! Robert loved a challenge! He would take the boy's seven inches — thank goodness, his cock was not fat like Robert's own — all the way in until his lips kissed the boy's flame-coloured hair and the skin beneath. But it was getting hard to concentrate. The mouth on his own cock was sucking hard, he felt saliva run down the shaft into his own thick bush of dark hair. Mike was pushing his cock up hard into Robert's mouth. Robert's hips and bottom began the same motions; it was not intentional on Robert's part; he had no control over it — though to be honest he did not try to control it. His hips jerked upwards, pushing his cock deep into the sucking mouth, while Mike pushed his own sweet cock into his. The feeling was there, building, rising, getting ready to rush his mind into that white place where reason and reality ended. He sucked Mike's cock, jerked it and played with his balls. That must feel good; it felt so good to him.

There was another sensation. Where was it? Yes, there. In his secret place, in his dark place, in his hairy place. Something was burrowing into his hole, seeking the most intimate of entrances. No! That was too much. Robert clenched his buttocks and tightened his hole. "That's all right, Rob,

that's all right, too soon, I know." The voice was soothing. He knew that voice. Was it Tom? No, too deep, too dark. It was Eric!

Robert shook his head to clear away some of the whisky fumes, forgetting how deeply Michael was inside him. "Oh... shit... yeh... yeh..." That was another voice. That was Mike's voice. The cock in his throat was swelling; Robert was forced to draw his head back, and then the spurting started. No, not a spurting. A long stream, two or three of them, streams of liquid hitting the back of his throat, choking him, he had to swallow, it was sliding down. Then another stream and another. O, quaff the kind nepenthe! And his own hips were jerking out of control; he was shooting, streaming, spurting. His cock swelled to its utmost. The sperm shot from his balls, up the tube and into...it was Eric's mouth. Eric was swallowing his sperm just as he swallowed Mike's. Thoughts spun and crashed into each other, falling from the blinding white. There was nothing left but sensation, he was nothing but sensation. He wanted — he wanted something — he wanted Tom's cock, he wanted Tom!

He had released Mike now. He was lying flat on his back. He could feel his penis lying thickly limp, still oozing, across his thigh. He felt something at his lips. His lips felt hot and swollen. Bee stung lips. Where did that come from? He felt something cool at his lips, cool and hard. He felt a trickle of liquid at his lips. He opened his mouth. He coughed in fits as the drops of whisky ran into his throat. They mingled with Mike's sperm. What a taste, what a wonderful taste! Where did Mike get that whisky? Robert lay there dreaming, playing with the images in his mind: Tom at the camp, Tom lying beside Theo, Tom half-naked passing buckets of water down the line, Tom naked in the communal showers, blushing when he saw Robert on duty, Tom in his tight rugby shorts — Tom lying in bed even now, wrapped up in the cocoon of his own innocence.

Had he fallen asleep? He wasn't sure. But the fire was lower and most of the candles were out. Who had been here? Eric and Mike. Had they gone? The grunting forced him to focus. He turned where he lay on the carpet. No, Eric and Mike hadn't gone. Mike was on his back, not completely, for his legs were rolled so far over him that they touched his ears. Eric had a hold of Mike's ankles. He was kneeling, his groin pressed hard against the boy. He grunted as he drove into him again and again. Mike's eyes were open. He looked up into Eric's eyes. Both boys were wet with sweat. It poured down their faces, shoulders, chests, hips. Robert could

hear the wet smacking sound each time Eric drove into Michael. He knew what was happening.

Eric was fucking Michael in the ass, and Michael was loving every moment of it. 'Fucking', was that the right word? Shouldn't it be 'buggering'? No, Robert preferred fucking. Buggering was too hard, too brutal. There was no affection in the act of buggery, but he knew those two cared for each other; he had simply never guessed how much.

"Hi, Rob." That was Eric. How could he chat at a time like this? "Sorry, didn't ask permission." Every few words were grunted. "You were asleep." A touch on his arm. It was Mike. "My fault, Rob." Every few words were interrupted as his head bounced on the carpet. Robert reached for a pillow and slipped it under the boy's head. "Thanks, Rob, you're a sport." Pain flitted over Mike's face as Eric rammed his penis home again. "We got to cum. Not fair to leave Eric out. I usually fuck him, but he's doing all right." Another 'oof' as his head hit the pillow.

On all fours, Robert crawled the length of the boys until he lay curled up near the hearth. He had an unrestricted view as Eric's penis drove into Michael's anus. It was hard to take in what he was seeing. Eric's swollen penis was as fat as his own, and as he withdrew, then rammed it home, Robert could see it was all of six inches, and that was without counting the head of the boy's cock which remained buried in the exposed hole. How could an anal ring stretch that much? Mike had very little hair on his legs or between his buttocks. Robert could see how stretched the ring was, red and raw round the smooth entrance. The puckered skin must be stretched to breaking, he thought. But Jove, it was an erotic sight! And sounds, too, as the boys heaved and panted, Eric withdrawing to the tip and ramming in to the hilt. If only... if only...

Would Eric shoot his 'cum', that was the word they'd used, up Mike's hole? Would Mike wash it out? Would it slosh around all night?

All night! What time was it? He glanced at the clock above the mantelpiece. Ten past three. It was Sunday morning. He was on duty. In less than four hours, he would have to be up, washed, dressed and ready to waken the junior dorms. Then after breakfast, there was clean-up, then a meeting of the junior rugby side. Then in the afternoon, the Inter-House match! He had to get to bed. He wanted to stay and watch the climax. But he had to get to bed.

Robert stood and leaned over Eric. "I'm off to bed. It's after three. When you two have finished..." Eric nodded. Mike blew him a kiss. Those two were crazy. And he'd been sucked into the craziness. What should he do? What could he do? Fuck it, he was going to bed. He'd think about it in the morning. Quietly he closed the door behind him and padded across the corridor to the bedroom he shared with Luke Purdie. Thank goodness, Luke was the studious, academic type, only interested in a place at Oxbridge. As Robert climbed naked into bed, his pyjamas forgotten or abandoned in the study, he did not glance at the bed near the window. If he had, he would have seen it was empty. That night Luke Purdie was not sleeping alone; neither was the Duty Master.

Dusk was gathering over Short Acre. Already sundry small lights winked in the town across the valley. A wet, salt mist drifted up from the sea, shrouding the outlying school buildings in a veil of grey.

For the last half hour the crowd around the ropes had been increasing steadily, and now, ten minutes before the close of play, they ranked two and three deep down each side of the ground.

"School House! School House! Play up!"

"Up and at them, Cawdor! Up and at them!"

Ten minutes to go, and the score at three points all!

The scrum had formed in mid-field. Cawdor House were down and pushing like Trojans. School House, out-weighted but not out-fought, heaved back. Graham Carruthers fed the ball into the scrum.

"Coming right, School, now!"

The ball emerged cleanly. Graham pounced on it, drew his man, and threw the ball out to Theo. The line was in motion.

The appeals of the School House contingent grew frantic in their intensity. Man after man was tackled and went down, but still the ball swept on towards the line. And now Fitzroy-McKean had it — the fastest, surest winger in junior school. Into the line burst Tom Brown, backing up for all he was worth, ready with eager hands to take the inside pass. On went Fitzroy-McKean, only yards from the line. The Cawdor full-back, racing over, took him high and bundled him into touch. But not before a little reverse pass found Tom who, clutching the ball to his chest, dived over the line and grounded the ball between the post to a perfect hurricane of cheers.

The kick was charged down.

“Keep them out, School,” panted Tom as they staggered back for the kick-off. “Keep it tight. Only minutes to go. That’s the spirit!”

Cawdor encamped themselves within the School House half. School, gloriously marshalled by Tom and whipped to a frenzy by their supports, fought them every inch of the way. Lance Clifton, kneed in the groin, got up, dazed, eyes glazed, shook his head like an enraged bull terrier and waded into the enemy with renewed gusto. Graham Carruthers took out the Cawdor captain, an oaf twice his size, and was booted in the head for his cheek. Theo Rycroft was molested in a collapsed scrum and smiled grimly. Fitzroy-McKean snatched at loose balls and was twice bitten about the buttocks. Even Peter Lane was inspired, interposing his body between much bigger chaps than himself, and hanging on to whatever he could reach in his efforts to slow them down. They were a magnificent six among a magnificent fifteen.

Less than a minute to go. They were going to do it!

From the scrum Graham slipped the ball to Theo. If they could get it wide to Fitz, he would be off like a whippet down the line. They would catch him, he was tiring now, but by then it would be too late — for them. As he was taken out by two men, Theo chucked the ball to his left, straight into the hands of Peter Lane. The boy, blond fringe flying, grey-faced, daubed with mud, had prayed the ball would not come to him. Nobody was listening. He glanced along the line. School House, out-classed and out-weighted, had played the game of their lives. At the commencement, perhaps, the apparent over-confidence of their rivals had helped them; but that had long since evaporated.

Peter saw that. He saw, too, that the School forwards were at the limit of their endurance, in no fit condition to withstand a final assault if Cawdor House got their paws on the ball again. He should kick, ought to kick, had to kick. He had promised Merry he would kick. But if he kicked short, Cawdor would have possession; there would be a swift, smashing forward rush. School would crumple — little more could be asked of them — the ball would be carried over and touched down under the posts. The kick would go over, all would be lost. This, Peter Lane saw with exceeding clarity.

The air was full of sound and fury signifying everything. Cries and counter-cries rang in the wintry half-light. The Cawdorites had massed in

hoarse-voiced array behind their own uprights. In their midst stood Merry, the only silent member of the party. His eyes were on Peter Lane. On the left touchline, another pair of silent eyes ran over the slight, slim figure: those were the eyes of Mr. Cornish. "Beautiful, just beautiful," he murmured as he considered plausible reasons for calling Peter to his study that evening.

Peter Lane had seen all with exceeding clarity. Now he did what instinct told him to. He threw the ball out to the right. It hung in the air, then dropped unerringly into the arms of the Cawdor captain, who in grateful disbelief, romped over the line and grounded the ball.

The kick was not charged down.

The whistle shrilled for the last time. "No-side!"

"Ah well, it's only a game," sighed Peter, blissfully unaware of the despair around him. The School juniors sat on the ground, some with head in hands, others staring at the darkening horizon. Tom went round each boy, clapping him on the shoulders with a sincere and hearty: "Well played." "We did our best." "Magnificent game." Tom would have gone on to commiserate with and congratulate even Peter Lane: "The little blighter played his heart out," but Peter was nowhere in sight. Actually he was, over there, on the left touchline, deep in conversation with Mr. Cornish. And Peter was laughing, hands on hips, the boy was laughing as Cornish brushed the fringe from his eyes. "Ah well, it's only a game," mused Tom as he trudged towards School house with the other chaps.

Peter hurried on into the house. He was late, very late. He would be lucky to find even lukewarm water left in the showers. "Drat that Cornish! Couldn't he see I was getting cold out there? Bored, too. Not that he would have noticed. Too far gone to notice anything but my...masters are such fools."

To Peter Lane, of the big eyes, perfect skin, cute nose and blond fringe, all masters were fair game. "They ask for it," he'd said one day, "by being schoolmasters at all. Especially the ones who actually like boys. No sensible man would be a schoolmaster. In fact, they become masters in the sure and certain hope of being ragged, just as a monkey allows itself to be caught and put in a zoo..."

"I didn't know monkeys allowed themselves to be caught of their own free will," protested Peter's bunkmate. Not that he protested with any great

vigour; Peter was caressing his stiffie at the time, and he did not want to upset his benefactor.

“Well, they do,” said Peter. “And do you know why? They do it for the fun of letting their tails hang through the wire to be pulled by passing fools. Monkeys know by instinct that while their tails are being pulled they can nip half an inch of flesh out of the ears of the chaps who pull them.”

“Yes. but doesn’t that make you the fool for pulling the monkey’s tail?”

“Quite right,” said Peter. “Except for one thing.” He paused for the expected question. It did not come, his friend being thoroughly absorbed in the pleasurable, sensations in his groin. “I have learned from experience,” he announced. “And, yes, there is something else. I’ve got something some of them want.” This time a question did come. “What’s that?” Peter tugged on his friend’s penis. “I’ve got a little banana.”

“I don’t understand.”

“You wouldn’t,” sighed Peter, “but then you’re only eight.”

“You’re only ten.”

“Shut up and turn round this way. I want to suck you off.”

“Thank you, Lane.”

“Don’t mention it.”

Peter skipped barefooted into the bathroom. He was right. He was late. The room was deserted, wet towels scattered everywhere. He felt the towel rail, lukewarm. It would have to do. He snipped and threw his rugby shirts, shorts and athletic support aside.

There were six cubicles. The nearest one would do. He was about to reach in and turn the tap when the faintest of moans caught his attention. The pipes? He recognised that kind of moan. His cock twitched. There it was again. From one of the end cubicles. The curtains of the far left cubicle were drawn shut. Promising! He edged along the row and stood just to the right. Within seconds he was grinning to himself. He recognised the familiar slapping sound. It was skin against skin, foreskin against cock actually. And there was an awful lot of it. Whoever was having a wank in the shower had a cock worth seeing.

Peter’s hand dropped to his own penis. Already semi-hard, a few squeezes brought it to attention. “Upon my word, you’re a randy little bastard,” he thought, then giggled again as he remembered those exact words were used by Mr. Dainty, second master at his prep school. He looked down at his stiff prick and his fingers squeezing, jerking the shaft,

drawing the foreskin over the head, then pushing it back down again. “Not bad for a twelve-year-old. Wish I had more hair. ’Cos I’m blond, I suppose.” He stopped thinking and devoted himself to listening and to the sensations in his cock. Listening to the moans and the wet slapping in the cubicle sent him quickly to the edge. His fingers were a blur. Eyes closed, he drove himself to the edge. A few more strokes would do it. He needed support. He reached out. He grabbed what was nearest — a shower curtain. And jerked it straight from its pole.

With a clatter, pole, rings and curtain crashed to the floor. Still holding onto the curtain and to his hard-on, Peter joined them in the wet.

“What the...?”

He looked up in the direction of the outraged voice. Lance Clifton, naked, holding Graham Carruthers’ penis which was as stiff as a milk bottle. Graham, naked, who somehow managed to look red and white in the face at the same time, whipping his hand away from Lance’s cock, the head of which looked about to burst. Graham’s hips were still jerking as he pushed his hard-on into Lance’s hand. Lance, absent-mindedly, or perhaps generously, continued to jerk him until he realised the compromising nature of his position.

“You little shit, you’ve been spying on us.” Lance was famously intemperate in his use of language. “And you cost us the game,” added Graham. “Cornish’s Lustknabe,” hissed Lance whose father served in the British Army of the Rhine.

“I’d rather be Cornish’s bumboy than Carruthers’ tart,” retorted Peter, bravely but unwisely under the circumstances.

“Why you little...little... You ought to be horse-whipped! You ought to be tarred and feathered!” Lance has recently acquired a taste for bawdy historical novel of the bodice-ripping variety. “You ought to be hung, drawn and quartered. You ought to be tortured.” There was a pause while several pennies dropped.

“Tortured...” Another pause. “And you shall be.” This time no pause. “Grab him, Graham.” The boys grabbed an arm each and hauled Peter up from the floor. Lance twisted the boy’s arm up his back and ushered him across the room. Peter was curious to see what they had in mind. “Shut the door,” whispered Lance.

Lance pushed Peter across the towel rail which, fortunately, was only lukewarm. “Get his arms from the other side.” Graham did as he was told,

curious to see what Lance had in mind.

“What have you got in mind?” he asked. Lance had no idea. He ran the various torture scenes that he remembered from his prep school through his mind. “Get me that bar of soap, on the sink behind you.” Graham reached and got the soap. “I think we should wash this boy’s mouth out with soap,” he grinned, kicking Peter’s feet apart, not with any particular force since all three boys were naked. “That’ll teach him to call me a tart.”

“Tart, tart and triple tart,” spat the captive Peter, as brave and as foolish as ever. “And just how are you going to make me open my mouth if I don’t want to?”

Silence. The cogs in Lance’s brain spun surely if not swiftly. Then he smiled. “If you won’t open up at that end, I’ll just have to use this end. Graham, the soap, please.”

“You wouldn’t dare,” hissed Peter, taken aback not so much by the proposition as by Lance’s unexpected ingenuity. “You just wouldn’t dare.”

“Oh, wouldn’t I just? Graham, pull his arms down. If he makes a sound, give them a real jerk. That will really hurt.” Graham nodded and winked at Lance. He knew his friend was joking.

Lance edged Peter’s feet and legs wider apart. The boy’s bum was at his waist. He dropped to his knees and parted Peter’s buttocks. There it was, the boy’s hole, pink and brown between the creaminess of his bum cheeks. It was larger than he expected, a good deal larger. Not that he’d inspected many bum holes, but it was larger than his own. More than once, on his mother’s double bed — father had his own bedroom and his own double bed — he’d taken her hand mirror, lain naked on the bed, swung his legs over his head and inspected his hole. It was a pinprick compared to this. He’d also tried to suck himself off, but had only managed to kiss the tip of his penis. He had, however, wanked himself and shot his load into his eager, gaping mouth. Lance had been surprised how good he tasted.

He ran the edge of soap along Peter’s opening. Again and again. He saw the hole turn concave and the lips of the boy’s anal ring stretch as he pushed and probed. It was his favourite soap: Wright’s Coal Tar. Great soap for washing but useless for penetrating the boy. And what if the bar got stuck up there, lodged tightly? He could imagine Matron’s face when Peter presented himself and his bottom. “Ma’am, could you help with this? I’ve had a little accident.” Cleanliness was next to godliness in Matron’s religion, but surely a bar of soap up the bum was over-doing it.

Lance stood up. Amusement and frustration contending in his face. Was this little bugger going to escape his just desserts? He looked down his body and was surprised to find his erection hadn't abated; it was harder than ever, poking straight out, the tip almost between Lane's buttocks. He couldn't. He shouldn't. He wouldn't. He bloody-well would! Dropping the soap and stepping forward, Lance parted the boy's creamy cheeks again. He wouldn't go all the way, just give him a scare. He pressed the tip of his engorged, enflamed cockhead against Peters hole. He pressed again and felt the concave indentation. He pressed once more, and as if he'd whispered 'Sesame', the head of his cock popped through the boy's anal ring. Lance stood in a state of shock. Nothing in his twelve years had been as exciting as this, not even his first time with Graham. Just a little more, just to see if it was for real. He pressed harder and watched one, two inches more of his cock slide into the boy.

Across Peter's arched back, Graham watched in disbelief. Lance had dropped the soap and was now pressing his groin against Peter's buttocks. He couldn't be... could he? He looked down at Peter's face. The boy's eyes were closed, beads of perspiration running down his cheeks, his blond fringe damp and clinging. He really was a pretty'-boy; that fringe, those eyelashes, the red, cupid lips. What a pity he was such a silly ass! But a prick up the bum! He knew that Lance had wanted to do that to him. He'd refused. Tempted, oh, yes, tempted, but, scared, he'd refused. Lance was big, four maybe five inches, the head of his cock like a battering ram. He'd wanked Lance; Lance had wanked him; Lance has sucked him, Lance had swallowed his sperm. Lance would try anything.

Graham looked at Peter again. His eyes were still dosed. But now his face had streaks of pain, or streaks of pleasure, it was hard to tell, and his face was bumping into Graham's crotch. And Graham's penis was brick hard; it ached; it hurt. He'd been about to shoot his load when Peter had pulled down the curtains. Silly rotten little twerp. As if losing the game wasn't enough. Peter's face continued to bump into his crotch. He stood back. He held his stiff cock horizontally from his body, held it so that Peter's lips made contact with the tip. He remembered the feel of Lance's lips around him, around the shaft, sucking, pulling, jerking.

Lance was all the way in now. He held Peter as open as he could and watched his cock drive into the boy's hole until his pubic hair was squashed by his bum. He drew his cock out, two, three, four, five inches, then slid it

in to the hilt. He was taking it easy; he didn't want to hurt the boy, and this slow, steady, greasy sliding felt so good.

Graham pinched Peter's nose. Peter opened his mouth. Graham slid himself in. It was as simple as that. Wet, warm, hot, a cavern of flesh that engulfed him, saliva that added to the slippery wetness of his own pre-cum. Lance had taught him that word: pre-cum. He liked the word, the feeling, the sensation of oozing out from himself. He'd tasted his pre-cum; Lance had scooped it up with a finger, licked some and then let him lick the rest. He liked the taste, the feel, the smell.

Graham was happily rocking back and forwards on his heels, driving his cock into Peter's mouth as Lance rocked the boy's body forward into him. All of him was in now. All four inches — and a bit; he'd measured himself again the night before last. Peter's lips touched his pubic hair with every stroke. Why didn't the boy choke? Had he done this before? Gossip said that Peter and Mr. Cornish. The image was exciting. Not that of Mr. Cornish; he was too weird to like, but of a huge cock, a man's cock driving in and out of this red-lipped boy's mouth. Men's cocks in boys' mouths; it made Graham harder than ever. He stroked Peter's hair. He watched the boy's cheeks bulge, like his overfed hamster at home. Was Peter hungry? He was going to get an early tea at both ends this evening. Graham imagined Lance's sperm- he had seen him shoot five feet! — shooting up Peter's hole. His own would shoot down Peter's throat. Would they meet somewhere in the middle! Splash! Shut up, concentrate, just concentrate.

Lance watched the boy's anal ring dilate and contract as he stroked himself in and out. He had slipped a hand round Peter and was jerking him off. Fair's fair. Peter was taking it like a man. He deserved something. He could feel himself coming; he jerked the boy faster; he wanted both of them to come together. Pete had a big cock to be such a little 'muthafucka'. That was a great word, his new word, he'd heard it on an American movie. It was a shocking word: muthafucka, muthafucka. He loved it! Lance leaned his head back and pushed his hips forward again. There. There. We're almost there. Graham leaned his head back and pushed his hips forward again. There. There. We're almost there.

