

With grateful thanks to both Ric Pollard, with whom the original story and characters were developed, and to Rob for his many invaluable suggestions as the rest of the saga has unfolded.

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Synopsis of Bare Ben Book One

Provincial England, early 1990s.

Ben hates his circumcision. He lost his long, perfect foreskin just days before his 18th birthday when Roger, his stepfather, set things up so that a "routine" medical check-up included an unnecessary circumcision. Ben does his best to hide his hated new state, but word gets round and, on his last day at school, he over-hears his new nickname – "Bare Ben."

A few months later, now at university, Ben struggles to establish rapport with his public-school roommate Christopher. Things start to thaw between them when Ben discovers that Christopher is also circumcised and they somehow bond when Ben opens up about his distress over the loss of his foreskin. Christopher, to Ben's massive relief, tells him about lube.

Soon after, Ben runs into Mike, the nurse who assisted at his circumcision. During their chat it becomes apparent how the unwanted circumcision had been engineered. With the truth discovered, although they know nothing can be done as he was quite within his rights to ask for Ben to be circumcised, the police call on Roger at work, only to discover that he has vanished, taking a large amount of his company's and wife's money with him.

Ben spends a weekend with his natural father who, despite Ben's efforts to hide the shame of his circumcision from him, finds out about it. He re-assures Ben that it looks good and tells him of his past history with Roger, his ex-best friend, and how it was possible that Roger's action was taken in revenge for a past wrong.

Two years later, Christopher and Ben are on holiday with their partners when they happen to come across Roger. With Roger finally in jail for embezzlement, Mike, who is now working as a prison nurse, manages to give Roger a "revenge" circumcision.

As part one ends, Ben and his new wife discover that they are to have a baby boy. To Ben's enormous distress, he discovers that non-religious Bekky is intent on having the boy circumcised to honour her Jewish heritage.

Bare Ben - Book Two

The Gite

by Gareth Walton

Part One: Rory

Chapter One

“Look, I just don’t get it,” said Ben. “We’ve just had a bacon sandwich for breakfast, your favourite swear word is ‘Jesus’ and I’ve never known you get within fifty paces of a synagogue if it wasn’t for a wedding or a funeral, so where’s this come from all of a sudden? I just hate the thought of it so much.”

“I know, I know, I know” said Bekky. “It must be hard for you to understand - I can see that. It’s just that it’s important to me, ok? But it’s not just religion. My grandparents – well, it would feel like belittling them and everything they went through if we didn’t do it, and the older I get, the more important it becomes. So sorry Ben, but it’s the way I feel.”

“Anyway,” she went on, suddenly angry, “Look at you talking! You’re hardly mister elephant’s trunk down there yourself, are you, and it’s never bothered you, has it, so what’s the fuss all about all of a sudden? Don’t you want him to be like you? Such a fuss over a tiny bit of skin!”

The conversation, on the day that Bekky’s second scan had shown that their child was going to be a boy, had been devastating for Ben. He had no problem at all with his son being raised Jewish, or at least as nominally Jewish as Bekky was herself, but the thought of him being circumcised appalled him. Somehow, it had just never occurred to him that it would be something that his very secular, anti-Zionist wife would want, and hearing her assumption that it would be done had shocked him to the core.

Although the topic was never very far from Ben’s mind, nothing more was said after that. The trouble was that he just couldn’t be sure how things stood. He knew Bekky well enough to realise that the whole thing might just have been another of her many passing fancies and that she’d completely forgotten that they’d even talked about it, but he also knew that she hated being seen to have backed down after having taken a stand over something. Raising the matter again ran the risk of making her stick to her original position just to save losing face, even if she’d actually forgotten the whole issue in the meantime, but it was equally possible though that her silence meant that she viewed it all as a done deal, and that she was going to stand her ground as a matter of principle, even if she didn’t actually feel that strongly about it. Either way, there was just no easy way for Ben to check that his son’s foreskin was safe.

To his massive relief, Ben’s worry was eased during their third anti-natal class. He had felt his face go instantly red when one of the other mums-to-be had asked about circumcision and was very

pleased to hear the nurse say that it was something that was no longer offered or recommended. It was, she said, now felt to be an unnecessary procedure that had no benefits but which, like any surgery, carried risks. Ben had been very relieved that none of the other parents-to-be had questioned this, but even more relieved, as he monitored her every sign of body language, that Bekky had nodded in all the “right” places as the discussion progressed. When the meeting moved to the next topic, Ben looked around at the other men in the room. He couldn’t help wondering if any of them were circumcised too, and had felt the same anger and shame that he had had at hearing what had been done to him described as something so futile. At least - and this was the most important thing - Bekky seemed to have seen sense on the subject.

There was more relief for Ben when Rory’s eighth day came and went without a Bris ever having been mentioned. Three lives, though, might have worked out very differently if Rory hadn’t been born prematurely, but he was - and his, Ben’s and Rebekkah’s lives all took an un-expected turn as a result. The real irony was that the one thing about Rory’s early arrival that had made life easier at the time turned out to be the very thing that caused his parents’ marriage to collapse. Long before Bekky had found that she was pregnant, Ben had accepted an invitation to give a keynote address at a conference in Bonn. When the pregnancy was confirmed, Ben soon realised that the baby would only be a few days old when he would have to be away and had had the phone in his hand to ring his boss and pull out of the trip when Bekky stopped him. She was adamant that she could manage and that Ben should still go to an event that would be so good for his career. When, in the event, Rory arrived happy and healthy but just a bit before his due date, Ben was still uneasy about going but managed to convince himself that Rory’s early arrival meant that Bekky would be a bit more over the birth and their son that little bit older before he needed to head off and leave them to fend for themselves than if she had gone full-term.

The plan was that Bekky and Rory would go and stay with her mum in London while Ben was away. So, with the car loaded to the roof with baby gear, he dropped them off at Grandma’s house in Hendon on the way to Heathrow. He was very pleased that Bekky wasn’t going to be left alone as he’d had been worried about her for the last few days - she was tired and generally out of salts, finding it harder to cope with a new baby than she’d thought, and Ben was worried that she might possibly have slipped into post-natal depression.

Ruth, Bekky’s mum, had been reluctant to travel since her husband died and Ben was glad to be there to see her delight when she met her new grandson for the first time. She and Ben had always got on well, and he felt reassured that Rory would have his sensible, capable granny to help look after him while he was away.

Ben was already in the departure lounge before Rory finally settled, and his mum and grandma Ruth were finally sitting down with a cup of tea.

“It’s so lovely to have you both here, and I’m really looking forward to tomorrow,” said Ruth. “I’ve arranged a bit of a do to celebrate - it’s so nice to have an excuse for a get together. Your uncles and aunts are all coming, I’ve arranged a nice meal for us, and I’ve asked my friend Emma to come in to do the needful”.

Bekky wasn’t exactly delighted by the thought of a family gathering. Feeling the way she did, she could well have done without the inevitable fuss, but she was so tired that all she did was nod as, knowing her mum, it was always easiest just to go along with her plans. She had never heard Ruth mention Emma before, but it was just like her to splash out and book a caterer when they could have just got a take-away if they really had to have her relations round.

“It’s a pity Ben can’t be with us,” said Ruth, “but I know work has got to come first, especially now he’s got a family to support. And it probably wouldn’t be his kind of thing anyway, so perhaps it’s for the best – he might have found it all a bit much.”

Rebbekah was a bit put out by this. She’d always been pleased by how well Ben and her mum got on so it seemed a bit off that she seemed glad that he wouldn’t be there at a family get-together. She was irked and about to pick her mum up on it, but Rory started howling and the moment passed.

Rory spent an unsettled night, and Bekky felt even more grim the next day than she had before. Her mum’s well-intentioned fussing was starting to annoy her, so it came as a relief when the doorbell rang and Emma arrived - at least Ruth would have someone else to deal with as a distraction. She wasn’t what Bekky was expecting at all. In her late twenties, very smartly dressed and well-spoken, she seemed much more of a “professional” type than Bekky’s image of a caterer. The leather briefcase didn’t seem to fit either, nor that she seemed in no rush to start organising anything in the kitchen. She was, in fact, rather more interested in sitting down for a chat over coffee. Bekky was a bit surprised when Ruth said she’d look after Rory for a bit so the two of them could get to know each other and, after the usual baby-talk pleasantries, she was a puzzled when Emma asked her if she had any questions.

“It’s really no big deal,” Emma added. “There’s no need to worry if he cries a bit at first - they usually do, then just nod off after a moment and just sleep through the whole thing, bless them. It’s a really special moment.”

It was only then that realisation dawned with Bekky. Emma wasn’t a caterer. She was a mohel.

“No no, no, no” said Bekky. “There’s been some misunderstanding here. We don’t want him brissed.”

“There’s really nothing to it,” said Emma. “The yukky bit is over in no time.”

“I don’t know where this has come from. There’s been some muddle here and it’s just not happening, OK?” said Bekky.

Emma reached over and put her hand on Bekky’s.

“There’s no need to be worried – you do want him to be Jewish, don’t you?”

“Well, yes of course I do – but...”

“Well, there you are then! He won’t be properly Jewish until it’s done. It’s all over in seconds, and he’ll not know anything about it, I promise you. And if it’s because you are worried about a woman doing it then...”

“No, it’s not that...”

“I know I’m perhaps not what you were expecting, but there lots of female mohels around these days, and I’ve done loads,” said Emma. “And, if it reassures you, I’m a nurse in “real life”. Emma’s fingers added the quotation marks in the air.

“Once you see the tiny little scrap that comes off then you’ll see it’s no big deal, and you’ll wonder what all the fuss was about.

Bekky’s head swam. In the distance, she heard the door-bell ring.

“Your husband isn’t of the faith, is he?” said Emma. “Is that the problem? Doesn’t he want Rory raised as Jewish?”

“No, no – it’s not that. He’s Catholic, but he’s always understood that our kids would be Jewish, and he’s fine with that.”

“Well, I know that some men who aren’t of our faith are a bit funny about the Bris, and I suppose I can get that, but there are so many benefits apart from the religious stuff. It’s so much cleaner and easier and....”

“Ben’s circumcised, actually,” said Becky, bluntly.

“Well, if his dad’s done, then it will make things easier for him too. Foreskins are complicated things that he wouldn’t understand, and it would be hard for him to teach Rory how to.....”

“Rory’s so small and perfect, I can’t bear the thought of you...”

“Well,” interrupted Emma, “if dad is circumcised then there’s no need for me to tell you how much better it is, is there.”

Bekky could hear the exaggerated conversation in the hall. Both sets of uncles and aunts had arrived and were talking animatedly. She could hear her aunt saying what a great day it was for the family to welcome a new little lad and how glad she was to be there for his big day.

“And,” Emma was saying, “if you don’t mind me saying so, if your husband is circumcised, then I don’t have to tell you how much better it is for us women too!”

Tired and confused as she was, Bekky couldn’t help thinking of how handsome Ben’s penis looked, and how intensely satisfying their sex life had always been.

“Surely, when he’s grown up, you’d want all that for Rory’s partner too?”

“Well, yes, but....”

Ben had never told Bekky the reason why he was circumcised, and it was something that she’d just never really thought about. She knew it wasn’t just Jews and Muslims that got circumcised and, to her, it was just the way some men were - like having freckles or big feet. She knew too from the stories that had sometimes gone around her school that foreskins didn’t always work the way they were meant to and could cause problems which “growing boys” sometimes needed to have sorted out. Ben had been a bit evasive the only time when she’d asked him about it, and he had just hinted that he’d been done as a teenager so, she had always thought, he must have fallen into that “growing boy” bracket too. Perhaps, she had thought, it embarrassed him for some reason, and she hadn’t wanted to push it, especially as it was no big deal for her. From the talk at school, she knew that the couple of boys who had turned up at the start of a new term with a bit of them suddenly missing had been teased mercilessly and she had always felt a bit sorry for them. She hated the idea of Rory having to go through all that if he needed to be done later and, as Ben had obviously had problems as a teen, then it could well happen to Rory too. But even so...

Ruth was glowing as she came into the kitchen, clearly loving being the hostess of “a bit of a do” with all her family around her. She fussed with the kettle and mugs.

“I wish you could have seen my son at his Bris,” said Emma. “He just slept right through. It all healed up in no time and, well, it just looks so neat and cute – you’d never believe there had ever been anything there at all. To be honest, I just can’t imagine him with a foreskin now – it would just look so

wrong, let alone knowing all the hassle he's been saved when he's older. And you know what some boys are like about washing properly so, well - yuk!"

Bekky felt more tired than she could ever remember. She just wanted them all to go away as soon as possible so she could go to bed.

It was late in the evening before Ben was finally able to phone. Bekky sounded tired and not herself at all, and he worried again that she might be starting post-natal depression. Expecting that she'd ask straightaway how his presentation had gone, he was a bit put out when she didn't.

"Listen Ben, I've got something to tell you," she said. "It was a complete misunderstanding – I had no idea that mum had it all arranged."

"What?" said Ben. "What are you on about? Is Rory OK? Is something wrong?"

"No, no – he's absolutely fine. We all are. He's sound asleep and just totally fine. Don't worry – please."

"Just tell me. What's happened?"

"It was because he was premature you see. I hadn't realised. Mum had got it all sorted out in her head and it just never occurred to me. She thought that was why we were coming to stay. It's because he was born two weeks early, so today would have been his "real" eighth day – I didn't realise that's how they work it out when they're premature. And mum – if you could have seen how much it meant to her. I just couldn't let her down. And the woman who did it, she was so nice. She made it seem like, well Ben, are you there? Hello? Say something"

The line was dead.

Chapter Two: The Juice Club

Four years later

“Are you in the special club too, daddy?”

With Bekky having custody of Rory for weekends, Ben was well used to un-tangling his son’s reports of what he had been up to whilst he was her. They usually unfolded whilst Ben was getting him ready for bed once he got him back on Sunday nights. De-cyphering them often took a lot of lateral thinking but, however garbled they might seem at first, there was always some sense in there, and Ben was always curious to keep track of what went on when Rory was under Bekky’s influence.

“What special club is that then, Rory?” said Ben, intrigued.

“It a special club for juice people. Mummy told me about it when I was in the bath with Freddie and Henry.”

To Ben’s annoyance, Bekky had re-married with un-seeming quickness after their divorce and, equally quickly, had twin sons with her new husband.

“Mummy said I’m in the juice club because she is, but not all daddies are, so are you in the juice club like mummy and me?”