Slam!

It was a shotgun!

In the boarding house? Don't be silly.

“Stop it! Stop it! That’s cruel. How can you be so cruel? Stop it. It wasn’t Lane’s fault. It was only a game!”

Lance went for the final few thrusts that would see him home. He never made it. Someone had an arm lock round his neck. He was dragged backwards. Embedded in Peter, he pulled the boy with him. Peter’s teeth grazed Graham’s cock. Graham shouted, “Ow!” Peter’s head struck the lower towel rail. “What the fuck!” Then Lance, suddenly released, flew backwards on the slippery floor and tumbled among the fallen curtain assembly. He lay there too dazed to say anything, holding onto his bruised erection.

Helping hands pulled Peter to his feet. The boy was shivering with fury. Helping hands wrapped a towel around him. “There, you can have my spare towel.”

“Fuck you and your spare towel, Brown. Who asked for your help?”

“But they were torturing you.” Tom stared at his friend, flabbergasted. His help was being spurned. He wanted to help Peter. He liked him. He was a spunky kid. He didn’t deserve this.

“Fuck off, Brown, just fuck off. When I want your help, I’ll ask for it.”

Behind them, Lance and Graham, wrapped in damp towels limped back to the dormitory.

“But I’m your captain, Lane. I only wanted to help you. Let me help you.”

“Then help me with this.” Peter Lane stood there, jerking furiously at his stiff prick. Tom stood open-mouthed. He wanted to slap the boy, bring him to his senses. But it was fascinating. Was he really going to...? Suddenly Peter erupted, spat, spurted, squirted a stream of cum that hit Tom right in the groin. “I say,” protested Tom stepping back, “I’ve only put these shorts on. They’re clean.” A second spurt hit his left slipper.

He’d had enough. He wasn’t going to stand there and be spermed by the boy who’d lost them the match. Tom turned, and mustering as much dignity as he could with semen dripping down his crotch and left slipper, he marched out of the bathroom.

Peter Lane stood still for a moment. Then he began to giggle, then to laugh. Then he was shaking with laughter, uncontrollably, tears running down his cheeks. He picked up Tom’s towel, held it to his nose and breathed in deeply. He did like Tom Brown, truly he did.

Peter headed for the shower. The evening's heating had come on. It was gloriously hot, gloriously refreshing. No, he would not go to Cornish's that evening, or any other evening. He was tired of the man, his lectures, his self-justification, his sonorous pomposities. No, his arse hole ached, and it wasn't Lance Clifton's fault. He liked Lance. He liked Graham, such a shy boy. He liked Theo Rycroft. He hardly knew Fitzroy-McKean, but then who did? Above all, he liked Tom Brown. It was Tom who insisted that he play in the match this afternoon. And together with Tom, when they pointed out it was only a game, they were the only ones who meant it.

Tom's was a six-boy dorm. There were only five sleeping there. He wondered if they'd accept him. He knew he had Lance's vote, and Graham's. Two down, three to go. He shook the water and the cares of the day out of his beautiful blond hair.

CHAPTER 4

A Mauve Mauritius

Every school has its own
traditionary standard
of right and wrong
which cannot be transgressed with impunity.

“Be erect, Brown!” snapped Mr. Cornish. “It’s about time you and Rycroft kept your hands above your desk. What’s that you’re hiding there?”

It was not so much the implicit accusation of illicit contact that disturbed Tom but the suggestion that he might be hiding something under his desk.

“Approach. Bring whatever it is to me. Prevarication will not be tolerated.”

“It’s only a stamp album, sir,” explained Tom. “I didn’t realise the lesson was underway, else I should not have been showing it to Theo, Rycroft, I mean.”

“Bring it here!”

Tom stepped forward, clasping in his ink-stained fingers this latest treasure. Only that morning the album had arrived. An early Christmas present from his favourite uncle — Flight-commander Harris of His Majesty’s Royal Air Force. A glorious velvet-covered stamp album, and in it one hundred assorted stamps, and one Mauve Mauritius!

“Infirm of purpose! Give me the book!”

Reluctantly Tom handed up his treasure, received a sharp cut with the master’s cane, and returned, a little dazed and wholly forlorn to his seat. Theo pressed his thigh against Tom’s in sympathy. How bad-tempered Cornish had become these last few weeks. There seemed no explanation for it.

Tom's treasure, which he had hoped to examine more carefully with Theo, lay in all its glory on the master's desk. Tom Brown could attend but fitfully to lessons that morning. Mr. Cornish, he knew, and as the class knew, was a keen collector of stamps. One might in the circumstances have expected some sympathy. None was evident.

Sad hours are long but finally classes were dismissed, and still the stamp album was not returned. The form master seemed to have forgotten it! Not so Tom Brown. Wandering lonely as a cloud across the quad, he caught sight of the master hastening in the direction of the cricket pavilion. Not that the pavilion could be his destination, locked up as it was until Summer Term. With a courage born of desperation, Tom pursued him across the cricket-field.

"Please, Mr. Cornish, oh please, sir, may I have my stamp album. It's a Christmas present, and a birthday present, too, I believe."

Cornish turned his myopic gaze on Tom. "And how old are you?"

"Thirteen on Saturday, sir."

"Then many happy returns on Saturday," said Mr. Cornish, turning on his heel and stalking away.

"The album, sir. May I have the album?" said Tom, keeping up with the master who oddly enough had wheeled off in the opposite direction.

"The album?" queried Mr. Cornish.

"Yes, sir, on your desk. You confiscated it this morning. My uncle — he's an airman — sent it." It was unnerving how distracted his Form Tutor seemed.

"And decent stamps?"

"Oh yes, sir! There's even a ..."

"Then go and fetch. Don't leave it lying on my desk. And don't let me see you playing with it in class again. Stick to playing with Rycroft. You're safer at that." The attempted-smile on Cornish's face suggested his last remark was intended as a joke. Tom, however, could not stay to work it out. He peeled off in the opposite direction, then wheeled round seconds later to call, "Thank you, sir." How odd! Mr. Cornish had about-faced and was stalking towards the pavilion again. What did it matter to Tom. He'd got what he wanted and he was off to get it!

On the way he was hailed by Peter Lane.

"Tom! Tom!" Peter caught up with him, pushing his fringe out of his eyes. "Theo's been looking for you, Tom. You were meant to meet him..."

As Tom strode along, Peter hopped, skipped and jumped to keep up with him. "Where are you going, Tom? It doesn't matter. I'll keep you company anyway."

Tom glanced at his companion. Really, if Lane were not quite such good company and quite so good-looking, he'd tell him to shove off. But he was glad that he'd persuaded the others, despite his own misgivings, to let Peter have the spare bed and spare locker in their dorm. Whatever one thought of Peter Lane, it was never dull when he was around.

Peter linked arms with Tom — How familiar! — and chatted gaily on as they made their way to the Fourth classroom. The stamp album lay on the master's desk. Yes! Tom punched the air in delight.

Making their way to the dorm, the two boys sat down on a bed. Tom opened the album across his knees, slapping Peter's hand away. "Not now. I'm looking at my stamps."

"You've got a Mauve Mauritius?" breathed Peter in a manner so intimate that he might well as have said, "You've got a big cock." Slightly out of breath — it may have been the walk — he continued. "Show me that one first. Lucky beggar!"

"Lucky's the word," said Tom, with pardonable pride, cautiously turning the pages. "But — but — where on earth-what's become — ?"

The whole book was searched. Cover to cover. Page after page was scrutinised. Stamp after stamp was thoroughly examined. The Mauritius was gone!

In blank dismay the boys looked at each other. Each face spoke the words that tongues refused to utter! Each boy searched the floor around the bed, knowing full well the missing stamp was not there. At last their eyes met.

"Could he have?" whispered Tom.

"Yes, he could have," whispered Peter. "I wouldn't put anything past that man. He can be quite unscrupulous when he wants to be."

"Unscroop-what?" asked Tom.

"Unscrupulous. He doesn't have any scruples. If he wants something badly enough, he just takes it. That monkey can give you more than a nasty nip. I should know." Much of what Peter said sailed above Tom's head; all of this did. But he got the general gist. Mr. Cornish might have taken his Mauve Mauritius. "Oh no, it can't be true," Tom thought to himself. "Mr. Cornish is an honourable man. All our masters are honourable men."

That evening in Robert's study, Tom was as despondent as the older boy had ever seen him. After considerable prodding, he poured out his heart to Robert, adding, "I know it's only a stamp, but it haunts me. Do you — I hardly dare say it — but do you think sir — pinched it?"

"Looks jolly well like it," answered Robert. "When..." Here the senior prefect paused.

"When... what?" urged Tom. "Tell me what you really think. I've thought and thought till my brain reels! By Jove! Would he do it, d'you think? Is a master capable of treating a boy so?"

"When people are mad over anything," said Robert, "they can go quite dotty. Now, we all know what Cornish is dotty over -stamps. Perhaps he's just — borrowed it."

"What can we do, then?" asked Tom, with a heavy sigh. "I daren't ask him."

Robert felt as despondent as Tom. He wanted to put his arm around the boy, hold him close, comfort him. He felt powerless, helpless, and he so wanted to do something for Tom Brown, his good and faithful fag. Even a gesture would do.

"I know," ejaculated Robert suddenly, leaping up from the couch. "Let's slip out, while everyone's in Prep, and have a dekko into his room. That's it! We'll slip outside and look through his window. He sits with his back to it. He's put his desk right across so as to get the light when he's correcting papers. Come on!"

"D'you mean his study, his private room?" asked Tom dubiously. "But it's on the second floor. Even if I stood on your shoulders..."

"But you're forgetting something," interrupted Robert.

"What?"

"Founder's Tree. It's right outside that part of the House. And it's easy to climb. And don't forget that part of House faces the playing fields, so there's no buildings opposite. So there'll be no one to see us."

Tom's face brightened. His spirits rose. "By Jove, I think you're right. Let's do it."

Robert pulled on a heavy, black, woollen pullover and threw a spare to Tom. "Put that on. It's warmed up a good deal this afternoon since the snow started falling, but it's still best to wrap up."

The boys padded along the corridor, down the stairs and out through a side door. The night air was cool. The moon was bright and snow was

falling in silent shrouds.

At the rear of the building there was sufficient moonlight to pick out Founder's Tree, stark and bare that morning and now wreathed in white. The snow-laden branches were slippery but no match for Robert as he climbed to the first stout branch, then reached down a hand to help Tom up. The second branch, horizontally parallel to the second floor window they sought, was a trickier proposition.

"Here, let me help you up first," whispered Robert, standing, back against the building. He made cradle from his hands. Tom put in one foot, put one hand on Robert's shoulders, the other on the branch above. As he pulled himself up, Robert lifted him. For a few seconds Tom's crotch pressed against Robert's nose. Robert could feel the boy's private parts 'mush' against his face. The clear night air made his sense of smell acute; he breathed in deeply through his nose. Tom seemed to have slowed up, apparently searching for a better hold. As he did, he rubbed his crotch against Robert's face which he could feel nuzzling into him. Then Robert cradled his buttocks and heaved him upwards. He fell across the branch, breathless. Within seconds, Robert had pulled himself up onto the branch.

"Careful, Tom. The branch is a little icy. Pull yourself up like this, then swivel round so that you can sit on the branch. Copy me, like this." Both boys swung their bodies round almost simultaneously, and ended up sitting side by side on the branch facing Mr. Cornish's study window.

They were stunned into wide-eyed silence.

Had Mr. Cornish been cuddling a junior that would have given them pause enough. They knew that the master, because of his interest in the ancient Greeks, did not disapprove of affection between boys. Had either master or boy or both been in a state of undress that would have surprised them. They were simply not prepared for what they saw.

Mr. Cornish was lying on his desk, his legs dangling over the edge. His knees almost touched the window through which the two boys were staring. Squatting above him, a foot on either side of the master's hips, a man — for it was clear that the visitor was indeed a man — continued to lower himself cautiously onto the huge penis that penetrated him. The stranger steadied himself, a hand on each of sir's hairy thighs.

Perspiration shone on the stranger's back and split buttocks. Pale skin gave way to darker areas within his cheeks, but how vulnerable he looked as he continued to be penetrated by the enormous penis sir gripped in his

hand. Tom looked for sir's other hand, his gaze tracking an elbow till he realised why the squatting man shook and trembled. It was not only the fearsome club that slid relentlessly into his hole. Sir was doing that thing to him, wanking him, tossing him off, diddling his dick, masturbating him. (His dorm was learning so much from Peter Lane.)

Below sir's hand, Tom could see his ballsac. "What big halls sir has!" he whispered to Robert, recollecting that he was not alone on the branch of Founder's Tree. "And look at all that hair in his crack. The other chap has hardly any. I wonder who he is." He continued to watch as the mysterious stranger slid greasily down sir's sweaty pole. He could almost feel the stretching in his own anal, ring (thank you, Lane). "Do you have any idea?"

Robert had an idea. In fact, he knew who it was. Who else had rust-coloured hair like that? It was the Rev. Mr. Boulind, the new House chaplain, not particularly popular with the seniors because of his long-winded sermons about the dangers of self-abuse. When had the chaplain become involved with Mr. Cornish?

They had to get down. If Cornish, glanced up, he was bound to see them. He was absorbed for the moment in tossing Boulind off, but he might glance up to check the progress of his penis as it sank into the squatting cleric. Robert paused to admire the chaplain's athleticism. It couldn't be easy to hold a squat like that while your bumhole... Enough. He half-turned to Tom, unable to take his eyes completely away from the window.

"Tom, Tom," he whispered. "All this is giving me a stiffie. Do you want to...?"

"Oh yes," whispered Tom, anticipating the question. He slid his hand into Robert's crotch. Like his own, the boy's cock was brick hard. Unlike his own, he could not get his hand fully round it. Through the flannel of school trousers, he felt every inch of the older boy's cock, running the skin of his palm against the distended shaft. Robert was long, very long as well as thick. Like his own, the boy's cock was aflame, the heat burning through the thin fabric. He could feel the shape, the texture, even the thick hair at the base of Robert's penis. Tom ran his thumb over the head of the boys cock, urging the foreskin back, feeling the little cock slit, feeling the pre-cum seeping through. How useful it was to have a pervert in one's dorm!

Robert knew this should not be happening. He must remove Tom's hand. Ah, but it felt so good! How did Tom know to touch him just like

that? Just a few seconds more, a few seconds, please. Through the window, the chaplain had sunk down onto the master's lap, a pair of balls jammed in his crack. Mr. Boulind was riding that big cock, cautiously, gingerly, an inch or two of the shaft appearing then disappearing as he rose and fell in his squatting position. The man's hands had appeared around his partner's cheeks, pulling them apart until Robert himself felt the pain, or would have felt it if Tom had not been manipulating his prick so pleasurably. The Rev. Boulind was working his own cock, his elbow moving faster and faster. Robert knew how he would come, spurting, a cream rope of semen shooting up his chest. The taste of Michael Sweet's semen rose in his own throat again. He wondered what Tom would taste like.

"We can stay no longer!" Thank you, Friar Laurence, breathed Robert into the falling snow. He gripped Tom's hand and gently hauled it away from his throbbing member. 'I'm getting down — ugh — come on down. I'll catch you.'" Robert jumped down. Tom slid into his arms. The boys stood there, holding each other, under the moonlight, under the falling snow, under the window of the room in which the two men were making love. "You've got a cock like my little pony," whispered Tom in Robert's ear.

Snow was falling even more heavily now. About three inches lay on the playing fields. Robert scooped up a handful and made a snowball. "Right, Brown," he called, "you're for it. I'm going to shove this down your trousers and freeze your little balls off. You cheeky blighter." The grin on Lawton's face told Tom how serious the senior prefect was. Totally serious.

Grabbing a handful of snow, he flung it at Robert. "Well, you'll have to catch me first, Mister Horse Cock," and raced for the House. Hither and thither the boys dashed, Robert managing to cut off Tom's escape route each time.

Tom retreated onto the play field, made a snowball and hit Robert smack in the forehead. Got you! It was short-lived triumph as Robert took the laughing boy down with a low, single-armed tackle. Tom lay on his back, still laughing as he tried to scrabble out of the Sixth Former's reach.

"Not this time, Tom, not this time. I made a promise and I'm going to keep it." Pulled the thick woollen sweater up, Robert tried to squeeze the snowball inside the waist of Tom's trousers. Far too tight. Tears of laughter ran down Tom's cheeks. Robert would not admit defeat. Unsnapping the metal clasp, he unbuttoned Tom's fly and pulled the flaps aside. The

boy's underpants, white as the freshly-fallen snow, gleamed below his hand. A thick bulge tented them. One hand held the snowball, the other ripped the underpants down to Tom's knees.

His hot young cock sprang free. Hot and hard. Cream, pink, brown, purple. The shaft distended, the head, freed from the foreskin, slippery with pre-cum. Four inches at least, nestled in thick dark curls. Balls drawn up tightly in the scrotum. Boy smells, rich and intoxicating rose up. Their game had suddenly changed. Robert wrapped a hand round Tom's shaft and looked down into the boy's eyes. Tom looked back. The look was enough.

Robert dropped his snowball and kneeled over Tom's groin. One hand held the shaft and the palm of the other ran round the smooth purple silk of the head, feeling the ridge of the tiny mouth-slit. Robert pushed back the boy's pullover, shirt and vest. He kissed the boy's stomach, belly button, pubic hair. How clean Tom was! How pure! His lips came in contact with the base of the boy's penis. Propped on his elbows to watch, Tom whispered, "Yes, please, Robert, yes, suck me if you want. I'd like you to suck me — if you want."

Robert lowered his head. Mouth wide open, he took Tom into the hilt, his lips embedded in the boy's hair. One hand worked the base of Tom's cock, the other manipulated the boy's scrotum, middle finger slipping into the hot darkness of the boy's crack. Tom watched his friend's head bob up and down on his cock, so excited and tense, that his tummy fluttered with nerves. The snow fell on Robert's hair, into Tom's eyes, on his cheeks, like a thousand tiny losses. He felt the flakes fall and melt on his tummy, his hips, his thighs. His cock throbbed like never before; he had sat on the branch of Founder's Tree, prick so hard it hurt, watching the men behind the window, holding Robert's big cock in his hand. And now this...

Robert's cock under his fingers. He wanted to feel it again, touch it, smell it, see it, give it pleasure as Robert was so generously, so lovingly giving him pleasure. He wanted to see it, he had to see it!

"Robert, Robert," he whispered. Absorbed in Tom's body, Robert heard nothing but the slurp of skin against skin as his mouth rose and fell on the boy's cock. "Robert!" Tom pulled himself up towards a sitting position, Robert followed glued to the boy's groin. Tom ruffled his hair, pulled his ears, then finally pushed his head back hard. Robert came up coughing and spluttering. "Wh... wha...?"

Like an eel, Tom wriggled round Robert's body in the snow until his face was level with the older boy's crotch. He scrabbled with belt and buttons. He felt his cock engulfed in hot, sucking wetness again. He pulled Robert's flies apart, grabbed the sides of his underpants, and jerked slip and trousers down to his knees.

At last! There was Robert. Exposed. Huge, hot and hairy. Tom revelled in the masculinity of it all. He loved the way the hair fanned out from Robert's crotch in a thick inverted triangle. He had more hair on the inside of his thighs. There was only a little hair on his balls. Tom slipped his fingers beneath them. Yes, there was thicker hair on that patch of skin between his balls and his anus. Tom longed to roll his friend over, part his cheeks and study that area, but that could wait. There were other things to be done other sensations to be explored. He gripped Robert's shaft, finger tips just touching thumb. How hot and hard it was, but there was a softness, a silkiness about the hardness. His hand moved along the shaft, the circle of his fingers and thumb gripped the foreskin and pulled it back. Robert had a much tighter foreskin than he. And his cock was so erect and distended, it took a deliberate effort on Tom's part to pull it all the way back.

The head mushroomed like a baby's buttocks. God, it was magnificent. Look at the slit! Like a red-lipped mouth. He had to feel it against his face, against his lips. He could feel his own cock, hot and hard, swelling in his friend's mouth. Tom gaped wide and thrust Robert's penis into his mouth. He gagged as it went in too far, withdrew it to the head, and settled to sucking on that for the moment.

Gradually, he inched his mouth down until the head and a couple of inches were inside. He could feel his own saliva pouring down, to mix with the slippery goo of Robert's cock, mingling to run down the shaft onto his fingers and thumb. He wasn't quite sure what to do, so he copied what Robert was doing to his own penis and balls. With his lips he squeezed different pressures as the boy's cock filled his mouth, touching the roof and making his eyes water as it tickled his tonsils. His other hand played with Robert's balls, so much bigger than his own. They felt so good as he pushed them in their sac, pushed them around the scrotum, weighed them in his palm, then slid his palm beneath them so that he could feel Robert's bumhair. Tom wanted to go further. Was it allowed? He let his middle finger run deep into Robert's cleft, so hot, so dark, so moist, until it bumped into a

little ridge and then the smoothness of the hole itself. It felt wonderful. Why? He did not understand. Who would have thought that a bumhole could be so magical? He ran his fingertip the length of Robert's anus, feeling it twitch at his touch. He wanted to...

But it was difficult to think what he wanted to do. Robert was pumping an extra couple of inches in and out of his mouth. His lips could feel every ridge, every vein, every subtle change in texture. He realised he was pumping too, his smaller cock driving in and out of the older boy's mouth until his hair was jammed flat against Robert's tips. He could feel his cock swell. He could feel Robert's cock swell. Was Robert going to take his sperm, his cum, his semen, his 'love juice' into himself? Was he going to do the same with Robert's semen? By Jove, he was! He wanted to. He wanted it. He wanted to be part of Robert and make Robert part of him.