Some sort of realisation dawned for Ben.

“Ah - I think you mean ‘the Jewish club,’” he said, smiling.

“I asked her why they’ve got lids on their willies,” said Rory, Ben’s correction completely passing him by.

Ben stopped smiling. “Who has, Rory?”

“Freddie and Henry!”

“Have they now!” said Ben, making sure he laughed as a second and very unwelcome realisation dawned. He had always just assumed that Bekky would have circumcised her twins for the same reasons as she had Rory, and the knowledge that she hadn’t made him instantly furious to the core. He and Bekky had been getting on reasonably well of late, but hearing that her boys remained intact whilst Rory bore the mark of his Bris was a blow that was very hard to take.

“What did she say?” asked Ben, guilty that he was pumping Rory for information, yet needing to know more.

“Mummy said it’s because they aren’t in the special club. She told me that all boys have lids on their willy when they are little babies, but God makes a special promise to boys in the juice club if they take the lids off their willies and give them back to him. That makes them special, and then He’ll take extra care of them.”

Ben nodded. “I see,” he said, grimly.

“I did that, didn’t I Daddy. I gave God my lid back, ‘cos I’m in the special juice club.”

“Yes, you did. When you were just a little baby,” said Ben with a sudden pang of sadness.

“Mummy says you don’t really need a lid on your willy anyway, but Freddie and Henry still have theirs. I asked Mummy why they didn’t want God to take special care of them too, ‘cos that sounds good, doesn’t it Dad.”

“What did she say?” Ben wondered how Bekky had explained away Rory’s perceptive question. He was both and furious and pleased that Rory had accepted the “don’t need them” bit.

“Well, she said that some daddies don’t want their little boys to unscrew their lids, and that Freddie and Henry’s daddy wants them to have willies with lids on, not special ones. And I said to Mummy that I didn’t think that was fair, but she said don’t worry - it’s alright, ‘cos their daddy said they can still be unscrewed when they are big boys, but only if they want.”

Ben couldn’t think of anything that could have made him angrier.

“Mummy said that I was a lucky boy to be unscrewed, but that I mustn’t tease other boys about it if they weren’t lucky, as that wouldn’t be kind. And if nasty boys ever teased me about being unscrewed, then I mustn’t mind ‘cos it was only because they wanted one without a lid like I’ve got, but their mummies and daddies won’t let them.”

“Well, it’s unkind to tease anyone about anything, isn’t it,” said Ben, hoping that the thought Bekky had sown with Rory that he was lucky might at least help him get through the inevitable awkward moments that lay ahead of him when he went to school, moments that he himself had, mercifully, missed.

“I told Mummy that I was glad that you are in the special club too, Daddy, ‘cos you gave God your lid back too, didn’t you.”

Ben was taken aback that Rory had noticed his circumcision. There had only been a couple of split seconds when they were changing for the Aqua-Fun sessions at the swimming pool when he might have seen that was the case.

“No, Rory. I’m not in the special club,” said Ben, sounding more serious than he intended. “But I know that God takes special care of me anyway. He takes special care of everyone, whatever club they are in. There are some boys who have to be unscrewed, even though they aren’t in the juice club. They need to go to doctor because their willies are poorly, and the doctor unscrews their lids for them to make them better, so they look like boys in the special club, even though they aren’t.”

“Was your willy poorly then Daddy?”

“Well, my extra daddy said it was, but it wasn’t – not really. The main thing is, Rory, promise me that that you won’t be sad and cross if anyone nasty ever teases you for having an unscrewed willy, and that you’ll never tease another little boy if his willy doesn’t look like yours either.”

“I won’t Daddy. I won’t be nasty. I promise. Can we go to the park tomorrow?”

It was over.

After he’d read Rory a story, Ben poured himself a large whisky and fought hard against his burning urge to ring Bekky and confront her with his anger. Probably what stopped him was the awful realisation that he was probably more cross with himself than he was with her. What kind of man had he been to pussy-foot around over stopping Rory’s circumcision? Her second husband had obviously just put his foot down when it came to saving his sons’ foreskins, and it tormented him that he had let Rory down so badly by not doing the same thing himself.

Part Two: Return to the Gite

Summer 2016

Chapter One

Seeing his son from the back seat of a car was an unusual perspective. It struck Ben just how strong the short, dark hairs were the back of Rory's neck and how neat the nape was after his first visit to a proper stylist rather than the local barber. As Chris edged the car out from the shade of the ferry terminal and into the strong sunshine, a beam of light illuminated the side of Rory's face, and Ben noticed with a pang that there was stubble there now - no longer just boyish, downy fuzz.

Rory, crammed into the front passenger seat with his guitar case between his knees, was talking excitedly. He'd enjoyed the train ride and the ferry enough, but a spin in Chris's new open-top MGB gt1 was even more to his liking. Ben was touched that his sophisticated, mature and level-headed 17-year-old could still find such childlike enjoyment in it all. Actually, he thought, that was Rory all round at the moment, both mentally and physically. At one moment you'd look at him and see a boy, the next moment a fine young man. As Ben's thoughts drifted, he realised how much of the same sense of boyish adventure had been with him too when, nearly a quarter of a century earlier and only a couple of years older than Rory was now, he'd made this same journey for the first time. This second trip had come out of the blue when Chris had phoned from France the previous week with his invitation. His "Ma and Da," he'd said, had decided to go on a last-minute cruise, so there would be room to spare at the gite if Ben and Rory fancied some time away.

Any time spent with Chris and his husband Mark was guaranteed to be fun, but there was a snag attached to this otherwise welcome invitation. Ben heard from Chris's voice that he realised that too when he had told him that his brother Charles was going to be there as well.

"Don't worry about him," said Chris when, as he had expected, Ben had voiced his concerns about Charles' presence. "He's not so bad really, and I'll set him straight before you arrive so he's on best behaviour. We had to put up with some of his gruesome friends here last summer, so he can't exactly object to you coming. And Rory will be good company for James too, of course."

"Well, I suppose James would be pleased to have someone his own age around," said Ben. "And the two of them have always got on well." It always amazed him that James, Charles's son, was such a nice lad despite having inherited some rather dubious genes from his father.

"Charles hates the idea of James spending so much time around old queens like Mark and I," said Chris, "so having two nice straight men like you around to dilute our bad influence will make him glad to have you here. He's always saying that James is at an impressionable age to keep us on our best behaviour, though God knows what the think's we might get up to."

"He hasn't changed much then." said Ben.

"Only on the surface, I fear," replied Chris. "Old opinions die hard with him. I don't think he's really moved on much since he said he didn't want me to be James's godfather as I wasn't a suitable role-model."

Ben had always thought that Charles Hilton-Smith shared all of Chris's bad points, but with none of his compensating big heart, loyalty and sense of humour. Charles was indeed a rather

particular type - something rather unspecified "in finance", often grotesquely right-wing, and generally self-centred. Although finding that he had a gay brother had at least stopped him from voicing the worst of his views, Charles was certainly in the foothills of homophobia. For Ben, the thought of a week with Charles - all rhubarb coloured trousers, gold-buckled Gucci loafers and wine snobbery - was enough to make him think twice about Chris's invitation, and there was Bekky to consider too. He'd have to get her to agree to Rory making the trip, and trying to guess his ex-wife's reaction to anything was never easy at the best of times.

Ben had told Chris he'd have to think seriously about coming, but he was smiling as he ended the call. The gite. He hadn't thought about the place for a while. Happy memories of the summer he and Chris had spent there as young men flooded back. Their time there during their first university summer vacation had been life-changing for both of them and, despite all the possible problems, Ben couldn't help relishing the prospect of going back and sharing the magic of the place with his son. When Ben rang her, Bekky had actually been very relaxed about relinquishing Rory for few days, even saying that it might do wonders for his French if he struck up with some nice local girls in the village. Ben had laughed when she'd said it, but it unsettled him a little to hear that a new chapter might have started in his son's life since he'd seen him last. Overall, it seemed best to him not to risk spoiling a moment of unexpected parental accord by digging any deeper.

For Bekky, guilt had quickly followed relief after Ben's call. She loved having her oldest son around of course, but things really hadn't been going well since Rory had arrived at the end of the school term. The arrangement made at their divorce had been that Rory lived with his father on school days, but with her for weekends and holidays. Neither of them had ever dared suggesting changing it and, for Rory, it was just the way things were. It had worked well enough in the past but, this time, things had been getting increasingly fractious between Rory and Bekky's other two sons. For Bekky, the prospect of a week's respite from the constant, wearing friction was very welcome, even if it meant losing Rory to get it. It had seemed as if the age gap between Rory and the twins had suddenly widened so much so that it had become un-bridgeable - Rory was a young man now, and the other two still very much boys. The trouble had started soon after Rory had arrived. At first it had been Rory, Maddy and Lucy that were hanging out together, but soon it was just Rory and Lucy. Rory hadn't "made a move" yet and was clearly embarrassed by his first crush. For the twins, for whom girls were still generally annoying and pointless, the idea of Rory being keen on one was a huge joke, and he wasn't coping at all well with their constant teasing. Things had got worse when Bekky had taken the three of them to Centerparks for the day out that she had vainly hoped might bring them together again. When, after the boys had had enough of the rides, she'd waited in the café whilst they went off for a swim. It was busy in the pool, so they'd all had to pack into one cubicle to change. Freddie had started it as they all undressed.

"Eeerr - Rory, that's gross! Does Lucy know you've got one that big?"

"Yeah," said Henry. "It's gross alright, but I bet Lucy loves it."

"Yes, that's the only reason she wants to go out with him."

"I bet she's told all her friends about it - how long and floppy it is. Like a snake. It's disgusting."

"Yeah, and the end bit's missing too."

Things got worse when they'd finished swimming. Rory had been longest in the showers, as Freddie and Henry did little more than rinse their hair. When he'd got back to the cubicle, the twins did one of their favourite tricks and gave him their 'silent statue' treatment. Still naked, they just stood

side by side, completely still and just staring ahead of them as if frozen. Rory, puzzled and exasperated, took a second or two to notice - they had both pulled back their foreskins. Once they saw that he'd realised that, the twins burst out laughing in unison, and it wasn't kind laughter.

"Do you think Lucy would like us too, now we've got weird ones like yours?" said Freddie.

"Rory's end must feel SOO sharp when he sticks it up her."

"Does she like your big, bare willy inside her then Rory, after you've kissed her?"

"Rory loves sticking his big, weird willy in Lucy, don't you Rory."

Luckily, it wasn't many days before Bekky happened to overhear one of the twins' many teasing sessions, but she had waited until they were in bed before tackling them. Rory was on the way back from the bathroom when he'd heard her voice from behind the twins' bedroom door that, unusually, had been shut tight. He wasn't the type to eavesdrop, but he couldn't help lingering for a second in the hope of getting some reassurance that his mum was finally putting a stop to things.

"Listen you two, you're going to have to cut it out, OK?" he heard her say. "It's spoiling things for everyone, and especially for Rory, so it's going to stop, right? Rory didn't choose the way his body is any more than you did, so it's very unfair of you to tease him. I'm really surprised at you for being so unkind. You'll soon realise that boys come in all shapes and sizes, and Rory didn't get any say about being the way he is."

Bekky dismissed the fleeting thought that, actually, she had been responsible for choosing one aspect of the way Rory was.

"But why is the end of his willy like that?" said Freddie, "It looks so weird."

"It's just something that happens to some boys - it's called circumcision, and he had it done when he was small. It just looks a bit different, that's all, and lots of people think it's much better when you've had it done. When you're older and you decide if you want to be Jewish or not, then you might be like that too - it's all a part of it. Or you might just want to be like that anyway - you'll understand it more as you grow up."

Rory, rather relieved, moved quickly back to his room. It was perhaps lucky that he didn't hear the next part of the conversation.

"No way! It looks totally sick," said Henry.

"Yeah, said Freddie, "It's really gross. I'd never want mine to look like that - ever."

"Who would?" said Henry.

"Right, listen," said Bekky, suddenly exasperated. "If you two don't bloody well stop teasing him about it, then I'm taking you both straight off to get you circumcised too - Jewish or not. Do I make myself totally clear?"

Chapter Two: La Suite D'hote

When they arrived, Ben was delighted that, two decades on, so little about the gite seemed to have changed. The house was smart now, only the “cowshed” seeming a little un-finished. The garden looked cared for and the orchard more or less back under control, but none of the charm of the place had been lost in the process. It pleased Ben enormously to see Rory’s reaction, his son clearly as entranced with it all as he had been himself nearly a quarter of a century earlier. To Ben’s surprise, Charles greeted them with firm handshakes and what seemed to be genuine warmth. Mark, of course, hugged them both long and tight. James hung back a little, embarrassed and hoping that he’d manage to avoid the awkwardness of either form of greeting, but it wasn’t long before he and Rory were deep in conversation.

“OK. Priorities right here,” said Mark, “Who wants a glass of well-chilled white before we sort out rooms? I know you won’t want one James, but how about you Rory?”

“Not at the moment, thanks very much Mark,” Rory replied.

Ben smiled inside with pride at his son’s confident, man-of-the-world tone. After a slight pause, though, he heard the end of Rory’s sentence:

“.....but do you have any beer?”

This time, the tone was very much less assured; hesitant, rather like a 6-year-old daring to ask for an extra sweet.

Ben caught Chris’s eye and made out his silently-mouthed “bless!” Ben smiled back, having had much the same thought himself. Mark didn’t blink as he asked Rory if he would prefer lager or a wheat beer, but Ben noticed the twitch at the corner of his mouth. He noted too the way that Mark’s gaze flicked over his son’s crotch as he waited for his answer – it was done so quickly that Ben wouldn’t have been aware of it if Chris, many years ago, hadn’t trained him to look out for what he called “the signs”. Ben knew that Mark would be the first to admit he was an inveterate crotch watcher - that it was just an instinct he couldn’t help, and that nothing was meant by it. Despite that, Ben felt... well, what did he actually feel? He wasn’t sure. Amused? Disquieted? Protective? When it was his own son’s crotch that was being – well, what was happening there? Was he being assessed? Analysed? Ogled? Lusted over? It was a new experience for him to see his son being regarded as a potentially sexual being – a young man now, not a boy.