Tom sucked Robert harder, jerked the base of his shaft harder, pressed the tip of his middle finger against Robert's hole — harder. He felt his friend respond in kind.

He was shooting now. Squirting uncontrollably. Hips jerking and bucking. His hand on his friend's head urging him to take all of it, swallow all of it. Three, four slashes of cum flew from the slits into the eager, willing mouths. Skin so hot, skin so tense, they could feel every snowflake. Hot flesh on hot flesh. Lips and hair and cum. and sweat. Sensations impossible to sort out. Is that him? Is that me? Oh Robert! Oh Tom! [Oh Reader!]

The boys crawled into each other's arms, face to face, limbs still jerking. Robert tried a gentle kiss on Tom's cheeks. Tom kissed him full-mouthed, open-mouthed, his tongue insistent on contact, hot wet contact. Robert responded, opening his mouth wide as the boy penetrated him. Then forcing his own, larger rubbery tongue into the open, sweet furnace of Tom's mouth. Kisses hot, fierce and deep. Until... until...

Robert pushed Tom back. Tom tried to fight his way back in. Robert laughed and held him at arm's length, a sweet laugh, a loving laugh. He steadied Tom. Looked into his eyes. They were fierce, they glinted with a determination that would not be denied. They scared Robert. He loved them, he loved Tom, but that look scared him a little.

"Come on, Tom. I'm on duty, and Prep must be over." Tom was stilled. Robert reached down and pulled up his underpants, his trousers, buttoned his fly, did his clasp, much as an older brother would help a younger. He

rose to his feet, pulling his own underpants with one hand, pulling Tom up with the other. The effort was too much, and both boys collapsed laughing into the snow again. This time Tom rose first and gave a helping hand to Robert. As the older boy pulled up his trousers, Tom pushed his hand away. "No, that's my job. I'm your fag." He pulled up the trousers, then knelt to do Robert's buttons. He completed each button with a little kiss until he was looking up into the older boy's face. His cheeks blazed, snow hung on his eyelashes. Robert decided suddenly that he could stand and look at Tom like this forever.

"Race you to House!" Tom whirled and was up and gone, like hare pursued by hounds. Robert took off after him, then stopped. Better this way. He would make his own tea this evening. Nothing could be better than what had just, happened. Nothing.

Back in the dormitory, what to do about the missing Mauve Mauritius provoked a general conflagration. Peter Lane was for raiding Mr. Cornish's study during class time. "I know every inch of that room," he said. "If it's there, I'll find it."

"No," argued Fitzroy-McKean, ever the voice of caution. "If we're caught there, whatever the reason, we will be expelled. We have no evidence, no real proof. Let's use our heads."

Common sense prevailed and it was agreed to await the arrival of Flight-commander Frank Harris. Tom had had a telegram from his uncle that he'd be coming to school to fetch him — not in his aeroplane, worse luck — but on his Douglas. Jolly fine riding pillion, anyway! He was to spend Christmas with Uncle and Aunt Harris and their boys before entraining to Scotland for the traditional Brown hogmanay in Edinburgh. Uncle Frank was bound to ask about the Mauritius. Tom would tell him all — well, not really all — and would take his uncle's advice in the matter.

The last day of term came. Uncle Frank arrived, bombing up the drive on his Douglas. Tom took him for a quick tour of the school, looking for a moment to share the bad news. Whatever happened, they would have to meet Mr. Cornish who was Tom's Form Tutor. Season's greeting must be exchanged.

Theo Rycroft was miserable, not only because his friend Tom was unhappy. Not only because Tom had seemed uninterested in him since the loss of that damn stamp. Not only because Tom seemed to spend an

inordinate amount of time fagging for Robert Lawton. But because Mr. Cornish had given him the short straw.

Sighing deeply, Theo set to clearing out the untidy desks in the Form room. This was a job the form-master imposed upon a boy of his choice at the end of each half-term. “Get started, Rycroft,” he’d instructed. “I shall be along to give you a hand in due course.”

He might as well start with his own desk and get the worst over first. When nervous, Theo had the odd habit of tearing up paper into tiny pieces and throwing them into his desk. He took out handfuls of the stuff and dropped it into a wire wastepaper basket. Suddenly he uttered a shriek of surprise and joy, not unmixed with dismay, for there, stuck on the palm of his hand, lay the stamp, that stamp, that damn stamp — the Mauve Mauritius! Theo worked out the implications of his discovery in a trice!

“Tom! Tom!” shrieked the boy as he sprinted across Quad. He burst past an astonished Dr Sweet into the House. Tom and his uncle were on the first floor, apparently in deep conversation, and looming down the corridor strode Mr. Cornish and the Reverend Matthew Boulind.

Theo stood tongue-tied.

“What is it, Theo?” asked Tom. “Can’t you see I’m giving Uncle Frank the grand tour? And here comes Mr. Cornish. Whatever it is, it will keep till later.”

“Ah, Tom,” said his Form Tutor who had arrived on the scene, “This must be your Uncle Frank.” Turning to the airman he continued, “Let me introduce myself, Flight-commander Harris, I’m Cornish, Tom’s Form Tutor, and for my pains his English master, too. And this is Reverend Boulind, our new House Chaplain, who takes care of the boys’ spiritual needs.”

The Flight-commander smiled and shook hands. “And I’ll bet they’re a real pain in the... well, let’s just say, a real handful at times.” Uncle Frank turned to Tom. “I hope you received the stamp album. Some good stamps in there. Especially that Mauve Mauritius. Quite valuable that. I’ve had it for years. Now it’s yours. Do take care of it, Tom.”

“I say, a Mauve Mauritius,” interjected Mr. Cornish. “By Jove, I’ve got one, too. Paid an enormous price for it. Thought I was the only one in the school who possessed one! I’ve seen Tom’s stamp album. Splendid. But I didn’t see a Mauve Mauritius. I’d certainly have remembered that. May we have a look at it, Brown?”

When Tom was silent. Uncle Frank and Mr. Cornish turned to Tom and jointly gave him a quizzical look. Tom's face was on fire. He'd rather lose the stamp than say anything now. He couldn't believe a master could be so brazen.

"Well, you see..." He hesitated. Reluctant to go on.

"Well, you see, I've got it!" That was from Theo.

What did he mean? Four quizzical gazes turned on Theo. His face was fire, too.

"You see," he stammered, "Tom let me have a look at it in class. Somehow it ended up in my papers..."

"Your papers?" That was Mr. Cornish.

"My bits of paper," stammered Theo. "I've got thousands of them, tiny bits of paper." He knew he sounded incredibly stupid, but that's the way it was. Theo stuck out a hand. On a grubby palm lay the Mauve Mauritius!

"You are an unwashed wretch," said Mr. Cornish, though not unkindly. "Give that here. Flight-commander Harris and I will retire to my study. I shall show him my collection, including my Mauve Mauritius. Then — with the Flight-commander's permission — we will lock Tom's Mauritius in my safe until he has learned to look after his property."

Uncle Frank nodded in wry approval. Cornish continued.

"Meanwhile, Brown, you will accompany Rycroft to our Tutor base. There you will tidy all the desks. You will then escort Rycroft to the nearest washbasin where you will both scrub your hands clean. Then you will make your way to my study where your uncle, Mr Boulind, and I will be inspecting my stamp collection and my Mauve Mauritius, and," he added with a chuckle, "a rather fine bottle of Highland Park Scotch. Do I make myself absolutely clear?"

Both boys gulped and nodded.

As they made their way across Quad to the empty stable, Tom turned to Theo. "You're going to pay for this, Rycroft. You know that, don't you?"

Theo gave Tom his biggest, saddest, wide-eyed look. "Yes, Brown, I deserve it."

"When we get to the classroom..Tom paused for effect. "I'm going to sit on a desk... and I'm going to take out my prick... and you're going to suck my balls dry."

Theo's wide-eyed look was one of adoration.

"Yes, please, Tom. That's the best Christmas present I'll get this year."

[And, dear Reader, he got it twice.]

CHAPTER 5

Two Mysteries Solved

By this time, Tom began to be conscious of his new social position and dignities.

Tom adjusted himself, swung his left leg over the back of Rob's couch and continued. "All I'm saying, Rob, is that we usually get on well with the day-boys but every now and again they have to be reminded of their inferior position." Robert made no comment.

"What helps to make them sidey is that they are not so much bothered as we are with the traditions of the School. They are inclined to take liberties." Still no comment from Robert Lawton.

"But now and then there appears amongst us a day-boy in the form of an utter freak, and something has to be done about it. None of us is compelled to wear any particular kind of clothes, except on Sundays, as the rules simply say that every pupil must be 'suitably clad'. Some parents have the maddest ideas of what 'suitably clad' means. Perhaps we can't get at them, but pressure has to be brought on their beastly offspring. What do you say, Rob?"

Rob raised his head from between Tom's legs. "I'd say you're not 'suitably clad' at the moment. Raise your bum. I want to get your underpants all the way off."

Tom brought his legs together, raised himself from the couch and allowed Rob to slip the underpants completely off. He returned one leg to the back of the couch, the other back to the floor. He lay there, spread-eagled, naked from the waist down, shirt pushed up to his neck, cushion beneath his head. His shorts and tie lay on the carpet. His body glowed with perspiration. A fire chortled merrily in the grate. His hard-on marked his tummy like an exclamation mark. Rob ran one hand over the boy's body — how smooth his skin was — while the other gently manipulated his erect penis.

"Do you have any particular day-boy in mind?" he asked.

“Indeed I do. Have you come across a certain Charles Stuart Parker? A new boy in the Upper Fourth. Started a few weeks ago, after Christmas. One of the most poisonous freaks taken in by this school in my time.” Rob tweaked Tom’s penis. “And how long is your time — three, four months?” The older boy leaned over and kissed the tip of Tom’s cock.

“Hold off a mo’, Rob. This is a serious conversation. Don’t distract me too much. But, yes, keep doing that. Anyway, for a long time Parker wouldn’t tell anybody what his full name was; but, of course, it leaked out at last, and then we understood why he always comes to school in a kilt.”

“A kilt!” echoed Rob. “How can I have missed him? Studying so hard, I suppose. I don’t get out much these days.”

“Yes, a kilt,” repeated Tom. “And we discovered why. Parker was forced to explain in History the other day. Apparently, his father is one of those people who think the Jacobite rebellion ought to have succeeded, so he named his miserable child after Bonnie Prince Charlie. And he makes him wear the tartan of some Scottish clan or other.”

“And you object to Charlie Parker wearing a kilt in school, is that it?”

“I most certainly do,” expostulated Tom, becoming more animated and excited as Rob’s free hand slid under his bum and into his crack. He raised himself a fraction to give Rob freer access. “We call the ugly little beast the Young Pretender. It’s great fun to ask him if he’s pretending to be human, or to pretend that, whatever he says in class, he’s only pretending. He has reddish hair — Ouch! Go easy there. I’m a bit dry — and a Scots temper. I must say he takes it all very well, never allows the chance of a fight to pass. Blacked Graham’s eye the other day; took a bloody lip in return, so honours even.”

“So, it’s the kilt?” Rob greased a middle finger with pre-cum from Tom’s cock and returned it to his bumhole.

“Yes. If he would only consent to giving up that barbarous dress...”

[My dear boys, old and young, you who have belonged, or do belong, to other Schools and other Houses, don’t begin throwing this poor little book about the room, and abusing me and it, and vowing you’ll read no more. I allow you have provocation for it. But, come now — would you, any of you, give a fig for a fellow who didn’t believe in and stand up for his own House and his own School? Hasn’t Tom the right to demand certain standards? If you aren’t satisfied, go and write the history of your own School, and, provided it’s the whole truth and nothing but the truth, I’ll

read it without abusing you. Tom Brown was no saint — is any boy worth his spunk a saint? — and if he was a mite intolerant towards Charles Stuart Parker, he was merely reflecting the mores of his time. Consider your position. Consider his. Honestly now, whose would you prefer?]

Tom grunted and adjusted his position again as Rob slung the boy's legs over his shoulders and burrowed between the cheeks of his tight, round, creamy arse. Tom slipped a cushion under his waist and brought his own hands down to pull himself wider apart. He sighed as Rob's long, hot tongue licked up and down his anal ring. If only life could always be this simple. He continued his reflections as Rob sucked and licked his hole while his hand continued to jerk Tom's hard-on.

Parker did have spunk, Tom gave him that. "What business is it of yours?" he would say, and even retaliate with such remarks as: "Stick your head in my sporran!" or "You could wear a kilt too, if your knees didn't bend the wrong way", or "A kilt wouldn't do for you — you'd have to wash those match sticks", or "How would you like to feel my haggis up your hole?" Of course, it had been a mistake to ask Peter Lane that question. His response — 'Yummy!' — had been entirely sincere.

You couldn't help admiring the chap for all this, but at the same time the Highland chieftain business made it impossible for Parker to mix freely with his fellow-creatures. Something had to be done. After Prep, Tom would call a council of war in the dorm and invite suggestions. But for now, he was finding it more and more difficult to concentrate on anything other than what was happening below.

"Rob! Rob!"

Robert's face came up. His eyes were glazed, lips swollen. He peered myopically at the half-naked boy stretched along his couch.

"Try it again, Rob, please try it again. I promise I won't cry out this time. I'm bigger down there now. It won't hurt so much. I promise."

The senior prefect slid up and alongside the boy. "No, Tom, I'm not going to do it. You're tiny down there. I can get half my tongue in, and most of my middle finger..." He let Tom sniff his finger...but I'm not going to force myself in. I know that I'd tear you, I'd make you bleed. You're a brave little chap, I'm not questioning that, but I'm not going to risk damaging you."

He looked into Tom's solemn, serious eyes. "But let's do it the other way, the way that you like. Let's do Cowboys and Indians." A huge grin split Tom's face. Both boys rose from the couch. "Keep your shirt up. You know I like to suck your nipples." Robert lay down full length; he was the captured White Man. Tom straddled his upper body; he was the Red Indian. He was about to torture his victim.

"Open your mouth, White Man," hissed Tom. Robert shook his head from side to side, keeping his mouth tightly shut. Tom ran his stiff penis along Rob's lips. "Open up, or else..." Another shake of the head. Tom slapped Rob lightly across the cheek. Another shake, another slap, harder this time. The game went on for a few minutes, the slaps getting harder, and Tom's cock, distended and straining, getting harder, too. Robert's mouth opened. "Wider, White Man, wider," hissed the Indian on top. "You touch with teeth, you die. Savvy?" Robert savvied and open his mouth wide. Tom fed his erection deep into the open mouth until his pubic hair pressed against Rob's lips. "Now I ride you like the Great White Buffalo."

Tom leaned forward, hair following over his eyes. Robert gripped the fleshy part of the boy's hips. Slowly and gently at first, Tom rode his friend, his hard cock slipping between bruised lips, into his wet mouth, his hot throat. Faster and harder he thrust and withdrew, a hand either side of Robert's head. Robert's long middle finger slipped round a buttock as it rose and fell, seeking and finding the younger boy's hot, moist hole, slipping in to the first knuckle, then in to the hilt, wiggling and wriggling in the dense, dark, softly-giving interior.

Tom breathed in short bursts now. Eyes open, he watched Rob's face as Rob watched his. His cock sang, his balls sang, his asshole sang. He felt huge inside Rob's mouth, huge, hot and growing. The finger played around inside him; he could feel it scrape the walls. O! O! O! He was cumming, shooting, spunking! There seemed to be no break between the spasms; one continuous orgasm shook his body; no more, no more; anymore and he would explode across the room, his flesh spattering the walls, the hearth, the desk, the door. O! O! O!

Robert was holding Tom in his arms. The boy lay full length along his body, his hips still twitching, groin circling, oozing cum onto Robert's trousers. Robert didn't care. It was worth it. Anything was worth it to be holding this boy in his arms. Total surrender — from them both. At last he eased Tom's head up to face his own. He kissed him, chastely, closed lips to

closed lips. "Tom, Tom... it's time. Tom, Prep's over." Tom snuggled into him. "Let me stay, Rob, let me stay, just for a bit."

"No, Tom. Clifford's on duty. He's a real stickler. He doesn't like you doing prep in here, but there's nothing he can do about it. But he'll expect you on the floors, or in the Lounge or the Rec room, or in a dorm. It's too dangerous."

Tom swung himself to the floor and bent to pick up his underpants. Rob ran a stocking foot between the crease in his buttocks. Tom giggled. "Oh yes, please, I'd like a foot." Rob stood up and gave him a friendly slap over the bum. "You're getting worse by the day, Tom Brown."

Tom turned to face him, took his cock between his fingers and waved it at the older boy. "Bigger, too." He raised an arm above his head. "And hairier."

"Get your clothes on, Brown. Get out of here. And don't try coming back later. I'm locking the door."

Tom climbed into his shorts and pulled on his house slippers. He flounced to the door doing a passable imitation of Peter Lane in a sulk. "Well, please yourself, but it means you won't get any of this..." Tom stooped, pointed his bum at Rob and let go a rasping fart. He was out of the door a split second before a heavy leather shoe whacked into it.

Torture?!

There was a collective gasp of delight from the boys gathered on Tom's bed.

"What a glorious wheeze!" Peter spoke for all of them.

"Of course. I'm not suggesting real torture," elaborated Tom, wondering where on earth the idea had come from. "You must agree that Charles Stuart Parker has been asking for it. We'll just throw a scare into him and make him promise not to wear the garb of old Gaul to school again. When you come to think of it, it's for his own good."

There were murmurs of assent for all the boys except Fitzroy-McKean, as skittish and cautious as ever. "I'm not sure," he murmured, "the best laid plans, and all that." None of the boys had the slightest idea to what he was referring.

"Don't be such a wet blanket, Fitz," scolded Lance. "It's only for fun. Nobody's going to get hurt. Count me in, Tom "

“And me!” That was Peter. “And me.” That was Graham. “Me, too.” That was Theo.

The boys turned their collective gaze on Fitz.

“Sorry. I’m afraid not.” Fitz rose and wandered off rather disconsolately in the direction of the Rec room.

“What do you have in mind, Tom?” asked Lance.

“Nothing much,” admitted Tom. “The idea just came to me out of the blue as it were.”

The silence of collective thought hung over the boys.

“By Aphrodite, I’ve got it,” laughed Peter.

The boys shifted round the bed to face him. He flicked back his blond fringe, making them wait.

“In the Great Hall. Under the stage. There’s a warren of tunnels and alley ways. The main boilers are down there. And all the scenery and props from productions. There’s quite a bit of lighting, too, though it is pretty gloomy. Lots of mice. Miles of tunnels. And some low-roofed rooms. Nobody ever goes down there. Except when the school’s doing a play or a musical or something like that.” Peter paused.

The boys sat open-mouthed. Were there no limits to Lane’s resourcefulness?

“Isn’t it always locked?” asked Graham.

“Usually,” continued Peter. “There are two entrances actually. There’s a trapdoor on stage, and a door in the wall at the back of Great Hall. That’s the emergency exit.”

“Fine, but how do we get in?”

Peter fluttered his eyelids. “I have my ways. I’ll get the key for the padlock. We’ll use the trapdoor.” The dorm knew Peter well enough not to question him too far.

“Wait a mo’. How do we get Charles Stuart Parker down there? We can’t just kidnap him. Can we?” The boys patronised Lance with a look of pity.

The pall of silence was restored.

“Cowboys and Indians.”

The announcement came from Tom Brown and it took that stalwart chap as much by surprise as it did everyone else.

Tom improvised.

“You know we used to play Cowboys and Indians down in the woods, before winter set in.” General nodding apart from Peter who licked his upper lip. “Let’s play C&I one lunchtime. Let’s ask Parker if he’d like a game. We could easily end up under the stage.”

“What a splendid old muff you are, Tom,” said Theo admiringly. “We can offer to put the chairs in Great Hall away. Slip onto the stage. Open the trapdoor. And voila!”

“Parker won’t fall for it.” Lance, the realist. “He’ll smell a trap.”

“He’ll smell a trapdoor!”

“Shut up, Peter!”

“No, he won’t,” Tom insisted. “I’ll spend this week making it up with him. By Friday, we’ll be old chums. What could be more natural than old chums playing with each other under the stage?”

Theo looked at Tom again, but this time there was tinge of concern in the look. Tom was changing. The Tom of September could never have dreamed up such a plan, could never even have thought of it. It was all Robert Lawton’s fault. Tom spent too much time in the study alone with Lawton. “How I wish I could be a fly on Lawton’s wall during Prep,” thought Theo. He suppressed the thought. It was his own envy of Lawton that made him doubt Tom. To be alone with Tom, away from company, just for an hour, each and every day...

“Theo. Theo.” The boy started! That was Tom’s voice. “Theo, I was saying, before you fell asleep, that Theo should be with me when I chum up Charles Stuart Parker. Look at him. You wouldn’t think butter would melt in his mouth.”

“I know what would melt in his mouth,” laughed Peter, throwing himself backwards on the bed, clutching his crotch, making obscene grunts and groans. That did it! Boy threw himself upon boy. Pillows smacked into heads. Sheets were draped over bodies, Lance and Graham ended up under Tom’s mattress while Tom and Theo bounced on it. Peter threw a sheet over T&T, then added another mattress for good measure. A pillow burst and showered the room in falling feathers. Ribald comments rang through the air. Three boys from a neighbouring dorm charged in, randomly picked sides and joined in the merry mayhem. A struggle of epic proportions was in the making.

“Boys! Boys! Wretched boys!”