With the drinks served, Mark, the school teacher in him never far below the surface, began to put Rory through his paces in French. To Ben’s delight and, he had to admit, surprise, Rory seemed pretty good. His pace was rapid, the accent, to Ben’s ears at least, plausible and the fluency almost un-broken. He was managing to make Mark laugh anyway – and more, it seemed, by what he was saying rather than over mistakes with the language. Ben was delighted too that Rory was so relaxed and able to enjoy the company of those so much older than him, even more by the fact that Mark and Chris being so openly and un-mistakeably gay didn’t seem to bother him one bit.

With Mark laughing heartily at something Rory had said, Ben was a little ashamed that he took a guilty pleasure in seeing that James was just sitting there, clearly no more able to follow the French than he was himself. Ben took the chance to take a good look at James. He was a nice-looking lad, but there was somehow something unformed about him. He was tall as Rory, spectacularly blonde, but thin and without any sign of the more muscular build that Rory was developing. Seeing him sitting

next to Mark and Rory, who were enjoying a conversation in a language that he clearly didn't understand, Ben thought that James looked child-like and lost compared to his confident and physically assured son. After a moment or two, Ben became concerned that the move into French had left James out on an awkward limb. Not as good at this kind of social grace as Chris, Ben tried hard to think of something he could ask the boy to bring him in from his exclusion, suddenly hoping that the idea of him and Rory enjoying time together hadn't been a mistake. Ben was saved when Chris and Charles arrived with some nibbles and turned the conversation back into to English.

"We've shifted things round so you can have your old room, Ben," said Chris as he sat down. "And James is going to keep Rory company in the cowshed."

"Christopher!" snapped Charles, unexpectedly. Since Mark had so thoroughly broken Chris's "all three syllables if you please" mould, it was strangely jarring to hear him addressed by his full name again.

"La suite d'hôte" please!" continued Charles, "Or "the guest suite" if you must, but please don't ever use that horribly, vulgar expression."

Seeing Charles's prissy side suddenly show through wasn't a welcome development. Ben couldn't help wondering if it was his own presence that had caused Chris to revert to their old name for the outbuilding or if this was a routine source of irritation between the brothers. Mark was in like a shot, ignoring the outburst, his skills of deflecting potential flare-ups between the two brothers well-honed over the years.

"Yes," Mark said, "we thought it would be nice for you to have your old room again, Ben. And Rory and James won't keep us awake if they want to stay up late in the guest suite. Why don't you show Rory his room, James?"

When the boys had left, Ben noticed that it was as he had expected - from the still-full glass on the table in front of his empty chair, it was obvious that Rory had managed perhaps two sips of his beer.

Going over the day's events as he lay in bed that night, Ben thought that this had been the day that he had first realised that Rory was turning into a young man and, even allowing for parental rose-tinted glasses, a very good-looking one too. It was as if he was suddenly seeing Rory through a stranger's eyes, and he realised that he was a very proud dad. Ben was no fashion expert, but he could tell that Rory looked good in his new summer gear, that he chose his clothes with care and wore them well. There was his new hair style too – seeing James' boyish cut had made Ben realise that his son had moved a notch towards manhood there too. Good looks aside, Rory was, he thought, kind-hearted, fun, interesting and generally nice to be around. Overall, Ben felt that it was going to be very special to spend some relaxed time with his son and enjoy what might well be the precious last days before his little boy finally left childhood behind.

Ben wasn't the only one thinking about Rory that night. James had been delighted when his Uncle Chris had said that Ben and Rory were coming to join them. His dad was his dad and he was OK really, and he loved time with Chris as he was always a real laugh and you never knew what he was going to say next. Mark too – well, you could always tell he was a teacher but James really liked the way he treated him with respect unlike his dad, who sometimes seemed to think he was just as an

annoying kid. But they were all so old that it could get a bit boring and, with his adored Granny and Gramps off on their cruise, it might have been a dull summer. With Rory there, though – well, that put a very different perspective on things. Only a few months apart in age, James and Rory had known each other since they were tiny. They were the kind of friends who rarely met, yet always seemed to pick up where they had left off. They had always got on well together in the gang of kids at Chris’s famous birthday barbeques, but it was when they were part of the smaller group of teenagers at Chris and Mark’s Civil Partnership Ceremony that James decided that he really liked Rory. After that, they hadn’t met again until Chris and Mark upgraded to a marriage, but that was the day when James, although he would have no way have thought of it in that way, fell in love with Rory. He had been awestruck as soon as he’d arrived for the ceremony, looking so grown up in the suit that Rebekkah had bought him for the occasion, but it was when he had walked so confidently to the front of the hall and played the guitar during the signing of the register that something really shifted inside James. The only thing that had marred the day had come in the form of James’s cousin Annabelle, and the annoying way that Rory seemed to be so interested in her. It irked James that Rory fell so easily for the stupid way she suddenly went all girly and silly when he was around, and the obvious way she kept sticking out her chest at him and laughed too loudly at his jokes. After that annoying set-back, James was delighted with the prospect of having Rory to himself for a whole week.

Chapter Three: Hair Gel

Ben and Rory's first morning *en vacance* was glorious. Mark laid out breakfast on the garden table and the three men had already started on it when the two boys finally emerged from the "cowshed" in swimming shorts, intent on a dip in the pool before eating. Ben didn't see the look that passed between Mark and Chris when Rory appeared, but he did notice, rather to his surprise, that his son had developed a hint of a six-pack since he'd started serious training at the gym. As he ate, Ben watched the boys' childlike enjoyment with pleasure as they splashed noisily in the pool before finally heading back in to shower.

Work on the cowshed had rather ground to a halt when Ursula, Charles's wife, had made it known in a rather heated exchange that not only was she never going through the horror of childbirth again but that she certainly wasn't planning on spending every summer in the back of beyond in France either. That, combined with the discovery that their other son wasn't going to be providing any grandchildren, had made the older Hilton-Smiths realise that the extra rooms that the "suite d' hote" had been intended to provide weren't going to be needed after all, so work had stopped on it and it had just been left more or less as it was - functional, but rather basic. The bathroom between the two bedrooms had never acquired a proper door so, with just a "temporary" curtain for privacy, it was perfectly possible to hold a conversation whilst washing, and James did that now as he called out to Rory:

"Rory, can I borrow some of your hair gel please?"

"Sorry, I didn't bring any with me."

"You did."

James stuck his head round Rory's door, wrapped in a towel. He was holding a small, transparent, plastic bottle that Rory had carefully filled before leaving home.

Rory felt his face go red.

"Sorry, but that's not hair gel."

"What is it then? It looks like it to me."

"It's - well, it's lube," said Rory, not able to think quickly enough to say anything other than the truth.

"Lube? What's that?"

"It's for when, you know..... when you want to rub one out."

James looked puzzled. Rory could see from his face that he wasn't going to be put off from enquiring further so, reluctantly, he went on.

"It's because I'm Jewish."

James laughed.

"Jewish? You're not Jewish, are you?"

"Yes. I thought you knew that."

“No, but it’s cool. I had no idea. I just assumed.... Well, I didn’t think I actually knew anyone who was Jewish. So, what’s that got to do with lube then?”

“Well, if you’re Jewish, you don’t have a skin to use, so you have to use it instead.”

It took a moment or two for James to piece things together.

“What - you mean you’ve been snipped? Wow!”

This was quite a revelation for James. So, Rory didn’t have a foreskin. That possibility had just never even occurred to him when he’d fantasised about what Rory’s penis might be like, wondering if it would be as amazing as the rest of him. Now he had a vital piece of information, and it was heady stuff, especially as Rory had chosen, although he hadn’t actually had much choice, to share something so intimate about himself.

Chapter Four: Cycling

By their third morning at the gite, the two newcomers felt as if they had lived there all their lives. Ben, Chris and Mark were finishing another outside breakfast when Rory and James appeared, hair still wet from their showers.

“Dad,” asked Rory, “is it OK if James and I go out cycling? They brought two bikes with them, and James says he’s got some spare gear and a helmet for me.”

“Sounds good to me,” said Ben, “It’s a lovely day for it.”

Ben was delighted that Rory was having such a good time and finding things to do, and seeing him getting on so well with James was a real bonus. The boys went back to the cowshed to get organised for their day. James re-emerged first, having changed into full cycling gear that was obviously expensive kit meant for a serious rider. He wheeled the two bikes in front of him and set about pumping up the tyres. Ben noted how thin they were and, taking in how uncomfortable the saddle looked, wondered how Rory would cope with a racer after his mountain bike back home.

Moments later, Rory emerged, walking a little unsteadily in heel-less shoes and in full cycling kit too. As he drew nearer, Ben took in the outfit properly. The gear was snug, indeed very snug. James was a good size smaller than Rory, so the form-fitting cycling top was sleek over his son’s chest and showed just how muscular he was getting. It was the shorts that alarmed Ben though. The top James had lent him was obviously of good quality, but the shorts weren’t in that league - the design more basic and the Lycra much thinner. It was taut enough around Rory’s thighs, but between his legs the material was stretched obscenely tight over a huge lump at the crotch. What really alarmed Ben though was seeing the obvious outline of his son’s penis through them - there could be no doubt about the cause of the thick shape that extended a considerable way down his left thigh.

As two boys cycled off down the drive, Rory a little wobbly at first, Ben looked across the table. He was rather lost for words and hoping to God that neither of the other two had noticed what he just had. Mark had yesterday’s Daily Telegraph open wide across him and, after a moment, Ben was surprised to see that his shoulders seemed to be shaking behind it. Chris was trying very hard not to, but couldn’t contain himself and burst out laughing.

“Ben!” said Chris, “The look on your little face! It was just priceless!”

Ben thoughts were in turmoil. He was appalled and upset by what he had just seen and thought it no joking matter. It was even worse was that the other two had clearly noticed as well, let alone that they were now laughing near-hysterically. Ben didn’t feel at all amused, but it was only a second or two before he gave in and joined them – somehow, it seemed the only way to release the tension and cope with the situation. Mark was laughing so hard that he found it hard to speak. He finally got it out:

“Dear God, I really hope those shorts don’t burst!”

“Well, they were packed to near exploding point,” said Chris, tears running down his face.”

“You pair of buggers! My poor little boy - you shouldn’t mock him!” said Ben. “But it was quite something, wasn’t it – I thought it was just me that had noticed.”

“As if!” said Mark. “It was pretty hard to miss.”

“And he’s obviously not exactly a little boy either, is he!” said Chris.

“I must admit I got quite a shock,” said Ben. “I haven’t – well - seen him down there for a while, and things have obviously moved on a little to say the least. God, what was he thinking wearing those? I just didn’t know if I should say anything, but he’d have been so embarrassed if I had. I just hope he realises before the next time.”

“I wonder if he had any idea?” said Chris. “I hope not, but then again he wouldn’t be the first bloke to set out to show exactly what he’s got, would he?” said Chris, nudging Mark, who swatted him back with *The Telegraph*.

“Well, I bloody well hope it was all innocent,” said Ben. “Do you think I should have a word with him?”

“I think it might be wise if someone tipped him off,” said Mark, “but would you like me to do it? I’m used to that sort of thing.”

As a secondary school teacher, Mark considered himself to be the expert when it came to teenaged boys and how to broach delicate matters with them.

“No,” said Chris, slightly wary that Mark might perhaps enjoy that particular conversation a little too much. “I’ll do it. I’m his sort-of Godfather, so it’s my duty.”

“Well, I think someone should. I’d hate him to realise later and be mortified that no one had told him what he was showing,” said Mark. “I have to say that I’ve seen some men in tight Lycra in my time, but it’s the first time I’ve seen it so tight that I’ve been able to tell that they’re Jewish!”

Ben’s face suddenly fell. Chris had gone quiet too, and Mark wondered what he had said to make the atmosphere lose all of its feeling of ribaldry so suddenly.

“Anyway, I’m off for a run” said Ben, all signs of humour gone.

“Oh dear,” said Chris a moment later, as Ben started off down the drive.

“What did I say?” said Mark.

“Don’t worry,” said Chris. “You weren’t to know. It’s just that you trod on rather sensitive toes there. It’s just that Ben really hates it that Rory is circumcised.”

“What, he doesn’t like it that he’s been raised Jewish?”

“No, he’s fine with that. He’d never say anything, but he knows deep down that, apart from a few genes, Rory isn’t really any more Jewish than we are. It’s just something he plays along with to keep Bekky sweet. As I’m sort of his Godfather, I thought I should show an interest once and ask him something about the Torah, but he didn’t have a clue.”

“So what is it about circumcision thing then?” asked Mark.

“He just doesn’t like the idea of it,” said Chris, wary that Mark could sometimes be very persistent when he wanted to get to the bottom of something.

“I didn’t think straight men were too bothered one way or another about that. Is Ben circumcised too then?” Mark added, trying to sound innocent.

“None of your business, Mark. Nice try though -you slipped that one in neatly! I know you’re fascinated by what Ben is packing, but that’s for me to know and you to guess - as you well know by now.”

Chris had contemplated saying that he didn’t know the answer to the question, but knew that Mark was hardly likely to believe that two men who had lived so intimately in the past would not know that about each other.

“I just don’t know why you are so cagey about him,” said Mark. “It’s not as if you are exactly reluctant to discuss what other men have got. I sometimes wonder if there is some story there – if he hasn’t got one at all or something. Was it cancer, or an accident or something awful like that?”

“You’ll just have to accept it as one of life’s little mysteries,” said Chris.

There was quiet for a while as Chris, in an attempt to close the conversation, picked up his pen and started on the Telegraph crossword.

It was quite a while before Mark spoke again. When he did, Chris was relieved to hear that his tone was different - now light and casual - and pleased that Mark seemed to have moved on from the previous topic.

“You going to the supermarket today?” he asked.

“Probably. Why?” said Chris.

“Well, there’ll be a heavy load to carry. It will be a big basket-full for sure.”

Chris didn’t look up as he wrote out the letters of an anagram in a circle.

Mark went on. “But it’s nice that the shelves in the supermarket are so very well stacked. Good to have all the goods all out on display – the best assets in the village well on show.”

Chris said nothing, wondering what Mark was on about.

Mark paused, frustrated, but a moment later he tried again.

“But it does get so packed in down there, doesn’t it? Almost to bursting point some times,” he continued. “Things can get stretched to the max.”

Chris was becoming irritated by Mark’s chatter, then light suddenly dawned.

“Indeed,” Chris said slowly, smiling as he finally caught on. “And the queues for the check-out too. There was a really massive one in there a little while ago. It snaked all the way down the left side.”