Few voices under normal circumstances could stop a dorm in its tracks. Mr. Clifford's booming baritone could stop a dorm in any circumstances. Everything ceased in an instant. Even breathing was distinctly shallow. Few masters wielded the cane with the subtle efficacy of Mr. Clifford. It was rumoured that a boy had once been able to fry a pork chop on his bum after Mr. Clifford was through slashing at it. Unbelievable, of course. But most boys, particularly the juniors, could not bring themselves to disbelieve it wholly.

"This dormitory will be restored to pristine purity within ten minutes. Members of this dorm will be washed, changed and in bed within twenty minutes. Each boy, pyjama'd, will present himself to me at five minutes intervals in the Duty Study. Fortunately, you wretches find me in the mood merciful. This will be a hand job. Make that ten minute intervals. You, Clifton, shall be first. You, Lane, will be last. Otherwise, stand not upon the order of your coming but come. So I have spoken, so it shall be done." Mr. Clifford, like so many of the masters, was eccentric to the point of being certifiable.

Fitzroy-McKean may have demurred, but the best laid plans o' mice and boys do not always gang aft agley. By Friday lunch the trap was set and sprung.

Through a maze of tunnels the boys scurried and scampered, ducking, bobbing, weaving, the low beams and the sharp turns promising a nasty collision for the less than fully alert. Peter led the way, followed by Lance, Graham, Charlie and Tom, Theo having received a wholly unmerited detention. Deep under the stage and the floor of Great Hall, the boys' whooping and hollering echoed and re-echoed in the Stygian gloom, Charles Stuart Parker a singularly unlikely Red Indian in his flapping tartan.

At last, led by Peter, the boys reached a low, round chamber deep in the bowels of Great Hall, a chamber where four hanging lamps afforded more light than they'd seen since dropping through the trapdoor. All except Peter were surprised to see three or four mattresses scattered about the floor, pillows, too.

"I say," said Lance, "we are not the only ones who know about this place."

"Elementary, my dear Clifton. There are three or four chambers like this. The seniors use them," explained Peter who always seemed to know more than he ought.

“Whatever for?” asked Charles.

“Smoking, sherry, wine, Highland Park Scotch, etc. etc. ” giggled Peter, declining to explain what the etceteras might entail.

“Right,” said Tom, cutting a fascinating subject short. “We need two Red Indians. You, Peter. And...” Tom looked around and apparently at random: “What about you, Charlie? Are you game?” An outburst of mirth, merry and mysterious, confused Charles for a moment, but Tom’s amicable use of ‘Charlie’ set him at ease. This was fun! The most fun he’d had since coming to this gloomy institution. To be fair, he suspected the epithet ‘gloomy’ reflected his inability to make friends amongst the boarders. These cheerful chaps were friendly. Brushing his thick red hair back, he raised the palm of his hand and uttered the only Indian he knew: How!

“Good show.” Tom undid one coil of thin rope from around his waist; Lance uncoiled one from his. The boys urged Peter and Charlie towards two pillars near the rear wall and bound them securely but not too tightly. Charlie was laughing, the light catching his hazel eyes that had odd flecks of gold in them. “You’re anything but an ugly little beast,” thought Tom, remembering his words to Robert. The smile transformed Charlie’s face. His skin seemed translucent. he glowed with health.

“I don’t see what excitement Peter and I can have tied up like this,” he gently complained. “After all, it’s not like you can put a fire up my kilt in a place like this. Whoo! Whoo!”

“I wouldn’t be too sure about that,” growled Peter, casting the rope that had seemed to bind him aside. Charlie looked puzzled. “A fire up your kilt is just what we had in mind.”

Charlie looked bewildered.

“You may get out of here alive,” added Lance, “but your kilt certainly won’t.” Charlie laughed, but there was a note of uncertainty in his voice.

“Come on now, Tom. Untie me. The kilt’s not my fault.” The boys stood around him in a half circle.

“Sorry, Charlie. It looks like you’re the only Indian, and cowboys have to do...what cowboys have to do.”

A look of hurt and anger flickered across Charlie’s face. “I trusted you, you blighter. That’s the first and last time. Untie me. I shall count to five, and then I shall scream. I don’t want to do it. It may not be manly, but you leave me no choice. Untie me and we’ll say no more. Otherwise...one, two, three, four...”

Whether Charles Stuart Parker would have screamed remained a mystery. Round his mouth Graham flung and tied a handkerchief of crimson silk. Charlie's efforts to dislodge it were futile.

The boys stood in their silent half circle. They had their Indian, their victim, but what now? Indians tortured White Men, they knew that much. But what did White Men do with captured Indians?

Peter Lane stepped forward within inches of Charles's bound body. "You know I've always wondered..." he whispered, his voice suddenly husky... "you know, about Scotch folk. What do they wear...?" He ran his small hand with the long fingers up and under Charlie's kilt. Anger blazed in the tied boy's eyes. Peter looked into them. Under the kilt he ran his hand over Charlie's cock and balls, feeling, squeezing, manipulating, all the while keeping his eyes on Charlie's.

"Well, that's a mystery solved," laughed Peter.

A smile spread into a grin as his ministrations were rewarded. The other boys watched Peter's face, his flickering smile broadening, and then switched their gaze to Charlie's face that changed gradually from sullen resentment to helpless pleasure.

The boys edged nearer, their eyes darting from those long-lashed hazel eyes with the gold flecks to the moving bulge under Charlie's kilt. The boy's eyes closed, his head fell back, as Peter rhythmically tossed him off.

"I say, chaps," whispered Peter, "don't leave all the work to me. There's enough for two of us. Lift his kilt and you'll see what I mean."

Graham and Lance stepped to each side of the bound boy and twitched his kilt up to his waist. There was collective gasp as Peter took his hand away.

Charles Stuart Parker's prick, now apparently aroused from Peter's ministrations, was big, no, it was huge for a boy of thirteen. Five, perhaps six inches long, it was so thick that Peter had been unable to close his hand around it. The shaft was brown rather than pink with blue veins running round it like snakes entwined around a pole. The foreskin was drawn back to reveal a fat, mushroom-shaped head that already glistened with pre-cum, the slit, seeming to open and close like a hot, little mouth. Thick reddish-orange hair, already tangled and sweaty, surrounded the base. Peter returned his hand to the shaft, gripping just below the head. "Give me a hand, Tom. No, give Charlie a hand."

Tom didn't hesitate in gripping the boy's hard-on where it thickened at the base. Even his fingers only just met as they closed round this man-sized cock on the kilted-boy. "Play with his balls, Lance," Tom suggested.

Lance knelt and cupped Charlie's scrotum, pulling down his balls to the bottom of the fleshy bag. Graham, having tucked the kilt into Charlie's waistband, knelt down. "Squeeze his bum," whispered Peter, looking up into their victim's eyes. The boy was looking down. He was wide-eyed. Beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead. The hand kerchief made it difficult to judge how angry he was. "If he's a normal boy, he'll be loving this," thought Peter. "I certainly did."

The youngest boy's eyes closed with lust as he remembered his naked self tied to the same pillar; he had been seated; a mouth had worked on his penis while a much larger penis had been thrust in and out of his mouth. He remembered the feeling of total surrender, total submissiveness.

He removed his hand and closed his hot, wet, young, red-lipped mouth over the hot, wet, hard head of the boy's penis, licking, sucking, squeezing with his lips, his jaws, letting his own saliva mingle with the wash of glistening pre-cum. Tom, Lance and Graham looked in awe at Peter Lane, as his sweet childish face, the blond fringe that flopped around his forehead, as he sucked so eagerly, so urgently. In their shorts, their hard-ons ached till they hurt.

Charlie's legs shook and trembled. His cock twitched, then jumped in Peter's mouth; it swelled in Tom's rhythmic grip, his balls rose high in his tightened scrotum, and his hole grew hot and slippery around Graham's probing finger. "Let's see him cum," whispered Tom. Reluctantly, Peter let Charlie's penis slide from his mouth. "Keep clear," whispered Tom, jerking the boy's distended shaft ruthlessly. Charlie's knees buckled, jets of semen spat from the slit. The boys followed their passage in the air, five, six feet!

"Wow!" gasped Lance, speaking for them all.

"Double wow!" added Graham.

Peter, thoughtful as ever, licked the last few drops from Charlie's wilting penis, then stood up to join the others.

They were crazy, they knew that. They'd never intended it to go so far. Charlie had proved to be far more likeable than they'd anticipated. Then they'd tricked him and used him. As far as any boys can be, they were sorry for what they'd done. They'd make it up to him. He could choose anything

he wanted from their tuck boxes, a free choice from each box! Lance undid the handkerchief. He stepped back. He knew of Charlie's Scots temper. Charlie raised his head.

"You twerps," he snapped. "I like being sucked off as well as the next boy, but I do not appreciate being tricked into it. Untie me." As astonished as those around him, Tom unbound the boy. "If that's why we're down here, let's get to it. You shall have to make it up to me. I shall have first choice." Modestly, he adjusted his kilt and looked around, rather like a Welsh shepherd assessing his sheep. "You, Tom, I shall suck. You, Graham, will suck me. As you can see..." and here Charles Stuart Parker raised his kilt... "I have remained tumescent. You, Lance, will use your tongue, I shall explain how later. And you, Lane, I shall fuck. You nipped me with your teeth, you little blighter. Therefore, I will fuck you in your bottom."

The boys were shocked more than amazed. Charlie had used the 'f...' word without a blush. "But why all this nonsense about Cowboys and Indians? And why tie me up if you're not going to...?"

Here Tom found sufficient voice to break in. "It's that damned kilt, Charlie. We wanted to teach you a lesson. We really don't think it's suitable dress for school. We'd tried everything else."

"Oh, but you are twerps," sighed Charlie and presently he explained. He didn't like wearing the kilt, at least not this full dress business, and wanted to be clothed like other fellows. He groused a lot about it at home, and at last his mother had made his father agree that when he outgrew this costume, he shouldn't have to wear another, except of course for weddings, funerals and Hogmany. Tom nodded in agreement.

"I like the kilt for some things..."

"So do I!"

"Shut up, Peter!"

"... and if anybody says anything against it, I'll clout his ear for him, but there's a time for everything, and we've only got... (he fished out a pocket watch from his sporran) ..half an hour. Pull those mattresses together, near the pillars. I want to see you chaps." Tom flushed to his hair: he knew his fellow-dormers had respectable cocks, but nothing like the hairy club under Charlie's kilt. Were all Scots boys so well-endowed?

The boys pulled the mattresses together and stretched out on them like aborigines after a chase. Charlie pulled up his kilt while Tom and his friends lowered their corduroy shorts and underpants, shyly at first, then with

enthusiasm as their nakedness revealed four erect penises. They made a wanking circle, each boy lying comfortably so that he could grip the hard-on of the boy in front of him. Ah, this was the life! ‘Let the steam-pot hiss till it’s hot. Give me the speed of the Tantivy trot!’

Only the wet slap of five foreskins on five hard boys’ cocks disturbed the dust-laden air. How difficult it was to know where to look. The Ottoman sultan in his Harem had no greater choice of beauty. Close your eyes. Listen to them. Watch boys being boys.

“Shhh...”

“What...?”

“Shhh... Listen. There’s someone coming.” They listened silently for a moment.

“It’s not in this tunnel. It’s on the other side of this wall.” Peter ran his fingers down the thin plywood that separated them from a parallel chamber. He put a finger to his lips. A soundless shhh... The boys listened like the mice in the tunnels when School Cat was on the prowl.

Behind the partition they heard something dragged along the floor, then another something. Peter pointed at the mattresses beneath them, then pulled the lobe of his left ear. The boys listened, the hair on the back of their necks erect, their penises wilting between each other’s fingers.

“Tell me what happened. You said you’d tell me what happened.” A light voice, a boy’s voice, a vaguely familiar voice.

“If I tell you, can I touch you — here, here, and here?” A boy’s voice, but older, darker, deeper.

“Yes, yes, but tell me. I like when you tell me.” The younger boy whispered urgently.

“Lie back. Let me open... there, yes, that’s it. Can I...?”

“Just use your hand. Not the other. Tell me. You promised you’d tell me.”

Tom, Charlie, Lance, Graham and Peter edged closer to the partition. They risked a grin at each other. Gently they began manipulating each other again, careful not to make a sound. It was story time. In their Prep school, if they’d been good, they were treated to a Greek tale by the dorm master. Charlie had never known bed-time treats from a satisfied dorm master, but he snuggled down to listen, his head on Tom’s knees, his hand working the boy’s elegant hard-on.

“You remember O.T.C. camp in October. The fire in the hut. That Rycroft boy saved Mortimer. A few of the tents and a lot of sleeping bags went up in the blaze. About thirty of us had to sleep the last night in the marquee, the grub tent. It happened there.

“I’d been watching Dan. You know he’s in the Upper Fifth. Of course you do. We all had to pile into the tent that night and make do with ground sheets and blankets. Dan got a spot near me. My heart raced as I anticipated tossing off as he lay asleep beside me. You remember how everyone got soaked. Dan’s shorts were still damp. I reached over to see how damp they were. Dan asked in a sleepy tone if he should take them off. He did and lay there in his underpants. We all snuggled in and drifted off to sleep.

“I left about six inches between us. I didn’t want to make him nervous. When I was sure he was asleep, I rolled onto my right side facing him. I could feel the warmth from his body seeping into mine. I devoured every inch of his face with my eyes. I watched his chest rise and fall. Only an inch separated us. My cock was so hard it twitched. I let my hand slip onto his stomach just above his waist line. My fingers traced the tiny hairs that crept above his underpants. His breathing jumped a bit, his belly fluttered under my touch, he snuffled and moved in closer to me. I let my fingers slide across his stomach; his soft skin was tight but soft, warm and fresh. My fingers grazed his waist band.

“Suddenly I felt him grasp my wrist as if he’d made a decision. I froze. He pulled my hand down until my fingers were touching the damp cotton of his underpants. I felt the hot hardness of his erection under my fingertips. I ran them up and down his stiff penis. Dan was breathing more deeply, short, sharp intakes of breath. I lay there, stroking his hard-on — just like I’m stroking yours — from root to tip. I let my fingers drift from his throbbing shaft onto his balls. He spread his legs. My middle finger slid between his cheeks. He was hot there, too, hot and moist.”

“No, don’t, please don’t. You’ll make me sperm too soon.” The speaker seemed short of breath.

“All right. Dan took my hand again and slipped it back over the bulge of his penis. I felt it pulse and throb under my fingers. My free hand hooked his waist band and drew his underpants down; I pushed his blanket down an inch at a time. His hair, down there, was thick and curly; his balls were clearly visible in the flesh sac that lay in the V of his legs; his cock, hard and strong, lay throbbing beneath my fingers. I bent across him and kissed

the little slit; the head was hot and slippery, foreskin drawn back, little bubbles of liquid at the join. I licked them away. Sweet and sour at the same time.

“I tossed him off. I kissed his tummy, his thighs, his hair, the tip of his cock. I laved his scrotum. I nibbled the tender skin inside his thighs. I moved my lips across his belly, nipped his nipples with my teeth, hovered above that beautiful face. Those dark eyes. Dark eyebrows. Dark hair. That straight nose. Those kissable lips.” There was a gentle laugh. “I could be describing you, you know,” continued the voice. “My lips pressed his. I wrapped my arms around his body and pulled him to me — he was hot to touch. My tongue ran along his lips; he opened them and let me slide in. My tongue explored his mouth. Dan was gasping now. I slowed the hand on his penis. I wanted to fall asleep with him in my arms, but I didn’t want sleep to come too soon.

“With my free hand I slid my shorts off. My hand slid across his back to the curves of his hard, round bottom. The skin was sheer silk. He tensed at my touch. I stroked the tension away. I pulled him closer to me; he lifted one leg to straddle me, exposing more of himself to my curious fingers. I could feel his hard-on press against my own as I squeezed the head of his cock. My fingers teased his sphincter, stroking the lips of his anus, probing but not penetrating. I withdrew my hand from his cock. We rubbed our genitals together. There was enough friction to send delightful shivers through both of us. My free hand encircled his head as I propped myself up to look down into those solemn, grey eyes. ‘Your first time,’ I whispered. A tiny nod, a tiny smile.

“Suddenly Dan was bucking and heaving against me. His head began to roll from side to side. I covered his mouth with my hand. I felt him spurt onto my belly. He set me off. We were spurting together. I could feel his cock beat against mine, mine against his. His hips bounced his groin into me as our sperm flew between us, hot and sticky.

“At last we subsided. ‘Okay?’ He nodded. I took my hand away and slid a finger into his mouth. He sucked my finger hard, waiting for the trembling to subside.

“I eased away from his body and licked down the silk of his skin. I licked his chest, his nipples, the downy fuzz in the middle of his stomach. I lapped at the sticky juices that had glued us together. There was so much of it, spreading across his belly, his pubic hair. I licked like a conscientious

mother cleans her kittens. I moved up his body again and lay beside him stroking his face and hair, as wet with perspiration as my own.”

The boys listening to this tale were breathless, feeling much of the tension of the described moment deep in their beings.

“Dan was smiling now. ‘I thought you’d never notice me,’ he whispered. ‘I’m glad you’re the first. What do we do now?’ I held his face in my hands. I kissed him on the lips. ‘We go to sleep now. That’s what we do.’ He looked content. Dan’s no fool. We’d taken a great enough risk for one night. We pulled on our things, wrapped ourselves in our blankets and lay facing each other. ‘I want to fall asleep looking at you,’ he whispered. ‘Even with my eyes closed, I’ll be looking at you.’ And that’s what he did.”

There was a general release of held breaths all round.

“Lie back. Let me finish you off.”

“No. I’ve told you I won’t let you do that.”

“Why? Do you think ids dirty? A mouth is always cleaner than fingers.”

“It’s not that. Its just...” The younger boy’s voice tailed away.

Another laugh. “I know what it is! You’ve got a pash on someone, haven’t you? Look, there’s no need to blush. It happens. Tell me about him. Is it another junior? Does he know?” Another laugh, but not unkind. “Go on. Whisper his name. It’s always good to tell someone. Someone you can trust. And you can trust me. You know that.”

There was silence for a few moments.

“Brown. It’s Tom Brown. But don’t tell. Promise you’ll never tell. He doesn’t even know I exist.”

A little whistle. “Tom Brown! By Jove, yon know how to choose them. I’ve had my eye on that one myself. Now, now, don’t get riled. I’m allowed to look, aren’t I?... What’s the time? It can’t be. It is! Do yourself up. Your heart’s not really in this. At least I know where your heart is now. Tom Brown.” Another whistle. “Now let’s get out of here.”

“Just remember,” it was the younger boy again, “don’t you dare tell. And don’t you dare tease me. You’ve no right to do that, even if you are the Doctor’s son. If you do, I’ll tell my brother never to let you inside his trousers again. So swear it. Swear it!”

“I swear it,” laughed Michael Sweet. “Now come on.” Moments later the boys on the other side of the partition were scrambling to their feet, pulling up their things and stuffing their swollen cocks back inside. Oddly, not a single boy had ejaculated. They had become too absorbed in the tale

unfolding behind the wall to concentrate on what they were doing or what was being done to them. By common consent, they'd scrunched up against the wall in a heap, listening intently and trying to guess the identities of the conversationalists. Eyes had opened wide at the revelation of Michael Sweet's identity. That made sense. Only Michael had ready access to every key in the school. He must have used the rear entrance. But who was the junior behind the wall? The voice was maddeningly familiar, but his whispers had been so sotto voce and the acoustics so muffled that no one had managed to pin a name on him.

There was no time to explore the mystery now. They were collectively late. They scrambled through the maze of tunnels, up the ladder through the trapdoor. Peter nobly dallied to do the padlock. "It's Cornish for English, isn't it? Have no fears. I can twist that man round my little..." He completed the sentence with a wink.

That same evening Tom was still mulling possibilities over in his head as he poured Robert a second cup of tea. He poured the tea as quietly as he could. Robert was studying, and he took his study so seriously that he had restricted Tom to visits of only fifteen minutes.

Tom had groaned at the thought of forty-five minutes in Prep; the loss of the opportunity to stretch out on the couch alongside Robert caused him even more pain. "Look, you young villain," Robert had explained, "much as I care for you, I have my mock exams at the end of the month. The university won't begin to consider me if I don't do spankingly well in the mocks. That's simply the way it is. You do understand, don't you? It's like laying off before an inter-school match; it's hard but it's got to be done."

Tom kissed Rob affectionately on the cheek. "As long as you make up for it when the mocks are over."

"I will," sighed Robert. "Believe me, I will."

Tom slid saucer and teacup carefully onto the desk. "Rob, may I ask you a question before I go?" Robert closed his Parnassus. "Of course you may."

Tom sat on the couch, hunching forward, elbows on knees. "Do you know any boys in the Upper Fifth called Daniel, maybe Dan for short?"

"Let me think. Yes, I believe there are two. Daniel Marston and Daniel Booker. They're both called Dan. Marston's a rugger bugger; Booker's a cricket wallah." This was interesting!

"Do you know if either of them is a... special friend... a particular friend... oh, you know what I mean... of Michael Sweet, the Doctor's

son?”

“I know who Michael Sweet is,” smiled Robert, intrigued by this line of questioning. “If he were interested in either of them, I imagine it would be Booker. A fine batter. Bowls a bit, too. Michael’s likely to award him his colours this summer. As to the other, I don’t know. Booker’s a handsome lad, so no doubt Mike’s ‘interested’ in him. Whether or not he’s consummated that interest, I wouldn’t know.”

“What’s ‘consummated’?”

Robert grinned. “‘Consummated’ — that’s what you’d like me to do to you, but I won’t do it. At least not until you’re a bit older.” Tom blushed and grinned.

“And does Dan Booker have a brother? At school, I mean.”