“Yes? Always nice to see a big snake down one side. Oh, and while you’re shopping, remember to get some sugar – a good big packet,” said Mark. “Or some lumps perhaps – two lumps in fact. Just make sure you tuck them well in down the left side of the basket. It would be awful if they fell out. And don’t forget the mushroom either - just one large one. It’s so nice when it’s easy to see that it’s a good big mushroom through the covering on the packet.”

“And I was planning to go to the charcuterie too”, said Chris, warming to the theme. “How about a good big piece of prime beef? I’ll make sure it’s well hung.”

“Yes,” said Mark, “nice idea - a good big slab of meat. A large portion, and with two veg to go with it. It’s always nice to have good big portions of veg to go with a thick piece of meat.”

“Yes, a big, prime, juicy slab of fresh meat,” said Chris, laughing now. “I can see that you are really fancying the idea of seeing that served up on a plate in front of you. A mouth-watering sight. I could fancy it too, actually. Somehow though, I don’t think we’re likely to get it!”

Ben pushed himself hard as he ran down the lane, still full of anger. He was cross with Mark but knew he was being unfair - he’d only been joking and would have no idea what he was saying. Ben was actually more furious with himself for not having protected Rory from the knife. He had often chastised himself for his cowardly naivety in believing that all would be well rather than having been brave enough to take steps to ensure that his son kept his precious foreskin. Why had he let it happen?

By the time Ben had run himself to the point of exhaustion and had a long, hot shower, he was feeling a bit better. It was just lucky that all was well - that Rory, so far at least, didn’t seem to mind being bareheaded, and that he had managed not to pass on his own, perhaps excessive, anxiety to his son. He thought of him at Bekky’s mum’s funeral - Rory looking awkward in a skull cap and as lost as to what was going on in the ceremony as Ben was himself. There were so many circumcised men in the world who seemed perfectly at ease with their state, but the thought that it had been done to Rory for reasons of a religion that meant so little to him deeply tormented Ben. The needlessness of it all, the stupidity. Ben was at least relieved that Rory had managed to avoid all the distress that he had endured himself. His son was now almost the same age as he had been when he had lost his foreskin and he had resolved to keep things as easy as he could for Rory - the only thing he could realistically do. He realised that a lot of the anger he was experiencing was for himself, and it would be wrong to put any of that burden back on to the boy.

Ben finished his shower and, when he went downstairs again, was relieved that Mark and Chris chose to greet him as if nothing had happened.

Chapter Five: The Carrot

“Rory, while we’ve got a moment, can I have a word?” said Chris.

“Sure,” said Rory, “what’s up?”

The boys were just back, hot and tired after a long cycle back from the coast. James had headed straight off for a shower so, with Ben, Mark and Charles away shopping in the village, Chris grabbed the opportunity to catch Rory alone. He braced himself and launched in, not quite sure how he was going to proceed.

“Rory, dear boy, I’m afraid the time has come to go man-to-man with you,” said Chris. “Being frank is the only way. As your legal guardian and ersatz Godfather, I hope you’ll agree that I’ve been mercifully restrained in trying to give you advice over the years, but...”

Rory was clearly taken aback. Chris often had a rather pompous way of speaking, but Rory had never heard him sound quite so formal, and it worried him. It sounded like this was going to be something serious. Chris saw the concern on Rory’s face and realised he’d got off to a bad start.

“Don’t worry!” said Chris, smiling and trying to lighten the mood. “It’s nothing heavy. Just a matter of a little – well, I think ‘wardrobe advice’ might be the term for it.”

Rory was puzzled. He had been increasingly aware of his looks of late, but Chris wasn’t exactly a snappy dresser, and Rory wondered what he might have to say that could be anything other than very lame.

“I just that I think that someone needs to tell you that - well - it’s those cycling shorts you’ve got on. I don’t know if you realise, but that Lycra is actually rather revealing.”

Rory just stared back, lost for words. He hadn’t expected that.

“Actually,” continued Chris, “to be honest, it’s more than rather revealing - they don’t leave a single thing to the imagination, dear boy. In fact, that shape you are showing in the front of them could leave no-one in any doubt at all that you are indeed a boy. To be honest, so revealing are they that they’d have no trouble in believing that you are a Jewish one too!”

Chris was aware from the look on his face that Rory had got the message. He had known that the shorts were a bit small for him - after all, James was hand shorter than he was and these were his last-year’s shorts too - but he hadn’t thought much about it and had just been glad that he’d had some proper kit for the ride. He knew from having seen cycling on the TV that men always seemed to have a bit of a lump showing in their shorts and he’d assumed that that was par for the course when he’d looked down and seen that he had one there too.

Chris was aware that he could probably leave his chat at that, but he didn’t. Somehow, he just couldn’t stop himself going further, and into territory that went well beyond matters of mere wardrobe advice.

“I’m not saying that everyone would look or even notice, and I can’t speak for the ladies of course, but I can tell you that if Mark and I saw a lad dressed like you waking towards us in town, then we couldn’t help but take in the view. Very few of us of our persuasion wouldn’t want to take a second look down below when they see a fine-looking young man in very revealing cycling shorts, so be warned!”

Rory was genuinely stunned. He hadn't been expecting anything like this. He just had no idea what to say, or even how he felt about it, so he could do nothing but let Chris carry on. He was embarrassed, but also alarmingly aware of movement in his cock.

Chris was now slightly uncomfortable too. He was aware that he might be enjoying himself and knew, guiltily, that it was at Rory's expense. He was suddenly very aware too of his glans, commando inside his shorts as usual, starting to brush across the material as his penis hardened at the thought of the scene he'd just described to Rory.

"I hope you don't mind, but I thought it was only fair to tell you. There are lots of men out there on both teams who don't mind having their goods on display. In fact, I know a few who might actually set out to do it on purpose, but - well - it's just a bit embarrassing when you come across someone who really has no idea that he has all his valuables clearly on show, and I'd hate you to be one of them. As Mark said this morning, no one would have any doubt believing that you are Jewish seeing you in that kit, so you get the idea of just how revealing that get-up is? It's up to you of course; you are old enough to make your own choices, but I just thought you'd better know before you wear them again."

Chris felt ashamed doing it - this was Ben's son after all and, as near as made no odds, his own Godson - but he couldn't stop himself from letting his gaze drop down to Rory's crotch. He hated to admit it to himself, but he was also poignantly aware that, if Rory was horrified and embarrassed by what he had just been told, then this might be the last chance to see the lad looking quite so stunning. To his amazement, Chris saw that the Lycra was grotesquely distended now, Rory obviously very hard indeed inside it. The shape and considerable size of his circumcised glans was clear to see as it stretched the fabric to the maximum. Not only that, a small, glistening damp patch was forming intriguingly far down the left leg of the shorts. When Chris quickly raised his eyes again, he was embarrassed to see that Rory had caught him looking. Now, both their faces were bright red. There was no getting away from having been caught in the act, but whilst most of Chris hoped that Rory would be too caught up in the embarrassment of the situation to notice that there was an obvious tent in his own shorts too, a small, guilty, part of him couldn't help wishing the exact opposite.

"Dear me," said Chris, "we are indeed a growing lad aren't we! Don't be embarrassed, I quite understand - been there, done it, got the damp patch."

Luckily, it never occurred to Rory that Chris might be aroused too, and looking another man in the crotch wasn't something he ever did. He wasn't quite sure why he had erected and was embarrassed to the core, but knew that sometimes his cock had a mind of its own and there was nothing he could do about it.