Robert’s left eyebrow rose. It was a trick that Tom had tried a hundred times, but for him it was both or nothing. “No, he doesn’t...” Tom’s spirits fell, “...unless you mean his younger brother, his half brother...” Tom’s spirits rose, “...unless you mean...” Robert lapsed into silence.

“Go on, Rob, oh, do go on. Who?!”

“Come over here. By the side of the desk. That’s it. Now, you young rascal, I’m going to kiss you goodnight. I’m going to answer your question. And then I’m going to throw you out of my study.” As the older boy spoke, he undid the buttons on Tom’s grey corduroy shorts, manipulated his penis through underpants and flies, hardened it with a few squeezes, rolled the foreskin back and gave the tip a couple of kisses. Tom stood with his hands behind his back and thrust his hips forward.

“No you don’t,” laughed Robert stuffing the boy back into his shorts and doing him up. “Now off you go.”

“But who is Daniel Booker’s younger brother?” Exasperation was clear in Tom’s young voice.

“I’m surprised you didn’t know. You should. He’s in your dorm. Dan Booker’s younger half-brother is... Ben Fitzroy-McKean.” Tom’s gasp was audible. “Same mother, different fathers, I believe. Hence the different surnames. You’ve still got a lot to learn about public school, Tom. One can go through one’s entire school career and never speak to one’s own brother, let alone a half-brother. Now be gone, blithe spirit, and let me return to dull care.”

Tom closed the door softly behind him and stood stunned in the darkness of the upper corridor. Fitz! It had been Fitz behind the partition

with Michael Sweet! Fitz! The colour rose to Tom's cheeks as he remembered what he'd heard: "Brown. It's Tom Brown. But don't tell. Promise you'll never tell. He doesn't even know I exist."

"Well, I do now," thought Tom. "I do now — Benjamin Fitzroy-McKean."

That night it was quiet in the dorm. The snow had returned. The House had exhausted itself in snow fights after Prep. Snow was falling heavily now. It lay across the playing fields, deep and crisp and even. Brightly shone the moon that night. Tom returned from the showers, dried himself vigorously and climbed into his favourite blue-striped pyjamas of brushed wool. He saw Fitzroy-McKean sitting on a window ledge looking out. Tom wandered casually over, sat down on the ledge and bumped Fitz along a little. They sat, knee to knee, half-facing each other, half-watching the fallen snow.

Fitz started a little, then risked a half-smile. He, too, was in pyjamas, silk, burgundy with blue trimmings. "Beautiful, just beautiful," whispered Tom, his face more turned towards Fitz than the snow. "It makes everything so clean, so fresh, so new. It's like the world starting over." Fitz nodded.

Tom watched the tiny Adam's apple in his throat jump. "My mother says on a night like this you can make a wish; it has to be something you really really want; if it is — something you really really want — all you have to do is wish it. And the angels have to grant your wish. I'm going to make a wash. I'm going to close my eyes and make, my wish." Tom closed his eyes for a moment, then opened them and whispered, his lips as close to the boy's ear as he dared. "Now it's your turn. Go on. What have you got to lose? Close your eyes and make your wish — Benjamin Fitzroy-McKean. Brother of Daniel Booker. Friend of Michael Sweet."

Fitz trembled so hard that Tom thought he might faint. He dropped a hand casually on the boy's knee. It shook under his touch. He turned to face Tom. There were tears in his eyes. Beautiful, so beautiful, that Tom found it difficult not to lean forward and kiss those tremulous lips. "You won't tell, Tom. Please say you won't tell. It was all a mistake. Promise me, promise you won't tell."

Lance, Graham and Theo charged into the dorm, naked, flicking each other with sodden towels, pursued by the Duty master who ordered them back to the showers. "Glad to see you two boys are ready for bed," he said, turned and left the room.

“I won’t tell. I promise,” said Tom. “Now cheer up. It’s too beautiful a night for misery. And besides, you didn’t exactly hurt my feelings by what you said.” A hint of a smile flitted across Fitz’s face. “I am going to do one thing,” added Tom. The smile fled. “From now on, in this dorm at least, you are no longer Fitz. You are Ben. And if you argue with me, I shall call you Benjamin, and so shall everyone else. Agreed?”

“Agreed.”

The snow fell. The moon beamed down on two boys in pyjamas seated on a window ledge. The long day was almost over.

Half an hour later the moonlight-flooded dorm was as silent as the snow on the playing fields. Tom slipped out of bed. He padded across the dorm. He pulled back the blanket and slid into bed alongside Benjamin Fitzroy-McKean.

Tom pulled the boy into his arms. Wool brushed silk. “Open your eyes, Ben. I know you’re not sleeping. I couldn’t sleep, so how could you?” Ben’s eyes opened. Tom kissed the tip of his nose. Ben felt Tom’s warm breath on his face. “Now we’ve both got our wish,” Tom whispered. “Now we can both go to sleep.” Two tired boys closed their eyes, content to be in each other’s arms.

[I leave you to guess how they slept, and what they dreamt of.]

CHAPTER 6

Sweet Sorrow

It was a great relief to have unburdened himself and to have found that his friend could listen.

A more gifted chronicler of the secret life of the public school than I observed that there is a queer elasticity about boys which no one, least of all themselves, can account for. Tom Brown had rapidly become one of those exuberant, irrepressible boys who take their class-fellows by storm. Now, however, that storm had stilled and Tom drifted into a period of quiet content. All the more unexpected since he spent less time with Robert Lawton and more time with Ben Fitzroy-McKean. To everyone's surprise, including Tom's and Ben's, the boys became public chums.

Ben was a comparatively new boy. He had entered, like Tom, in September having come direct from another school. He was generally regarded as a sensible, agreeable boy, good-tempered and inoffensive; he rarely quarrelled or interfered with anyone. Perhaps it was that very inoffensiveness which made the boy seem bland. He was never particularly popular or unpopular; Ben was simply there.

Of course, as Robert withdrew further into study and revision for the mocks, Tom was compelled to find other diversions. Each evening he turned up promptly at Robert's study, built and lit a fire, made a pot of tea and some toast, and shared a brief repast and desultory conversation with his one-time mentor and confidant. Robert was never unkind, but he became distant, distracted, hardly aware of Tom's desperate initial attempts to please: the honey from home, the lavender-scented water in his hair, the lack of underpants.

Tom himself was distracted. The boy who had given comfort to Ben now received it in return. Very little had happened in bed that first night,

and yet everything had happened. A friendship had formed, a friendship of equals.

Tom hauled himself from the pool, sat at the edge, feet dangling, and watched Ben cut through the water like a porpoise. If he were capable of envy, he might have felt a twinge of jealousy; he was not. He leaned back on his hands and watched the slight figure slice through the bluey-green as if he were swimming in air. Eighteen-nineteen-twenty laps! Almost as if water were Ben's natural environment and he resented having to return to terra firma — unless Tom was there.

The boys sat side by side at the edge of the pool. In the midst of fifty boys they were alone, the echoing hubbub making conversation intimate and private.

"Do tell, Ben," said Tom as if they were entirely alone. "I've told you so much. I only want to know if you've done anything." The peculiar stress on the verb indicated precisely what Tom was referring to. From the corner of his eye, he saw his friend blush. He knew better than to look him straight in the face. There was something Ben was dying to tell him, needed to tell him, but it had to be told obliquely, almost as if he were talking to himself.

"It happened two years ago," began Ben hesitantly. "I was just eleven. I love swimming. You know that. I was allowed down to the municipal baths in B... by myself twice a week. There were locker rooms for changing. That day they were crowded. There were enclosed rooms available, too, cubicles really. They cost sixpence. I didn't have sixpence.

"A man struck up a conversation with me. He was about thirty. He looked clean and polite, a gentleman. He was already changed for swimming. He offered me the use of his cubicle. I thought I'd be alone. When I went in, he followed me. He closed and locked the door behind us. I was a little alarmed by this but I didn't want to appear rude, I didn't want to seem babyish, so I went ahead and undressed in his presence."

Ben flicked the water with his toes as he related what had happened in the cubicle. Tom was disgusted, not so much by the act itself, but by the ungentlemanly nature of the man's conduct. He had imposed himself upon the boy, taken advantage of his naiveté, used him and discarded him with little ceremony nor affection.

"Did he say anything, afterwards, I mean?" he asked.

"He told me he had to go. He would leave the cubicle door unlocked, so I could fetch my things. He said I was a lucky boy."

“The blackguard!” exclaimed Tom. “Did you say anything?” “All I was said was ‘Thank you very much, sir.’ ”

“What on earth for?”

“For letting me use his cubicle.”

“I suppose you didn’t go back to the baths.”

The vacuum of a silence surrounded the boys. Tom risked a look at Ben. The boy’s eyes were fixed on the water at his feet.

“Yes, I went back. Three times a week, I went back. I hoped he’d be there. I prayed he wouldn’t be there. But I wanted him to be there. I wanted him to take me into the cubicle again. I wanted him to touch me; I wanted to touch him. I was ashamed, Tom, desperately ashamed. But I didn’t care. I couldn’t help myself.”

Ben recoiled at the look of disgust on Tom’s face. Tom realised he had to explain.

“Don’t get me wrong, Ben. I wasn’t thinking of you. I was thinking of that man. He shouldn’t have done that. He didn’t give you any choice. He forced himself on you.” There was a lengthy pause as Tom worked out what he thought. “I don’t think it’s right,” he continued. “Men and boys, I mean. Men are bigger than us, they’re more powerful than us. Men should stick to other men, or to women, and leave us boys alone.” The frown on his face kept Ben still. “It’s worse in school. Teachers, I mean. They’re meant to take care of us, to look after us, to set us an example. They shouldn’t use their authority to make us... well, you know what I mean. There’s something very sad about: a man who chases little boys. It’s not even a question of age.”

Was Tom thinking of Robert Lawton, Eric Merry and Michael Sweet?

“If you’re a schoolboy, it’s only natural you’ll be interested in the sex thing. Here we are, cooped up with hundreds of other boys, so it’s only natural...” Tom let his fingers brush Ben’s wrist. “But when you leave school, you’re a man, and you should stick to manly things. A job and a wife and children, that sort of thing.

And if you still like the sex thing, you should find other men, not hang around public baths scaring little boys. That’s what I think anyway. You just went back for the sex stuff, not for the man himself. You should only have sex with someone you like, I mean, really like.”

Ben raised his head and looked at Tom. “That’s how I feel, Tom. Even if we didn’t have the sex thing, I’d still want to be near you. Being near you

just makes my heart..." The boy searched for the word. He found it. "...sing."

Tom rose gingerly to his feet, the sides of the pool were slippery. "Come on, let's get to the showers." He reached to help Ben up. "Look at the clock. There's still about fifteen minutes."

"I know," smiled Ben, "but I want to soap you down. We're not going to do anything in there, it's far too dangerous, but its safe enough to soap you down. Don't blush. You know we're not allowed to take off our costumes in there." As the boys strolled towards the showers, they discussed the silliness of the rule. It was perfectly permissible, in fact the norm, to shower naked in the House bathrooms, but not licit to shower naked at the pool. Yet another of School's little mysteries.

Tom felt his soapy hands slide over Ben's back and wondered how his friend's slim, strong body could feel so much like silk. His hands traced every ridge in Ben's shoulders, every ridge in his spine, the tapering of his torso, the butterfly of his hips, the hollow in the small of his back. He let his hands run around Ben's front. There was no protest. He soaped and stroked his well-defined swimmer's chest, delayed only by the nubs of the boy's nipples as they erected at his loving touch. Tom's hard-on bulged the front of his swimming costume. He gently urged Ben against the tiled wall and leaned into his back, his erection fitting neatly into the crack in the boy's behind.

Tom let the soap slip to the floor. His fingers slid across the front of Ben's costume. His fingers slid into the waistband. He began to ease them down, he had to feel skin against skin. He leaned against him, nuzzling his neck, as his thumbs slid inside the boy's trunks. He could feel the heat as his thumbs grazed the side of the boy's stiff penis.

"Brown! Brown! Hurry it along, boy. I need a fag."

That was a senior voice. Tom's fingers flew up as if they'd been burned. His face burned, too. "Hurry it along, Brown."

Tom leaned round the wall of the shower cubicle. It was not Robert. It was Eric Merry. Why on earth did he want Tom to fag for him? He had two of his own, two of the prettiest juniors in the entire school.

"Sorry, Brown. Needs must. Mine both have flu. Lawton says fine by him. Get changed smartly. And take this letter to the post. Got to be off by six. Oh, and yes, Lawton wants two Bellamy's pies. No dinner, working late. One of them's for you, but I'm not supposed to know that. The letter

and the money are at Reception. Now cut along. Take Fitzroy-M. with you. He's in there, but I'm not supposed to know that." Merry chuckled, turned on his heel and left.

Bellamy's pies! And one was for him! He was having dinner with Robert. All was forgiven.

"Where's the post office?" asked Ben coming out of the cubicle, rubbing at his hair with a thread-bare towel. "Give me that," laughed Tom and towelled his friend's head vigorously. His delight was mingled with disgust. He didn't see why he should be ordered out on Robert's say-so, just at a time, too, when his prospects were so bright. What a time to be thwarted! Just as Ben was opening up to him. However, it couldn't be helped. His day would come and he would have his own fag.

Two or three seniors hailed the boys as they hurried to the main gate.

"Oh, are you going to the post? Take this bat. Drop it off at Spencer's. Thanks awfully."

"Oh, Brown, off to town, are we? Here's sixpence. Invest it in a bag of gobstoppers for me. Have one each for yourselves, no more, mind. I can count."

Fitz — a quicker learner than Tom — urged him to stuff the letter in his pocket. Then the boys took care, if they passed anyone, to not look as if they were going anywhere for fear of being burdened with further missions. Mind you, as they wore heavy great coats, mittens and balaclavas, it was clear they were going some distance from the school.

As the boys strolled down the quiet evening road, Ben turned shyly to Tom. "What about you?"

"What about me?"

"You know, your first time. You've told me a bit about Lawton, and in the dorm, well, I've got eyes in my head, but I mean, when was your first time? Don't tell if you don't want to." Ben had taken Tom's silence for reluctance.

"No, no, it's not that I don't want to say. I'm trying to think when the first time was." Tom laughed. "I've got it. But I don't think it counts. When I was eight or nine, I had a friend called Tim. He was about a year younger than me. We used to play in the shed at the bottom of his garden. His father had given him the shed. To keep him out of mischief, I suppose. He'd piled half a dozen old mattresses in there so we could jump around on them. I

don't know where I got the idea, but I used to jump from a low shelf and pretend to... I can't think of the word... you know, what dogs do?"

"Hump?"

"Yes, that's the word. I used to jump off the shelf and hump him on the mattresses. Finally, Tim asked if I really wanted to hump him. He didn't wait for an answer. He just pulled his pants and underpants down and lay there with his bum in the air. I saw he had a stiffie. I pulled my things down. I had a stiffie, too. I wasn't at all sure where I was supposed to stick it till Tim whispered, 'Up my bum. Stick it up my bum .' I found out later that he used to get enemas, and he liked things up his bum. I knelt down on all fours. It was very awkward trying to pull his bum open and find his hole and stick my thing in. Then Tim lay half down he could reach round and hold himself open for me. I didn't look at first; I thought that was rude. I couldn't find his hole blind, I crouched real low and had a peep.

"It was really sweet. I know that's a daft word to use, but that's hat it was. It was tiny, and round, and pink. I was only eight, my hard-on was only a couple of inches long, but I knew I'd never get it inside that little hole. But I tried. How hard I tried! I pushed the head against his hole. Nothing. So I stuck the tip of my finger in. It was dry. Tim yelped like a dog does when you step on its paw. He was really game. He sat up and we both spat in the palm of his right hand. Then he smeared the gob all over my prick. Then smeared some of it on his hole. I tried again and again. No luck. There were tears running down Tim's face, and the head of my penis burned like hell. We gave up. We never tried it again. Tim says we should have got a dog, bur we never did. So that was my first time."

Ben was laughing out loud. Tom loved the sound. Something happened to Ben when he laughed. He lit up from within. He didn't smile with his mouth only; his entire face smiled along with it. The boys settled down to business as they entered the town.

First call was Spencer's and the safe delivery of the bat. Next to Mahoney's where Tom purchased sixpence worth of gobstoppers. They had one each, ideal on an evening that had turned bitter. Next into Bellamy's where a disappointment waited them.

Bellamy's lay at the school end of the High Street. The green-fronted double window's still boasted a fine selection of breads, cakes and pastries; it was late-opening night. The shop had been run by generations of Bellamys who could trace their history as far back as School itself.

Currently it was run by proprietor and proprietrix, Ma ‘n’ Pa Bellamy, which revealed nothing since it had been owned and run by a Ma ‘n’ Pa Bellamy from time memorial. The years of in-breeding amongst the Bellamys had done nothing to sharpen their wits but they were kindly folk who took inordinate pride in their products — above all, in Bellamy’s legendary pies, which accounted for more cardiac arrests in the county than any other single cause. This fact discomfited no one. As Pa Bellamy always said: “We’ve all got to die from something, so it might as well be a Bellamy’s pie.”

“Alas, dear boys,” sighed Ma Bellamy, as large and wholesome as her own pies, “we are out at the moment. Pa Bellamy will be finishing the last batch down in the ovens within the half hour; sooner if I could be there to help him, but who will mind the shop?”

Tom, with a laudable promptness, piped up, “Why, we will, Ma Bellamy, to be sure. You pop down to the ovens, secure a batch of pies, we will mind the shop, you will return, we will make our purchase and be off. You can trust us; we’re School boys.”

“And what gems you are!” sparkled Ma Bellamy, reaching for her coat. “I shall lock the shop door. Just keep the lights on. Then our customers will know that Bellamys will soon be open.” She pulled on a bonnet remarkably similar in shape to one of her own pies. “Hang this ‘Back Soon’ in the door window as soon as I’ve gone. In thirty minutes my big, hot pies will be in your hands,” and she was off, locking the door behind her. The boys watched her waddle down High Street, hung the sign, and wandered round the premises. It was infernally warm and they cast aside their gloves, scarves, coats and balaclavas.

What smells and delights greeted their eyes and noses! In the stock room bags of flour were piled high, floor to ceiling. A minor mystery. Why not stock them in the bakery itself? Ben resolved to pursue the matter with Ma Bellamy on her return.

Ben was trying to read the labels on bags piled haphazardly on the higher shelves when he felt Tom’s arms slide round him, Tom’s body press him into the lower bags, Tom’s fingers fumble with the buckle of his belt, Tom’s warm breath on the nape of his neck. “Where were we in the showers? About here, I think,” whispered Tom into Ben’s ear. He let his palm run across the front of Ben’s trousers where already there was a hillock. He felt himself harden and push into the cleavage of Ben’s behind.

Both boys could, feel the heat from each other's bodies. Ben uttered no sound, inhaled no breath.

Tom undid the belt, slid open the trousers buttons and felt Ben's growing hardness under the thin, white cotton of his underpants. The boy was hard, very hard, and he was big, as big as Tom himself. He nuzzled Ben's ear, kissed the delicate skin at the nape of his neck, and stroked the four inches of hot flesh beneath his fingertips. His other hand freed his own belt, undid his buttons and pulled the flaps wide. He eased trousers and underpants down until he was naked to the knees. Using both hands, he gripped the waists of Ben's trousers and underpants and yanked them to his knees. There was a gasp of protest, then a sigh, as Tom pressed the heat and hardness of his own groin into Ben's bum, a hand returning to grip the boy's erection.

Turning Ben round, Tom pressed him backwards against the unevenly distributed bags which allowed Ben to half lean, half sit on them. Tom removed his hand, pulled up their shirts and pullovers, and leaned into the boy. Hot flesh against hot flesh, young hard-on against hard-on, hair brushing against hair, tummy button against tummy button.

Ben's eyes were closed, head tilted back, mouth slightly open, his breathing now audible. Tom examined the shape of his face, the refined line of the jaw, the small, curvy ears, the slightly almond-shaped eyes, the elegant nose, the curve of the lips. It was a singular face, an aristocratic face, but Tom remembered how it changed when Ben smiled, how the smile took over the face, took over the entire boy, and made him truly handsome. The man's face could be discerned in the boyish features; this handsome boy would be a striking man. As Tom examined his friend's face, he rotated his groin gently against Ben's, their hard cocks fencing for space. Sex smells already rose between them, and Tom was delighted to feel Ben respond as the boy pressed into him and rotated his groin in return.

The boys stood in the dim light of the stock room, naked from the waist down, trousers and underpants at their ankles, Tom's broad brownish bum churning against the paler, delicate skin of his partner. The boys were happy, but Tom, conscious of time slipping by, wanted to make both of them happier still.

He slid to his knees, pushed up Ben's shirt and pullover to his chest, and engulfed Ben's erection in his hot, wet mouth. He choked a little at first having, as they say, bitten off a little more than he could chew. Ben's penis

was not only long but it thickened quickly to the base and its nest of straight, dark hair. Tom heard a gasp from the boy above him, then felt hands replace his own as Ben pulled his clothes up to his neck. Tom gripped the base of the boy's cock, turning it every which way but loose in his mouth, while his lips and fingers applied a variety of pressures to the shaft. He felt the skin slide back and forth along the stiffened penis, felt the collar of the foreskin against his lips, felt the wetness of pre-cum on his tongue, heard little sighs and moans and "Tom. Tom" somewhere above him. His free hand slid into the furnace of Ben's crack. The boy moved his legs apart to give him freer access.

Tom released the boy's cock from his mouth. He pressed Ben's penis against his cheek, ran his closed lips along the shaft, stuck the tip of his tongue into the little red slit, kissed open-mouth the dark hair until it was wet with his saliva; he traced with a finger-tip the purple vein that ran from the base, squeezed the tube on the underside between his fingers, and marvelled at the strength and firmness that yielded to his touch. The boy's penis was as beautiful as his face and body — the swimmer's shoulders and chest, the torso that tapered to the tiny waist, the flat hard stomach, the flare of the buttocks — and the weighty bollocks beneath predicted the powerful man to come.

Tom's mouth returned to Ben's cock. His head was bobbing hard and fast now. He felt his friend's hands in his hair, their tightening grip revealing how close to climaxing he was. His legs trembled and shook. His hips bucked. He drove his cock hard into Tom's face until his hair mashed against his lips again and again. He was breathing in gasps.

His swollen penis jerked. The ferocity of his orgasm shocked both boys. Ben was cumming... cumming... cumming... uncontrollable spasms... jets of liquid shooting into mouth and throat... balls high and tight in their scrotum... sphincter tautly stretched around Tom's middle finger. He bucked and heaved and pulled Tom's head by the ears until the kneeling boy choked, spluttered and pulled himself free. The explosion of Ben's first wet orgasm was 'allowed by another explosion.

Splat!

An explosion of flour! A white burst of flour! A snowstorm :: flour!

A bag had fallen from the top shelf and hit Ben on the head, splitting and exploding across the both boys. In the throes of orgasm, Ben had felt nothing, while Tom, busy gulping down cum and fighting off Ben, eyes

watering, had seen nothing until, falling back on the floor, he sat there as the flour unleashed its white dry around them. The boys would have burst out laughing if they had been able to see the expressions on each other's face.

The door bell! A key in the lock. Ma Bellamy!

Tom leapt from the floor and grabbed his underpants and trousers, heaving them on in a single movement. His zip snagged his hard-on; he bit his lip, did half the buttons, snapped his belt shut, and turned to Ben. Bravo! Ben had already scrambled into most of his clothes and was brushing flour out of his hair and eyes. It was so comical that Tom burst out laughing. Ben scowled, then joined him in laughter as he recognised the temporary twin standing before him, flour cascading from Tom's hair and shoulders as he shook himself like an old gun dog.

"Mercy me!" came the voice of Ma Bellamy behind them. "Are you poor Iambs hurt? I've told Pa Bellamy that we should stock the flour down at the ovens. He says the building is damp. Come through, lads, and let me brush the worst off."

Ma Bellamy did her best, but two ghostly figures could be seen, five minutes later, striding up School Lane. Two white-haired, whey-faced apparitions who, every now and then, stopped, faced each other and burst into laughter. Never in its half millennium had such merry sprites graced School Lane.

The prefect who had ordered the gobstoppers was awaiting them at the gates. "You duffer! These are minty gobs. I like strawberry. You'd better take them back, hadn't you?"

What ingratitude! "I can't now," said Tom. "I've got to get Lawton's tea ready. And besides, these Bellamy's pies are cold enough as it is."

"I suppose so," grumbled the senior boy who turned to depart in low if not high dudgeon. Not a word had passed about the appearance of the boys. Tom learned another lesson that evening — that if a fag ever expects to be thanked for any service he provides is doomed to disappointment. Had they been covered in blood, mild inquiry might have been made, but two fags bedecked with flour were insignificant to a waist-coated prefect.

Tom turned to Ben. "You'd best get changed and report to Prep. I'm already late for Rob's..." He corrected the slip. "Lawton's tea. I'll see you later. And..."

"Yes, Tom?"

“...that was great fun. I do like being with you, Ben, I really do.”

Ben smiled. “I know that, Tom. I really do. See you later.” The boys entered the House, Ben slipping into the dorm to clean up and change, Tom continuing on upstairs, bagged pies in hand, to the study. He paused on the stairs for a moment. He wanted to go up to Robert; he wanted to stay with Ben. At heart, Tom Brown was a simple boy; complications confused him; he sighed and went on up. His heart might have been downstairs but his loyalty was definitely up.

Opening the study door somewhat sheepishly, Tom stepped in. Robert looked up from his books and gave a cry; “Why, Tom Brown, you seem to have been having an awfully big adventure. I was not aware the snow had returned.” He laughed and called Tom over to the hearth. A fire was already burning merrily away in the grate. Small pancakes and cream buns lay on a willow-pattern plate.

“At least you have returned with the pies. Here, let me have them. I’ll warm them up while you’re cleaning yourself up.” Robert took the pies. “Stop! Not a step further. Whatever that is, I want no more of it on my rug. Here, take my dressing gown. You may use the senior shower. I’m the only one in the building tonight. Go, get thee hence, and return the clean, sweet-smelling boy I cherish.” Tom realised Rob must have been studying ‘literature’; he often spoke in that high-faluting manner when he’d been studying ‘literature’. He grinned, took the gown and headed for the showers. Turning at the door, he asked, “Who’s on duty tonight? Master, I mean.”

“We’re fine. It’s Cornish. I fancy he’s got his own crumpet to keep him occupied. I’ve never seen him on the senior floor.”

Tom stood in the shower, face up, mouth open, eyes closed, letting the spray batter him. He could still taste Ben in his mouth. Images danced across his mind. He felt his penis stiffen and stretch. He smiled to himself as he soaped underarm. Robert was in a splendid mood; it would be no brief visit this evening. His penis grew hard. His balls ached. It was two weeks since Robert and he had — the phrase ‘made love’ danced in his mind — done anything; he could imagine how frantic his sperm must be. Tom rarely tossed himself off; it seemed such a waste; now he felt his balls were full and heavy. He kept his hand away from his erection because the slightest touch might set him off, and he wanted to save himself for Rob — if Robert wanted him.

Back in the study, Tom let the gown slip from his shoulders and slide to the floor. He stood there, in the firelight, the candle light, and the glow of two lamps, naked and unconcerned towelling away the last few drops of water that clung to his shoulders and legs. Like many a young boy, he was flirting, albeit subconsciously, and succeeding. Robert smiled, though the smile was not untinged by melancholy. "Come here," he said. Tom sat on the couch facing the flickering flames; Robert sat behind him and began to towel his hair gently. As he did, he spoke in a low voice, almost a whisper.

"There's something I've got to tell you, Tom." The tone of his voice made Tom shift his bottom uneasily.

"I want you to listen, Tom Brown. I want you to listen, and I don't want you to turn round. Can you do that?" Tom nodded. Robert kissed the nape of his neck, running the towel over the boy's back.

"I'm leaving the School, Tom." He felt the boy start and try to turn. He gripped him gently by the shoulders. "No, look at the fire. I'm leaving, not because I want to, but because I have to. Revision isn't going well. I need help if I'm to get the place I want at university. I've talked it over with Dr Sweet, and with my father. I'm going to a crammer, Tom. Back home, back in C... . I'll live at home and go there every day. Saturday mornings, too. That's how much it means to me."

"But what...?"

"No, let me finish, Tom. Let me hold you like this and finish. I was going to go at Christmas. I only came back because... because of you. There, I've said it. But, as I said, the revision isn't going well. Too many duties, too many distractions. So you see, Tom, that's why I haven't seen much of you of late. Yes, I've been studying, and every time I saw you, it reminded me that one day, sooner or later, I'd have to leave, leave you, leave this place, leave this life. It's come sooner than later, and it hurts.

"Now I'm going to say something, Tom. Something I shouldn't. Something no senior boy should ever say to a junior. And I'm going to say it... I love you, Tom. With all my heart and soul, I, Robert Lawton, love you, Tom Brown. There, it's done."

Robert's declaration brought a cry from Tom: "And I... oh, I love..." Robert clamped his hand round Tom's mouth. "No, don't say it, Tom. You're too young to say it. We both know what we know, so don't say anything." Tom turned and flung himself into Robert's arms. There were tears in his eyes, but he forced himself not to cry, not to weep, not to sob,

not to let the sound of his breaking heart fill the room. Robert held onto the boy till all passion was spent, then held him at arm's length.

"Smile for me, Tom Brown. That's the way I want to remember you. Smiling." Tom sniffed back the tears. Smiling was so hard but Robert's smile helped. His good-nature, sweet temper, natural resilience, and lust for life reasserted itself. He smiled, he grinned, he laughed, and said with breaking voice: "It's been great, hasn't it?"

"Yes, it has," said Robert. "And that's how I want to remember it."

"How? like this?" Tom slid further back on the couch, crossed his arms and sat po-faced as if posing for a family photograph. "Or this?" He slid from the couch, stood up and took two steps back. He raised his arms and cupped the back of his head with his hands. His penis, still semi-tumescent from his shower, rose a little more. He held the pose, then dropped to the carpet. He sat, legs spread wide, his penis stiffening until it stood erect, the tip just below his belly button. He was delighted when he saw Robert's Adam's apple jump in his throat.

"What about this?" He rose, moved to Robert's chair and sat down. He pulled his legs up onto the seat and spread them wide again. The V of his bottom opened up. Robert slid from the couch to the carpet, his gaze directly opposite the boy's exposed hole. Above the hole, Tom's balls hung low and heavy, the cock above nestling in the thick brown hair. And above the foreshortened body, Tom's face smiling down. 'You're beautiful, Tom,' whispered Rob huskily.

The naked boy slid from chair to carpet, turning till he was face down, but with the upper part of his body raised so that he could turn towards Rob. One leg was drawn halfway, leaving his balls and penis to peep below his bottom. Tom was utterly wanton now. He raised his torso and his bottom, keeping only his forehead and feet on the floor. He pushed his bottom upwards, supported by his legs so that he seemed to be offering himself to Robert. Between his legs, he smiled at Robert and stuck his tongue out. In a final gesture of surrender, Tom lowered his shoulders to the floor, kept his bottom raised, and with one hand pulled himself as wide open as he could. He held the pose, held it and held it. until Robert edging along the carpet held the boy's cheeks open and kissed his ring. He held a long, wet, open-mouthed kiss that was his own way of surrendering to the boy who had surrendered so much to him.

Tom rolled over and pushed Robert back onto the carpet. Looking into Robert's eyes, he undid the buttons of his shirt, pulled it free from his trousers, and when Robert raised himself, slid it down his shoulders and off. Eyes still fixed on Robert's, he let his hand run over the huge bulge in the senior's trousers, snapped open the belt, slid open the buttons, then, on his knees, backed down between Robert's long legs until he had slipped the trousers completely off. Eyes on Roberts, he pulled off his socks one by one and threw them over the couch. Tom slid back along the older boy's body until they lay naked full length against each other, each feeling the other's erection burn in his groin. Tom linked his fingers together and placed his palms below Robert's neck. Lying there, he grinned as his eyes devoured the face of the boy below him.

Robert lay there watching the flames of the fire flicker and dance in the younger boy's eyes, his face aglow, his hair like burnished gold. They kissed, almost chastely at first but then with the heated passion of the fire behind Robert's head. Lips crushed lips, tongues probed, sought and entered, mouths sucked, as if each boy was trying to swallow the other up completely. Tom came up for air, spluttering and grinning in his delight. The sweat between their bodies popped.

"Do you think it will always be like this for us?" asked Tom becoming solemn for a moment.

"I'm not sure I follow," said Robert.

"I mean, will we always want boys, men, other males?" Tom face grew redder in the firelight but the question was important, and Robert was the only one he could really ask. Ben, after all, was, like himself, only a boy.

Robert considered the question. It had troubled him for a long time.

"I don't know, Tom, I really don't. I do know that I want to get married one day — to a woman, I mean — settle down, have children of my own, be the father of a household. I don't know if you can do that though I suspect many men do. Men, boys like us, I mean. I think we can keep what we have for each other, the trust, the affection, yes, the love, and still do what is expected by the world. Loving a boy may be different from loving a woman. Perhaps what we love in a boy is all that we ourselves would like to be. Perhaps only another boy can understand what it is like to be... a boy." As Robert made his speech, Tom lay stretched out upon him, solemnly, seriously listening to every word.

“Oh, I do hope you are right,” he cried. “I, too, want to get married, have a family, raise my own brood, but I never want to lose what we have... never, never, never. Even if I never see you again, I shall always have you, always!” He kissed Robert furiously, desperately, grinding his groin against the groin below until both boys ached.

Robert reached to his right and pulled the large cushion of his armchair towards him. Raising his hips and Tom, he slid the cushion under the boy's lower back. He opened his legs wide and let the boy's lower half slip into the space between so that he squatted over him. He gripped Tom's shaft at the base and ran the tip along the hot dark V of his buttocks. “I want you inside me, Tom Brown,” he murmured. “I want to feel you inside me. I want you to be part of me. Use your hand, put yourself inside me.” Robert pulled himself wide apart.

The boy gulped and felt his penis grow unbelievably hard. Holding the base of his erection, Tom ran the tip in the hot, dark place until he felt it snag slightly. He put his other hand into Robert's crack and scooted the tip of his middle finger around until he found the hot spot among the sweaty swirling hair. He pressed his finger and felt: the sphincter muscle give way ever so slightly. He pressed in with the head of his cock and pushed. He kept his eyes on Robert's and pushed again. Sweat ran down their foreheads and down their shafts. He could smell the sweat, pre-cum and anal juices. He pushed again... and slid in, the sphincter muscle gripping him fiercely. There were tears in Robert's eyes. “I'm not hurting you, am I?” whispered Tom. “Yes, you are, and I love it. Hurt me some more, Tom, hurt me some more.”

Tom raised his hips, then lowered his crotch, pushing his hard-on steadily past Robert's distending anal ring. He was sliding in easily now, sliding as slowly as he could, wanting to feel every nuance, subtlety and change in the pressure, the heat, the texture, the friction that held him in this loving grip. At last he was in! All the way in! In to the hilt! In so far that his scrotum was tightly wedged in the crack of Robert's bottom. Robert sighed, his breath like perfume on Tom's face.

“You're a big boy for thirteen, Tom Brown, a very big boy.” Tom lay there, not daring to move, knowing that the slightest friction would tip him over the edge and he would shoot his cum up Robert's arse. He wanted that to happen, and didn't want it to happen. He wanted to lie like this forever, his hard cock up Rob's bum while he lay and looked into his mentor's eyes.

“Rob... Rob... is this the first time...? I mean, have you...?” He couldn’t finish the sentence, couldn’t bring himself to use the taboo word in front of someone he respected and admired so much.

“Yes, Tom, yes Tom, darling...” The word seemed utterly right, “...this is the first time I’ve ever... made love all the way.” Tom sighed, “I’m glad it was me.” Robert grinned, “So am I. If a boy’s prick feels like this, what would a grown man’s feel like!” “What does it feel like, Rob?”

“Oh, it feels good, Tom. It feels very good. It feels like you are filling me up. It feels like you are completing me in a way. It feels as if it was always meant to feel like this.” He kissed the tip of Tom’s nose. “And you, how is it for you?”

“Oh, Rob, Rob, I can’t tell you. I feel like I’m going to die from pleasure. If I make a move, I’ll cum, I’ll explode, I’ll disappear inside you. Hold me, Rob, oh, please hold me.” Robert slid his arms around the boy’s back and held him tightly, feeling his own erection burn into the boy’s belly. He slid his hands down to the boy’s bum, grasped his cheeks and gently squeezed, pulling the boy into him, then releasing him to pull him in again. “Oh, Rob, Rob, I’m going to die, and I love it. I’m burning, Rob. Touch me there, with your finger touch me there, inside me, Rob, please, inside me.”

The tip of Robert’s middle finger slid across Tom’s anal ring. The boy was on fire! He pressed his finger tip against the hot little muscle. He felt it give, but it was too dry to enter without hurting Tom. “Please, oh please, Robert, I don’t mind, really I don’t.” Tom was clenching his buttocks and rocking himself backwards and forwards into Robert’s hole. He couldn’t last long. Robert pushed again, he felt the boy spasm. He looked along their bodies. To his left, he saw the plate, the two cream buns, he took his hand from Tom’s cleft, slid his arm along the carpet and scooped up a large gob of cream with his fingers. He returned them to the boy’s cleft and slid the cream across Tom’s hot little hole. He pressed his creamy finger tip against the creamy hole. The little muscle gave way and he slid in. A furnace closed around him. Dark, treacle-like flesh embraced his finger. He slid his finger up and down the boy’s rectum, following the boy’s movements as Tom let nature take over and drive him towards orgasm.

Tom’s bottom rose and fell faster and faster now. The heat and friction excited his cock to a hardness and sensitivity he had never known. Rob’s skin, his sweat, his smell, his finger ramming in his hole made thought

impossible. He became the feeling, became the orgasm as something touched him deep inside setting off uncontrollable squirts that emptied his entire self into the boy below him. He was dissolving, disintegrating, disappearing into Rob's bum, his body, his self. Control had gone. "Um, Uh, Um." The noises were guttural from both boys as they lay there naked, joined, spasming on the carpet: in front of the fire, Robert's cock erupting onto Tom even as the boy erupted into him.

The younger boy collapsed onto the older. Minutes later, as his cock slid easily from Robert's hole, he crawled his way up Rob's body and propped himself on his entwined hands.

"I don't care if you are a boy, Robert Lawton. I don't care if you are a Senior Prefect." He smiled. That open, honest smile that had first endeared him to the boy beneath him. "I love you, Robert. I fucking love you. And I always will."

[And now, dear reader, we will tiptoe from the study. We will leave Tom and Robert naked on the carpet in front of the flickering fire. We will leave them to the glow of candlelight and the sweaty sheen of their young bodies. We will leave them to their cream buns, pancakes and Bellamy's pies. We will leave them to the love they declared for each other that night, their last night together.]

CHAPTER 7

Of War and Peace

Several instances had occurred of matters
having been reported to the masters;
this was against public morality and School tradition.

The boys lay in the dark embrace of the empty gym, head to toes, shorts pushed down to knees, faces in each other's groins, straining cocks in each other's mouths. The air was warm and heavy, clanking radiators occasionally covering the sounds, wet sounds, they made as they suckled on each other's boyhood. They had stacked the mats in two heaps, and lay on the smaller heap, stretched out in bliss. The taller heap hid them completely, both from the door and the window that served as one wall of the building.

It was Ben who had made the exciting discovery. As he lay there, being sucked off by Tom, he twisted his body round until he, too, faced his friend's crotch. Tom, startled by the development, but unwilling to release the sweet, sweaty prick in his mouth, had grunted in delight as Ben's lips slid over the swollen head of his penis. He had slowed down his own sucking, concentrating on the pleasure the boy gave, and allowing himself to near the peak of excitement that Ben had obviously reached. Perhaps it was not possible, but he hoped they might cum together, Ben squirting into him as he squirted into Ben. He felt Ben's lips brush his pubic hair, imagined those sweet bee-stung lips stretched around the base of his penis, then opened his own throat to accept all of the boy again.

Tom's hands squeezed the rich flesh of Ben's buttocks, then slid a middle finger in to stroke his ring. He felt the boy's body tremble, then gasped a little as Tom pressed a middle finger all the way in. He wiggled his finger; Ben wiggled in response. If his mouth were not so full and busy, he would have laughed. For no reason that he could discern, Tom thought of the number 69; that's the shape their bodies made. 'That's what we're doing. We're sixty nine-ing!' Again he would have laughed, but realising

how quickly time passed, he redoubled his efforts on Ben's blood-engorged hard-on. It was difficult to think with so much pleasure in the lower part of his body, and in his mouth; he abandoned thought and surrendered himself to sensation.

The boys' bodies trembled, shuddered, bucked and heaved almost in unison, a duet of flesh, a symphony of sensation. Ben came first, setting off Tom almost immediately. They gushed into each other's mouth, hot wet rushes that threatened to overwhelm and choke; they gulped down most, dribbles of creamy juice oozing from the sides of their mouths. Exhausted, emptied, they lay still for as long as they dared.

"Tom! Tom! Come on. Let me go. It must be gone six." Released, Ben struggled to his feet, only to be hauled back down again. Tom rolled on top of him, stretched Ben's arms above his head, then kissed him open-mouthed. They tasted each other, tasted themselves, and it tasted sweet.

Making the way back to the House, Tom's mood became darker. "I won't do it," he stated again. "I don't think it's right and I won't do it."

"But the Reverend Boulind's a master, Tom," responded Ben, "and now that Lawton's gone, you're not fagging for anyone."

"It's not the fagging I mind," said Tom. "Fagging's part of School tradition. I don't much like the tradition, but I respect it. But I think a junior should have some rights. He must have choice in the matter. I'll fag for Merry, I'll fag for Sweet, but I will not fag for Rev. Boulind."

Ben sighed. He knew that Tom in defiant mood would not shift; there was going to be trouble. Twice, since Lawton had gone, Chaplain Boulind had sent messages announcing Tom would fag for him in future; twice, Tom had politely declined. There was going to be trouble. While it was unusual for a master to request a junior to fag for him, it was not entirely unknown. Of course, it was not referred to by the masters as 'fagging' but, nevertheless, that's what it amounted to.

Chaplain Boulind had summoned Tom from Prep. Since the master did not explicitly state it was for fagging duties, Tom had to answer his call. To do otherwise would have been churlish. He was ushered into Mr. Boulind's study in silence. A lump came to Tom's throat. This had been Robert's study. He was not about to sit at Matthew Boulind's feet, making tea and toasting muffins, for a master who treated the juniors as if they were his personal property.

“Why didn’t you run my bath and get my breakfast, you idle ruffian?” inquired Boulind coldly. Tom could hardly believe his ears. This was a man of the cloth addressing him in terms even a Sixth Former would not employ.

“I am neither idle nor a ruffian,” said Tom.

“Then, lummo, what do you mean by not doing your work?”

“It is not my work,” said Tom, his chin set in the bulldog mould of the Browns who had fought so nobly at Waterloo, Balaclava and Ypres.

“Look here, Brown,” said Boulind, when he convinced himself that he had heard correctly, “don’t play any of your little games with me, or you’ll be sorry for it. You were Lawton’s fag. Lawton is gone. I have taken over this room in order that I can be closer to you boys. In order that I can take better care of your spiritual and physical needs. I believe you served Lawton well. I shall use you as he used you. I know Lawton and you were close, very close. I shall treat you well. You are a good-looking boy. A fine rugby player. A leader amongst the juniors. You will do well under me.”

“I am not your fag, Reverend sir. I will not fag for you,” repeated Tom, blushing, very determined and not a little angry.

Boulind was more than angry. This cool defiance on the part of a junior was too much for anyone’s civility. How dare Brown decline his invitation? “Stuff and nonsense, Brown,” he said, catching the boy by the arm.

Tom wrenched his arm away and stood dogged and silent. Nothing could have irritated Boulind more. To be defied and resisted by a junior was an entirely novel experience. He stepped closer to Tom. “What a good-looking boy,” thought the blue-jawed cleric. He attempted mollification.

“Now, Brown, be reasonable,” he said, dropping his voice. “I know how much you must miss Lawton, but you’ll get over it. I’ll get you out of Prep. You can do it here. We can get to know each other well — very well.” The final phrase was accompanied by Boulind’s fingers brushing Tom’s corduroyed bottom.

Stunned, Tom stepped back towards the study door.

“Are you going to do what you are told, or not?” demanded Mr. Boulind, the amiable mask slipping away.

“Not what you tell me,” replied Tom as boldly as he could.

Boulind, face crimson, stepped forward and gave the boy a sharp box on the ears. Tom recoiled for a moment, but only a moment. He had expected worse. If that was all, he would brave it out yet. “Don’t you hit me!” he said defiantly.

The chaplain could not stand to be defied by a younger boy. His vanity was his weak point, and nothing offended his vanity as much as having what he saw as a generous offer spurned by a junior. He took up a Bible, and in his fury, flung it at Tom's head, striking him hard on the cheek. The blood flushed to the boy's face as he stared back in disbelief, smarting with pain and indignation. Then he rushed blindly in and flung himself upon the bully, entirely forgetting that this was a master.

[Ah, dear reader, if this were plain fiction, we might have Tom overcoming his adversary, forcing him to the carpet, straddling him, pinning his shoulders to the floor, and as the older boy lay there, mouth agape, we might have Tom... but why speculate? why hypothesise? It was in reality no match.]

Boulind was indeed taken aback by the passion of his young assailant, but that was all. He might have held Tom off with a single hand, for he was a well-built, athletic chap; he might have carried Tom under one arm out into the corridor; he might have dumped him on his bed and left laughing. But an evil spirit had been roused within him, and that spirit knew no mercy. He struck out at the boy as if they had been equals in size and strength. For every wild blow Tom aimed, Boulind punched him with cold, calculated cruelty, his stiffening cock signifying his unstated intent. As Tom wavered, Boulind followed in as he would in a professional boxing encounter and hurt Tom again and again. And when at last the younger boy gave up, exhausted, bleeding, stretched beneath his foe, the Reverend administered a parting slap across his face, which, if he had struck no other blow, stamped him as a coward.

"Now!" hissed Boulind, looking down on his victim, "will you do what you are told?"

It was a critical moment for Tom. A single word would save him. He might not even have to fag for Boulind; after all, news of such an assault on a junior boy in these informal circumstances would lead to instant dismissal; whereas if he again denied his persecutor... Tom could see the swollen bulge in the man's trousers.

Fate rarely comes to the aid of the persecuted; at that moment it did. The door opened and Mr. Cornish entered. Tom, his wits intact, scrambled to his feet and slipped to the open door, mustering enough energy to cry as loudly as he could: "No, I won't!" And with that made good his escape along the corridor and down to the junior dorms.

Back in the dorm, Tom's friends were at hand to aid in stanching the blood from his nose, and to apply a cold apple to his blackening eye. Tom told the story of his desperate encounter, leaving out any mention of Robert or of Boulind's attempt on his virtue.

"But, Tom, you must report the bounder," cried Theo Rycroft.

"It won't do any good," pronounced Peter Lane.

"But he can't get away with this," protested Lance Clifton.

"But he will," pronounced Peter with a grim certainty, though he refused to elaborate further.

"Mr. Cornish saw it," added Ben Fitzroy-McKean. "He's duty-bound to report it."

"He won't," said Peter.

Strategies and stratagems were proposed, examined and abandoned. If Tom refused to take the matter up with Dr Sweet, there was little they could do. After all, Tom had refused to serve a master, unheard of in the history of the school. Much depended on the attitude taken by Mr. Cornish. Since he was not on duty — though he was in the House — they must wait on the morrow for his verdict.

An hour later, as the boys lay in their beds waiting for 'lights out', their Micawberish wish was granted. Mr. Cornish put in an unexpected appearance. He approached Tom's bed — the boy was sitting up — and examined from a distance his blackened eye and swollen lips.

"Why, Brown," exclaimed Mr. Cornish, as if the damage was entirely unexpected, "what have you been doing to yourself?"

"Nothing, sir," responded Tom.

"How did you come by that black eye? And your lips are unnaturally swollen. I repeat, what have you been doing?"

"Fighting, sir."

"Ah, boys will be boys," sighed Mr. Cornish. A fart from Peter Lane's direction rasped the air. The master ignored it. "I'm afraid you got the worst of the encounter."

"The fellow was older than me," said Tom. The dorm held its collective breath.

"Older than I, Brown. Older than I," corrected Mr. Cornish, somewhat pedantically in the circumstances. "Now I don't want to know what the fight was about though I dare say you'd like to tell me. Nor do I wish to

know the identity of the other. You boys have such peculiar reasons for fighting that..."

"But, sir, this was because..."

"Hush! Didn't I tell you I won't hear about it?" Mr. Cornish grew stern. "And I don't think any other master would wish to hear about it either. Did you shake hands afterwards?"

"No, I didn't, and I won't!" exclaimed Tom, forgetting in his indignation to whom he was speaking.

"Won't? Won't? Won't me no won'ts, sirrah," cried Mr. Cornish sharply. "As I suspected, Brown, you are no School boy. You have never appreciated the traditions of this great School of ours. You are an outsider. An intruder. You, sir, are plebian!" The sentence of doom was merciless. "So," continued the master in milder tones, "write out one hundred lines of poetry from your Palgrave. On my desk, tomorrow evening, six o'clock." He turned to address the dorm. "Now, sleep, boys, sleep. Knit up the ravelled sleeve of care. Forget your troubles. Come on, be happy. And sleep!" He strode from the room, a man among boys, a boy among men, followed by another rasping fart from Lane's bed. Oddly enough, Mr. Cornish chose to ignore this flatulent farewell.

The dorm was in darkness, heavy curtains drawn, radiators gasping and wheezing in geriatric unison. Tom still sat up in bed, rather dazed by what had happened. It was not the pain in his face; that had subsided to a dull ache; it was the pain in his heart, the pain of betrayal. He had not expected a master to take his side against a colleague, but he had expected, if not sympathy, a certain neutrality, and not the outright hostility he had experienced from his tutor. He was not a boy to weep though he felt like weeping. He would weep for Robert, not for men like these.

He sensed rather than saw a figure pad across the dorm. Though it hurt a little he smiled. Ben had come to comfort him. He felt the blanket and sheet drawn back; the dorm was so over-heated it came as a relief. He felt the boy sit at the edge of the bed, felt fingers tug at the drawstrings of his pyjamas. He was in no mood to resist. He raised his bottom and allowed the fingers to slide the pyjamas down his legs. The fingers folded round his flaccid penis, gently squeezing it to life. He leaned back and relaxed, saying nothing. He closed his eyes. His penis sprang to attention. Good little soldier, always ready for duty. He felt warm lips close over the swelling head. He smiled a little to think what his swollen lips would feel

like around another boy's hard-on. The head at his naked crotch was bobbing now, hot lips sliding the full length until his member was engulfed to the hair at its base. Ah, sweetest of balms!

Lips at his lips. A tongue probing for entry. He surrendered and let it slide into his mouth. Saliva mingle with saliva. A mouth on his mouth. A mouth round his cock. Two mouths! His eyes flew open. "Shhh..." That was Ben. Ben's mouth at his ear. "Close your eyes, Tom. We're your friends. Close your eyes." Too tired to fight, he closed his eyes. Tiny kisses across his face. He recognised those kisses. Ben's kisses were like butterfly wings. He felt the hot mouth around the head of his cock, sucking him to the collar of his foreskin. Another mouth lapped at his balls, slid up the shaft as far as it could go, then wrapped itself round the lower half of his jerking penis. Cool fingers urged his legs apart. A pillow pushed in under his bum. Hands pulled him apart. He felt the brush of silken hair between his legs, between his thighs, then a hot wet tongue stroking the oval ring of his rectum. Hands held his bum checks apart. Fingers stretched his sphincter open. A full wet kiss on his anal ring. A tongue probing, penetrating. A mouth at his mouth. A mouth round his cock. A mouth sucking at his bum hole. His pyjama tops were eased off. A giggle. That was Peter Lane! Lips on his nipples. Pulling, teasing, squeezing, sucking. Lips, fingers, hands, mouths, hair, skin, kisses, hot, wet, sweat, smells, touch, taste, here, there, everywhere.

Deep inside, the tongue was replaced by a finger. Deeper, harder, faster, until... until... too much... too much... cocks and hands and mouths... not fingers... cocks, hot hard cocks... touching him, here, there and everywhere... the head bobbing faster, lips gripping... the finger, one finger, no, two, sawing in his hole... hot hard sweat... stop! stop! Oh, never stop!

Tom's body trembled and shuddered, a knee juddered out of control, muscles in his stomach leapt frantically... eyes rolled in his head... a hot mouth covered his own... "Ah! Ah! Ah!" He was cuming, squirting, jetting, balls so tight they hurt, spurting into the mouth that still bobbed on his cock. He gripped someone's back so hard the boy cried: "Tom! Tom!" And slowly, oh so slowly, he sank back into sweet bliss, clouds of comfort that held him like a baby in its warm embrace. Hands, lips, mouths were gone. Pyjama bottoms tenderly eased back on.

Someone slipped into bed beside him. Arms slipped around him. He snuggled into them. “Hi, Tom.” “Hi, Ben.”

“I’m sleeping here tonight,” whispered Ben.

“But... matron...”

A finger touched his lips. “Peter’s alarm is set for 6. He’s in bed with Theo. Lance is in bed with Graham. I’m the lucky one. I’m in bed with you. Good night, Thomas Brown.”

“Good night, Benjamin Fitzroy-McKean.”

Good night, sweet princes.

The next day dawned as next days will to find Tom much-restored in health and spirits. A good half-hour was spent with Theo raking through Palgrave’s Golden Treasury to discover the poem with the shortest lines. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner was selected. Tom was somewhat perplexed by the archaic nature of the language but relieved when Theo made an exciting discovery.

“I say, Tom,” cried Theo as his friend laboriously began ‘It is an Ancient Mariner.’ “Your handwriting is practically identical to mine. And I write much faster than you. You shall start at the beginning of the poem; I shall start at the end! Then we’ll get Cornish’s imposition done in half the time.” Delight flickered across Tom’s face followed by a frown.

“No, Theo, I can’t let you do that. It’s dishonest. And, besides, it’s far too dangerous.”

“Stuff and nonsense!” cried Theo. “Mr. Cornish has behaved like a bounder. You did nothing to deserve the lines. He did nothing to protect you. You owe that man nothing. He doesn’t even read lines, you know. He tears them up in front of you and throws them in the waste paper basket. So, let’s hear no more about it. Let’s get on with it. We’ve got better things to do on a glorious morning like this.”

Tom sighed. “Thanks, Theo.” He paused, then, “Just what are you doing this morning?”

Theo blushed. “I’m going bird-spotting, actually. With Peter. He’s going to show me some special places down in the woods.” Tom tried his best to hide a grin. He bent his head over the greyish-white, blue-lined paper and continued writing, but boy that he was, he could not resist a low-pitched wolf-whistle that had Theo blushing to the roots of his blond fringe.

How Theo and Peter spent the morning I leave to the reader’s imagination. With determination Tom went about his business, expecting

that a summons from Boulind would put him to the necessity of a renewed struggle. As the day wore on, however, he relaxed more and more, especially when Merry, friend to Robert and Captain of the First XV, hailed him.

“You’re a bit battered, Brown, but you’ll have to do.”

“Sorry, Merry, I don’t...”

“Fagging, Brown, fagging. In future, you will fag for me. Which means, of course, that you can fag for nobody else. Nobody else.” The Sixth Form prefect smiled. “But I’m afraid you’ll have to do Prep. No malingering in my study. I’m not Lawton, you know. Of course, it’s up to you. If you’re not agreeable...”

“I am. I am,” protested Tom.

“Good. That’s settled. Start Monday. Six o’clock sharp.” Merry turned on his heel and headed for the House. He stopped, turned his head and called, “Robert would be proud of you, Tom,” turned and strolled away.

“Six o’clock sharp.” An alarm bell sounded in Tom’s head. Six o’clock. The lines. Mr. Cornish. He retrieved them from the dorm and hared off to the masters’ quarters. Second floor. He’d never been in sir’s study though he’d seen it from the outside, sitting on a snow-laden bough with Robert watching... He knocked at the door. No answer. He knocked again. “Wait!” came the imperious call. Tom waited and waited and waited. A good fifteen minutes ticked by. Finally, “Enter.”

Tom turned the handle, pushed open the door and stepped inside. It took his eyes a few moments to adjust to the darkness. The room was lit by two-lamps and a fire sputtering in the hearth. It looked odd seeing the room from this angle, but Tom recognised enough to put a naked Mr. Cornish straddled by a naked young chaplain in place. This seemed to put things in perspective. Cornish shrank in size and menace. “Ah, here’s our young warrior, come to make amends,” the master remarked.

Tom realised the remark was not addressed to him. He shifted his gaze from the desk to the low-lying couch in the left hand corner, almost hidden behind the open door. He stepped beyond the door. On the couch, smirking, stretched out in an insolent manner, sipping from a cut-glass tumbler, lay the Rev. Matthew Boulind!

“The lines if you please,” said Mr. Cornish. Tom stepped forward and handed them to the master. “On the desk if you please.” Tom laid the papers on the desk. “And now the apology please.”

“I’m sorry, sir...” Cornish cut him short.

“Oh, not to me, Brown, not to me.” Behind the master’s impassive face flickered a smirk. “To Mr. Boulind. An apology is most certainly owed to Mr. Boulind. And after the apology, you may express your delight at being invited to serve the House chaplain.” Colour had drained from Tom’s face, highlighting the black and blue bruises. “Then you may stay if you wish. All work and no play makes for very dull boys. We’ll be delighted if you stay and play.” From the corner of his eyes, Tom saw Boulind openly stroking his crotch. “Despite your village manners, you are not wholly unattractive, Brown. You could go far in this school, Tom, — I shall call you ‘Tom’ — very far under our, how shall I say, wings.”

If Tom had not felt ill before, he felt sick now. His face was a furious crimson. The courage, the stubbornness, the true grit of the Browns rose up in him. So too did his evenings with Robert Lawton. Tom had learned more than he knew. What would Robert do? Coolly, he replied.

“I’m most awfully sorry, sir, but I cannot accept Boulind’s invitation.” Oh what a sting lay in his use of Boulind’s unadorned surname. “Naturally, I wish to apologise to him. I realise throughout the junior house he is a laughing-stock. I am sure that was never sir’s intention when he beat me. As to fagging, I fear I am already taken.”

Only the hiss of fire and the spit of shale could be heard in that room.

“Who have you been taken by?” hissed the English master in unison with the fire.

“By whom have I been taken?” queried Tom. [Take care, Tom Brown, take care! Never beard a lion in his own den!] “Why, by Eric Merry, Sixth Former, Captain of the First XV, senior prefect, and designated Head Boy.”

Two pairs of glaring eyes bored into the flushed boy’s face.

“Get out.”

“Yes, sir.”

Tom turned to leave.

“And, Brown...”

Tom turned again.

“Watch your rear.”

Tom turned again. He walked out of the study. He closed the door behind him. He leaned against the wall and took five deep breaths, another Lawton lesson. He felt no sense of triumph. He had entered the study with one mortal enemy, now he had two.

Tom shook himself. He was not alone. He had friends, good friends. Ben and Theo. Lance and Graham and Peter. And it seemed Eric Merry. He didn't want a fight, but by God if he had to, he would give a good account of himself. Shaking off his anxiety, Tom hurried from the dark claustrophobia of the masters' block towards the sunnier uplands of the House. Had he been able to observe the next few minutes in Mr. Cornish's study, his smile would have been less sure.

"Calm down, Matthew," the master was saying as he rose from his desk. "Everything comes to him who waits. Perhaps that should be every boy. Now where were we? I think you were just about to take off... One moment, let me dispose of this rubbish." He picked up Tom's lines and stepped to the hearth. About to crumple Tom's work and throw it on the coals, he stopped. "Ah! What's this?"

Mr. Cornish rummaged amongst a pile of exercise books on his desk. He selected one, flicked it open and compared a page with the lines he held in his hand. "Elementary, my dear Boulind. Come and look at this." He held out the open exercise book and a page of Tom's lines. The Rev. Boulind peered at them. What was he meant to be looking for?

"Come now, Boulind. The handwriting is the same, is it not?"

"Yes, it is," said Boulind since that seemed the expected reply.

"But it is not all the same. No, not by any means. I grant you the second half of the Brown's lines are written in the same hand as wrote this exercise book. But the first half is not. Brown may have written, oh, about forty of these lines, but the remainder were written by the owner of this exercise book. Who is... let's see..." He glanced through several more jotters. "Ah, no surprises here... Rycroft, Theo."

Matthew Boulind emitted a low whistle.

"Do not be vulgar, sir. He laid lines and exercise book on the desk, turned his back to the fire and firmly pressed the cleric's shoulders. Mr. Boulind sank to his knees in front of the master. "Do not disturb me. I have some thinking to do.... and Boulind..."

"Yes, sir."

"Be careful, with your teeth."

"Yes, sir. I will, sir."

CHAPTER 8

Perfect Fulness

Where better could we leave him, than at the altar,
before which he had first caught a glimpse of the glory of his
birthright.

“Good morning, chaps,” said Mr. Cornish, his smile as cold as the brass knobs on a coffin. “It appears that this class has become enamoured of poetry; therefore, this morning poetry it shall be.” A collective groan rose from the class. “And I shall be communicating the results to the good Doctor. I am not convinced all of you should remain in this class throughout the year.” Puzzled glances swept through the boys. “But I am a fair man. I shall drop no boy into the lower set without appropriate evidence.” Boys exchanged bewildered looks. It was not unheard of to move boys during the school year, but it was rarely done for academic reasons.

“I had intended to make the Rime of the Ancient Mariner our subject of study, but it would appear some of our number..and here he glanced at Tom and Theo... “have already familiarised themselves with that poem. To the extent of copying it out unnecessarily, I believe. But let that pass.

“Open your Palgrave’s. Page 112. Gray’s Elegy.” A rustle of pages. The English master read the opening lines:

“The curfew tolls the knell of parting day.
The lowing herds wind slowly o’er the lea.”

and indicated Peter. “Lane, what can you tell us about the curfew?”

Peter was well up on the subject of curfews and rattled off a fine, accurate account of a fine old English institution, much to everybody’s satisfaction. Cornish went on repeating two or three verses, pausing to interrogate boys at random, till he came to the line:

“The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep.”

His glittering gaze turned on Tom. “Ah, Brown, this line might have been written just for you. What does it mean?”

Panic rose in Tom’s breast. He hadn’t: the faintest idea. “Four old men?” he suggested hesitantly. No response from Cornish encouraged him to blunder on. “Four rude old men?” Theo kicked him under the desk. “Four rude old men who used to sleep in church, sir?” Suppressed titters around him brought a blush to Tom’s cheeks.

The master did not pass the question on, but sonorously explained the meaning on the line, and then proceeded with the general interrogation. Now and again he stopped short and demanded an explanation of some obscure phrase, the answers to which varied from hazily correct to originally brilliant. Occasionally he asked for a boy to read a few lines but ceased the experiment following an encounter with Peter Lane who spoilt the whole beauty of:

“Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the Poor.”

by reading “anals” instead of “annals”.

When corrected, Peter protested, “But, sir, surely even the Poor have anals. Everybody has an anal. Some maybe shorter than others, but they do have them.”

“That is enough, Lane.”

“Oh, but, sir, just when it is getting interesting, sir. Don’t you have any interest in anals, sir?” A breathless hush filled the room. Even naive, innocent or ignorant boys held their breaths. Lane was outrageous, but surely this was going too far. Man and boy looked at each other, gazes locked, amusement in one pair of eyes, hatred in the other. It was the man who lowered his eyes first.

“Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn,”

continued Cornish. “Brown, your second — and last — chance. Elaborate, please.”

Tom looked at the lines. They swam before him as meaningless as a haggis to a Sassenach. "It's a swine, sir. Pig, sir, perhaps a Berkshire White. That's why it's hoary-headed. Is haply an old form of happy, sir? So the pig's happy, and that's why it's up at the break of dawn, sir. Probably a stud pig. They're best in the morning, doing it, I mean. We've got two at home, on the farm, sir. One's called..." Tom stopped in mid-gabble. He glanced down. On his desk lay his blotting paper. On the paper, scribbled in pencil, was the meaning of the two lines. He had not even been close.

"That will do, Brown." Mr. Cornish rose. "Tell me, Brown, how long have you been in this class?"

"Since September, sir."

"And all the while you have been sitting there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why then, Brown, you have been sitting in the wrong desk. You should be sitting there." He indicated a solitary desk near the front. The desk occupied by Lance Clifton. "You are a dunce, Brown. And that is where dunces sit. Clifton, change places with Brown." Lance hesitated. He was delighted to vacate the dunce's desk but not at Tom's expense. "Now, Clifton, now, if you please. I am not one who waits well." Lance rose and shuffled to Tom's desk; Tom rose and strode, head high, heart-burning, to the dunce's desk. He sat frozen-faced.

The morning ground on. Cornish continued his interrogations, and, as might be expected, Tom gave a miserable exhibition, silent fury annihilating his ability to reason or remember. The simplest question could hardly coax a correct answer out of him, an ordinary enquiry was hopelessly beyond his powers. He mixed up the Cromwells, Richard and Thomas, subtracted what he ought to have multiplied, confused prefix and suffix, and as to French, Latin, Grammar and Pythagoras, knew less than the clock on the wall. The master did not spare him. He went on — ruthlessly exposing Tom's ignorance, first in one thing and then another, apparently oblivious to the fact that he himself had been teaching Tom since September.

The lunch bell rang, releasing Tom in particular and the boys in general from their misery.

"One moment, Brown. One moment, Rycroft." Mr. Cornish summoned Tom and Theo to his desk as the room emptied. "We have some unfinished business." The luckless youngsters stood side by side in front of the seated master. The man drew some papers out of his desk and spread them out

before the boys. They were Tom's lines. A red line ran down the margin indicating those written by Theo.

"You, little boys," said their Form Tutor, "take a word of warning from me. You are not as clever as you would like to be. I have here..." and he picked up the papers... "your future in my hands. If you will but be guided by me, all will be well." He rose and brushed past the boys. He stopped at Tom's desk and opened it. The boys' eyes widened. This was unheard of. Individual desks were sacred. No one, including the masters, had the right to open one without the express permission of its owner. The master's long bony fingers reached in and flicked out a piece of blotting paper.

"Your blotting paper, I believe, Brown. Your handwriting, I know, Rycroft. I warned you I would do nothing without evidence; now, I have it." He returned to his desk, sat, opened a drawer and flung in lines and blotting paper. He looked up at the boys. Brown, grimly, handsomely defiant. Rycroft, tears in his eyes, a tremble at his lips, a blush on his cheeks, so fragile, so exquisite that the man wanted to reach out and brush, his pale, curving neck with his fingertips.

"You boys are in my Form. And you will be for the next three years... if I wish it so. I am not a demanding man. This is how it will be. You may sit together. I admit you look well together. I enjoy watching you." The anticipated nods of gratitude did not come.

"You, Brown, are now Eric Merry's fag. Let it be so. I am a generous man. You, Rycroft, have done no fagging duties this year. You will fag for Chaplain Boulind. No, no... Don't thank me," he continued, deliberately misinterpreting the boys' protests, "You will fag for Boulind, or else..." He let the unspoken threat hang in the air. "Besides, I have already handed in the revised list to Dr Sweet. He has approved the list. Come now, chaps," and here he broke into a wintry smile, "let us be reasonable, for we are all reasonable men with more in common than the world might imagine."

He opened the desk and took out the incriminating evidence. "Why do we need these when we have an understanding? Come now, let bygones be bygones. We are men of honour. Give me your word and I will rip these up, here and now... Come, you know I am not a man who waits well."

Tom turned to Theo. He would have happily strode out of the room, marched to the Doctor, told the entire story, and hang the consequences. He looked at Theo. The boy's eyes brimmed with tears, his lips and shoulders trembled, he looked as delicate as a week-old kitten. No, he could not put

his friend through the storm that would break over their heads if he insisted on the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. They would find some way out, an honourable way, but they would find it another day. He turned to the Form Tutor.

“We give you our word.”

Mr. Cornish beamed, tore the papers in tiny fragments and let them flutter to the floor. He extended a hand to Tom. The boy ignored it. “May we leave now?” he asked. The smile slipped from the man’s face. “Yes.” Tom turned, and ushering Theo by the arm, guided him from the classroom. They walked in silence across the Quad. On the stairs, Theo turned to Tom.

“What shall we do, Tom? What shall we do?”

Tom Brown thought for a moment. Then a smile lit up his face. “We shall survive, Theo. That’s what we shall do we. We shall survive. Because that’s what boys have to do.”

Back in the classroom, Mr. Cornish slid open the drawer in his desk and took out some papers — Tom’s lines and the blotting paper. He looked at the tattered fragments on the floor, the substitute papers, a thin smile curling his lip.

On Monday evening Tom was called to fag for Eric Merry for the first time. He found the Captain of the 1st XV in reflective mood.

“I say, Brown, I must admit I miss old Lawton. Not, I dare say, as much as you, but he was a good egg.” Tom brushed the ashes from the hearth onto a pan. “Generally I don’t approve of seniors and juniors spending too much time together, but you were good for Robert. Brought him out of his shell. Made him smile a lot. More than most of us could do. Put the ashes in that bucket. I’m not so fastidious as Lawton, a bit of mess never did a study or a dorm any harm. By the way, I think you should try out for the 2nd XV.”

Tom looked up. “Do you really think so?” he asked, eyes beginning to shine.

“Mmmm...” murmured Eric, “I can see what Robert saw in you.” He grunted. “Yes, I do. You haven’t got much beef on you yet but you’ve got solid muscles, a fine turn of speed, and you’re too dim to be afraid of anything.” Eric’s laughter took the sting of his last remark. “So, that’s sealed. Wednesday afternoon get down to Short Acre at 2.30. You’re excused, class. I’m taking the 2nds and I’d like to see how you do amongst

bigger chaps. Now stop grinning at me like a Cheshire Cat and get that fire on. It's perishing in here. Looks like the boilers have gone again."

Tom set to the task with a will and soon had a fire roaring in the grate. "By the way, Brown," began Merry again, "your days of skipping Prep are over. As are every juniors. From now on, no fagging's to be done during Prep. I've cleared that with the Doctor. It was announced in Sixth Form library this afternoon. No exceptions. Pop on the teapot and be off. Ten minutes till Prep. There's a good chap. Don't want to make new rules and be the first to break them."

"Yes, Merry. Right away, Merry," grinned Tom.

Back in the dorm, Tom stuffed a few books under his arm. Only Peter remained, the others having filed off to Prep. "I say, Pete, have you seen Theo? He's going to help me construe tomorrow's Latin before Mr. Clifford divides me into three parts!"

"He's upstairs," replied Peter. "The call came half an hour ago. He's gone up to Lawt... I mean, Boulind's." Tom's face fell, his heart skipped a beat. "Well, he should be back by now. He's got to be in Prep. All juniors have got to be in Prep — even me."

The look of concern on Tom's face spread to Peter. "Yes, I heard the new rule," said Fitz. "It's going to be officially announced this evening. Perhaps Boulind hasn't heard."

"Well, he's going to hear it from me. Hold my books for me, Pete. I'll nip upstairs and get him." He passed the books to Peter and flew out of the dorm. Behind him he heard Peter's voice, "Don't worry, Tom. Theo will be all right."

If either Peter Lane or Tom Brown had been able to see Theo Rycroft at that moment, they would have seen he was not all right, and he was not 'only fagging'. Nor was he in Chaplain Boulind's study. True, he had been in the senior's study half an hour ago, but now both Theo and Boulind were in Mr. Cornish's study in the masters' block, which may have been in order for a senior but was quite out of order for a junior. Theo had protested, only to be over-ruled vigorously by Boulind who suggested it would be in Tom's best interests as well as his own to attend the audience granted by the senior English master.

"So, I'm afraid that's the way it is," Mr. Cornish had told Theo. "You see, I've had second thoughts, and I can't see how I can let the matter pass. Not only did you do most of Brown's lines for him, almost forgivable, but

you slipped answers to him, on blotting paper, while I was conducting an official *viva voce* test. You do realise that is a breach of honour, don't you, Rycroft? You do realise that means expulsion when I report it to the good Doctor."

Tears glittered in Theo's eyes as he stood on the carpet before the master's desk. The flames from the fire made his eyes sparkle even more, bringing out the fireflies of gold that matched his hair. He had never felt so alone. The hurt and humiliation was doubled by the presence of Boulind stretched smugly on the low couch sipping what Theo recognised as whisky. Whisky had been his father's favourite drink before... He shut the image out of his mind. He had enough pain as it was. Why couldn't he be brave and courageous like Tom, or even like Peter Lane? He loved Tom, he adored Peter. Why couldn't they be with him now? They'd know what to do. They always did. Why did he have to be so much like his mother—delicate, timid, fearful? His voice caught in his throat. "I'm sorry, sir. It was my idea, not Brown's. He didn't know I was going to pass the note on his blotting paper."

"Ah, that makes everything so much better," smiled Mr. Cornish ingratiatingly. "Only you will be expelled. Brown will remain here with us. Where you will find a berth, I won't hazard a guess. You know, of course, that no good school will take you when your dishonour is made public. Perhaps one of the minor schools will have. Perhaps not. But then, there's always these new grammar schools. You're a bright boy, if a foolish one, so life among the *hoi polloi* might suit you admirably."

A tear rolled down Theo's cheek. He had tried to will the tears back, but he just couldn't. Tear followed tear.

"Now, now, old chap, be brave," continued the master. "It doesn't have to be this way, you know. You don't have to be expelled. Your punishment, like you, lies in my hands." The man rubbed his hands together and entwined his fingers.

Hope sprang in Theo's breast. He sniffed back his tears. He thought of his mother. He thought of the disgrace. He thought of losing Peter and Tom. "Anything, sir. Anything!"

"Anything." Cornish repeated the word with a grim finality. He rose and took down the cane that hung by his desk. He bent it into a crescent moon, then released it with a swish that cut through the air. "Anything."

Peter gulped. He did not like pain; he never had. But he could stand it. He had to stand it, for Peter, for Tom, for himself. He braced himself in his corduroys, sports shirt, stockings and plimsolls, trying not to tremble.

“Undo yourself, boy,” said Mr. Cornish, pulling over a high, dais chair to the centre of the room. The seat of the dais chair was four feet from the floor, with a high back that had an opening between the seat and back panel. This one was made of oak and clearly had absorbed many years and many backsides. Theo let his shorts fall to the floor, absurdly glad that he was wearing fresh underpants. “Over here, boy” said Mr. Cornish. “Assume the position.”

Theo approached the chair and bent over. The positioning of the back panel meant he had to slip his head through the gap. It was highly uncomfortable until Mr. Cornish, stepping around the chair, pulled his arms through the gap. That was quite comfortable but utterly humiliating as Theo found himself helpless, his arms dangling to the floor, his bottom raised high. He started to protest but then checked himself. The quicker it was over the better.

“As I lay me down to sleep, I pray...” In his mind, the boy began whispering his bed-time prayer. He heard the cane cut the air behind him as Mr. Cornish tried a few practice strokes. He had just reached “before I wake” third time round when he felt his underpants yanked to his ankles. The boy gasped audibly. Surely sir was not going to cane him on his bare bottom. Not even seniors were permitted that degree of punishment. It was too much, too much for his little soul to bear. The boy burst out in tears.

“Shhh... shhh... There, boy, there. I would not damage such skin for all the world.” He felt the master’s hand run across the bare skin of his bottom, hands separate his bum cheeks, a finger tip ... [Dear Readers, even now I hear you plead, ‘Spare us the sordid details, O, spare us!’]

At first Theo could not, would not believe what was happening. As realisation forced itself upon him, he stuttered his fear. “D-don’t, s-sir, p-please, don’t.”

“Ah, so we are not entirely innocent,” he heard Cornish whisper. “This may hurt, Rycroft, but only for a little while. Then you’ll like it. Isn’t that right, Matthew? It hurts at first, then you learn to like it.” The tone of the man’s voice changed. “Matthew, tend to Rycroft’s tears. There is no one else in the building, except, ah listen...” From somewhere in the building came the distant strains of Wagner. “The good Doctor rides with his

Valkyries this evening. Otherwise, all are gone for early supper. Nevertheless, we do not want to disturb the evening, so please keep Rycroft's mouth occupied if necessary. I want to enjoy this lovely, lovely boy before..."

Mr. Boulind stepped in front of Theo, his crotch level with the trapped boy's face. Theo could not see the man's face but he could see the bulge in his trousers. Boulind was hard, very hard. Theo saw Boulind's fingers slide into view, saw the fingers slide open his trouser buttons, fumble in his flies and pull out a long, thin cock. The hand gripped the cock and ran the head across Theo's face, leaving behind a sticky trail of pre-cum. It was hard to concentrate on the cock. Fingers had edged open his bum cheeks. There was something warm and wet, touching him, touching him there, in the place where only Peter had ever...

* * *

Tom burst back into the dorm. "He's not there. Boulind's not there either. The study's empty. It's empty, Pete. Where can they be?" The boys stood dumb-founded. Then... "Cornish. That's where he is, Tom! I'll bet a week's tuck on it."

"Let's go," said Tom.

"Right, but just a mo'," called Peter, pausing to rummage in his bedside cabinet. "Found it," he said. "Just in case." The two boys leapt down the stair and sprinted past the Duty Master. As they ran across the Quad, Peter panted, "What are we going to do, Tom? We can't just barge in. All hell will break loose if we've got it wrong. Not even I will be able to do anything about it."

"This way," cried Tom, taking a U-turn that would lead them to the rear of the masters' block, to Founder's Tree, to the window of Mr. Cornish's second floor flat. They scrambled up the tree, oblivious to the scratches and abrasions on their bare legs. Cautiously, they edged along the branch until they sat facing the window. There was little light in the study, a lamp or two perhaps, and a flickering fire. But light there was, and there was more than enough to see what was happening.

Mr. Cornish's trousers and underwear were down. His naked crotch was pressed against the naked buttocks of a boy. The boy was kneeling, head and hands forced through the gap in a dais chair. On the other side of the

chair stood Mr. Boulind, naked from the waist down. "Don't, please, don't," whispered Peter, "Theo can't even take my middle finger."

The boys scrambled down out of the tree. They faced each other, panic-stricken. "Let me think," whispered Peter. "No time for that," cried Tom, picking up a large stone. "I'm going to heave this through the window."

"Yes, do that, Tom," said Peter excitedly, "but not until you hear..."

"Hear what? Hear what?" asked Tom urgently.

"You'll know," said Peter taking something from his pocket. A key glinted in the moonlight. "Wait till you hear it, then though the window..." He dashed off into the darkness.

Peter took the stairs three at a time. He'd often mounted those stairs in the dark; they held no terrors for him now. He reached Cornish's study. On the wall of the corridor was a small glass box. Peter snatched, up a small bronze statue and smashed the box. Fire alarms throughout the building exploded in an almost unbearable jangle. Outside, Tom threw his stone. It smashed through the window in a second explosion. Inside the room, there was a scream. Peter threw open the door. There was a tableau that Peter Lane described again and again throughout his life.

Cornish had unplugged himself and scrambled to the window. Theo in panic had bitten down hard. The Rev. Boulind was leaping around the carpet clutching his groin. Theo was struggling to free himself from the chair.

Peter dashed into the room, freed Theo, grabbed the boy's shorts and underpants, scooping up the master's trousers and underwear along with them, and dragged the astonished junior out of the door. Peter slammed the door behind him and slipped a key out of his pocket into the door; he turned the lock, leaving the key there. Voila!

Shouting to make himself heard above the din of the alarm, Peter helped Theo into his shorts, stuffing the underpants into his pocket. "Come on, Theo. We've got to get out of here. Doctor Sweet's using the Music Room upstairs. He'll check and trace the alarm to this corridor." He pointed to the broken glass outside the English master's door. Down the stairs they flew, hand in hand, out of the door, and round to the rear of the building. Tom grabbed Theo's free hand and, linked together, the boys ran along the perimeter of the Short Acre, taking them to the back door of the House.

Bedlam reigned in Prep. Boys poured out of the building, onto the lawn, across the Quad, and headed for Founder's Block. No word had been given

of a fire drill. This must be the real thing. Fire! Fire! What manner of boys do not rush towards that sound?

Upstairs in the dorm, Tom and Peter sat on either side of Theo. “Those filthy beasts,” said Tom. “You’re not hurt, are you? Not too badly. Should we fetch Matron?”

Theo was indignant. “No, you will not fetch Matron. My bumhole’s a bit sore, and I want to wash my mouth out, but otherwise I’m all right.” Peter cuddled Theo openly. “You wash your mouth out, Theo. Let me see to your bumhole. I’ll kiss it better.” Theo laughed. “You’re impossible, Peter, but maybe a little cold cream... Seriously though, what do you think is going to happen?”

“Nothing much to us,” said Peter, “but I wouldn’t give a toss for Mr. Cornish’s chances. I don’t see how he can explain being locked in a room with no trousers and a House chaplain bitten about the cock. How badly did you bite Boulind?”

Theo ran his tongue around his mouth. “Not too badly, but I drew blood.”

Peter addressed himself to Tom. “I’ll take Theo to the bathroom. He can start with a shower. You go back to Founder’s Block. Keep your eyes open and report back when the brouhaha dies down.” Tom went and returned in twenty minutes, shepherded along with the entire House, by senior prefects Sweet and Merry. The House and School were agog. Mr. Cornish had been led away by Doctor Sweet towards Headmaster’s House; Mr. Boulind, his modesty covered by a towel, had been led away, clutching his groin, by Matron to the Sanatorium. Theory after theory, hypothesis after hypothesis, ran through the School like ripples on a windy lake. Tom, Peter and Theo listened and offered no comment despite intense curiosity from Ben, Lance and Graham.

Bed time was postponed, but finally around ten o’clock, juniors were herded into bed with ‘lights out’ following more or less immediately. A whispering sort of silence fell on the dorms. A few minutes later, Tom’s bed lamp was switched on. The boys looked across the room. Eric Merry was standing by Tom’s bed. He signalled in silence for the six boys to get up quietly and go to Lawton’s study. He switched the light off and followed them.

In Lawton’s study, once Robert’s, then Boulind’s, now Merry’s, Michael Sweet sat in the armchair. Merry took his place behind the desk and

signalled to the boys to seat themselves as best they could. Three sat on the couch, three on the floor, backs against the others' knees.

"Listen carefully, chaps," began Merry, "I'm only going to say this once. Mr. Cornish left the school tonight. He has had what is called 'a nervous breakdown' of the type which ends a master's teaching career. He will not be returning to this or any other school. Mr. Boulind has been taken to General Hospital. He, too, will not be returning. You know absolutely nothing about what happened this evening. None of you was there. Is that understood?"

Tom, Theo and Peter nodded first; Ben, Lance and Graham joined in.

"As from tonight, fagging is ended in this school," added Michael Sweet. "That comes from the top." Michael smiled. "Let's not look so grim, chaps. In future, things are going to get better in this school. And you are part of that future. Understood?"

A sweet chorus of 'Understood' was the collective reply.

"Now off you go and get your beauty sleep. Eric and I are duty 'masters' this evening. All doors and windows have been secured. We will not be downstairs again tonight, but no noise, please — well, not too much."

The boys rose to go. At the door Tom turned round. He felt a lump in his throat. This room meant so much to him. He was glad that Eric Merry had taken it over. "Thanks, Merry. Thanks, Sweet," he said, on behalf of all the juniors in School, as much as himself.

"Thank you, Tom Brown," smiled Michael Sweet.

"Good night, sweet princes," said Eric Merry.

In the dorm, the boys pulled all the beds into the centre of the room, made one huge bed and climbed in. Arms were wrapped around arms, legs around legs, bottoms touched stomachs, lips breathed against lips. Like kittens, they lay in the warmth of each other's presence; like children far away from home, they lay in the security of affection; like friends, they lay in the trust they had for each other. Sleep smoothed the furrows from their brows, kissed their tired eyes, and stole away the cares of the day. Listen! You can just hear some final whispers:

"Isn't life an awfully big adventure?" Perhaps that was Theo.

"Yes, and it's only just begun." That was surely Peter Lane.

And now, dear reader, we are at the end of our story, though in a real sense it is a never-ending story, and there remain only the usual "last

words” before we shake hands and say farewell.

The House flourishes still, and only last weekend beat School by two wickets! The captain of the First XI is a fellow called Tom Brown, who carried his bat for sixty nine in the second innings. He is a big fellow, is the captain, and has got a moustache. He is a popular chap, and fellows say there never was such a good Sixth at the school since the days of Sweet, Merry and Lawton. The captain is an object of special awe amongst the House juniors who positively shiver, shake and tremble when he does bed-duty.

The big cricket match against School I spoke of just now was a famous event for more reasons than one. The chief reason, of course, was the glorious victory of the House; but another notable reason was the muster of old boys who turned up to witness the exploits of the “young ’uns”.

Look! There is Eric Merry, for instance, smoking a fat cigar, strolling the grounds arm in arm with Michael Sweet, an inordinately handsome young man with flame-red hair. There is Robert Lawton, seated in a deckchair, watching Tom make his runs. At his feet sits Ben Fitzroy-McKean. Look how their eyes sparkle as they” watch Tom reverse-sweep a ball for four runs. How reckless! How typical! Look! You almost missed the way Robert ran his hand through Ben’s hair, the way Ben leaned into Robert’s knees, the way Robert’s hand rests casually on Ben’s shoulders. Look! Tom has made his fifty! He salutes the crowd, modestly, with imperceptible nods towards the two friends he cares for most in the world.

Let us leave our heroes in their youth and in their glory. They have had their full share of trouble — what real hero has not? — but they have come out of the ordeal purified and strengthened, with nobler aspirations, and tender thoughts of helpfulness towards those needing succour.

THE END (?)

Let us leave Tom in the midst of those who have loved him most, and give thanks that we, if only as guardians, have been able to partake in some small measure in the pains and pleasures of The Real Tom Brown’s School Days.

THE REAL END

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By the author of:
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