Chris went on, knowing now that he really should leave things alone now.

"So, anyway, if you've got it, flaunt it if you want to," he said. "Good for you if you do, but just be aware of exactly what you are doing and be sure you can handle the responses you might get to the signals you'd be sending out, OK?"

Rory nodded, lost for anything sensible to say in return. He couldn't understand why he was so very aroused when he should only have been feeling embarrassed and, perhaps, ashamed of himself. That morning, he had been aware of a rather pleasant snug feeling when, after a bit of a struggle, he had got the shorts on but, never having worn anything like it before, he hadn't known what to expect. He hadn't, though, been at all aware of quite how brazen his display had been in them, and it certainly hadn't occurred to him that anyone would notice. In some way that puzzled and

intrigued him, he somehow liked the idea that, actually, people might have noticed. He wondered – intrigued, alarmed and excited in turn – who else might have checked him out that day, and the thought, alarmingly, was erotic. As to the fact that everyone could tell that he was without foreskin – could it really be possible that the shorts were really revealing enough to show that little detail? Or, in fact, was it actually that little a detail? Or was showing that you were circumcised something more important, and why might anyone even care?

“OK dear boy, nanny’s little homily is over,” said Chris, getting himself under control and realising that he had to end the scene before it went any further.

“My Dad. Will you.....?” said Rory, alarmed at the thought of having to discuss it all again with Ben.

“No, it’s just between us, OK?” lied Chris. “I’m sure he didn’t even notice,” he lied again. “Now, run along and play nicely.”

Chris knew he shouldn’t, but he just couldn’t stop himself when, in the way that he might, in a parallel moment, have innocently patted a small boy on the head as he sent him on his way after a telling-off, he playfully tapped Rory’s bum as he turned to leave. The touch was very light, and Rory was pre-occupied enough not to even notice, but it was enough for Chris to register just how firm and taugth the buttocks were.

When he got back to the cowshed, Rory was still very confused, very aroused, and very erect. He was worried about the obvious damp patch on his shorts, so it was a relief that James was still in the bathroom, even though he cursed the fact that his bottle of lube was in there too. As he lay back on his bed and looked down at the shape of the Lycra in a new, somehow scary, but intriguing and exciting light, he had an urgent desire to masturbate and wondered if there was any way he could it without lube for once.

* * * * *

Frustratingly for Mark, it was only when the two of them were starting on making a late dinner that he finally managed to get Chris on his own.

“Well, how did it go then?” asked Mark.

“How did what go?”

“Now, don’t start that, Chris. You know exactly what I mean! Rory. Your chat.”

“Oh, that.”

“Come on, you know you are dying to tell me. Spill the beans.”

“It was fine. He took it on the shoulder.”

“And? Come on. Details please. Do you think he knew?”

“Well, he does now!”

“Listen Chris, I’m getting cross now. Just tell me. Don’t make me drag it out of you.”

“Ooooooh! We are interested, aren’t we! OK, I know you’ll get it out of me in the end. Well, I don’t think he’d realised that there was anything un-toward until I tipped him the wink.”

“Yes?”

“Well, then I think he cottoned on pretty fast”

“And? Dear God, this is hard work.”

“Well, to be honest, he was embarrassed to the core, bless him. But, if you must know, I think he was pretty quick to quite like the whole idea. Actually, in fact I know he did!”

“Noooo! He didn’t, did he?”

“Yes, the full works - damp patch included.”

“You’re joking me.”

“Oh yes. No mistake at all. Absolutely no way to hide it in that gear of course. Poor lad went bright red – a rush of blood in both departments. Rather sweet really.”

“And?”

“I’ve no idea what you mean.”

“Oh, for God’s sake, Christopher, don’t give me that. Just tell me!”

“Well, if you must know, you were right. It’s an absolute whopper.”

“Now! Didn’t I always tell you that he had the look of it!” said Mark. His accent was suddenly the one he had grown up with. “Go on. Details please. T’is is like getting blood out of a fekkin’ stone.”

Chris said nothing, but picked up one of the large organic carrots on the kitchen table and held it down his left thigh.

“You’re joking me?” said Mark.

“I kid you not. If not more so.”

“Jesus, Mary and sweet Saint Joseph. Imagine.”

“Oh, I have been. Often!”

“Like father like son then?”

“Ahhhh! Second try of the day there, Mark! That that’s for me to know and you to guess. Poor old Ben, he’d me mortified if I told you.”

“You absolute”

James chose that moment to come into the kitchen for a can of Coke. Chris deftly had the carrot back on the chopping board in seconds. As James went to the fridge, he wondered why Mark laughed so hard as Chris took the vegetable peeler and, very carefully and strangely ostentatiously, used it to peel just the first inch and a half of the pointed end of the carrot.

Chapter Six: The Mosquito

It was gone midnight when Mark finally gave in, the irritation of having a mosquito in the room finally exceeding the annoyance of having to get out of bed to deal with it. With Chris snoring gently, he crept quietly to get a newspaper with which to swat it. As he neared the window, he noticed a light still on in Rory's room across the yard in the cowshed. He could see Rory clearly through the gap in the curtains, standing in front of the wardrobe mirror and taking in his reflection. He was bare chested, his body lean and taut. Even from across the yard, Mark could make out the un-mistakeable shape that distended the Lycra of that day's cycling shorts. He was clearly very erect indeed inside them.

"Ah, bless him!" said Mark quietly to himself, remembering doing rather similar things at that age, although he realised that Rory was looking rather more spectacular than he ever had himself. Mark couldn't stop his hand dropping to his penis, almost unconsciously rubbing his glans through his long, loose foreskin. He instinctively took a step backwards as Rory turned, worried that the boy might have seen him reflected in the mirror, but he was only reaching for his phone.

The mosquito buzzed past Mark on another round of attack, but his attention was now only on Rory, who was taking selfies from every angle. Mark was erect, aroused by the way Rory was exploring just how good he looked. He did, indeed, look very good. Mark couldn't stop pleasuring himself seriously when Rory, slightly clumsily, rolled up one side of the shorts and hooked out his rampant erection. It sprang out forcefully as it finally freed itself from the cloth and pointed straight out in front of him – very long, and very hard. Mark jumped when he felt an arm round him, too absorbed to have noticed Chris's approach.

"That's quite a show he's putting on there, isn't it," said Chris. "The poor lamb – he'd be mortified to know he had an appreciative audience."

Mark wondered briefly if Rory would actually mind knowing.

"You can see what I mean about the dimensions, even from here," said Chris.

"Just incredible," said Mark. "What a lucky lad. Lucky us too. I wonder if he knows just how lucky he is."

"If he doesn't already, I'm sure there will be plenty of admiring and very appreciative young ladies to let him know before too much longer," said Chris. "Perhaps there already are."

"Lucky them," said Mark. "Unless it freaks them, of course."

As his hand dropped to Mark's crotch, Chris said "Mmm, even in the dark I can tell you're enjoying the thought of it anyway."

"Well, if they weren't up for the challenge of taking it, I know many men who would love to try," said Mark.

"And I think I'm talking to one of them," said Chris.

When Rory finally put out the light, Mark and Chris's love making was more intense and carnal than it had been in a long while.

Chapter Seven: The Scorcher

Luckily, perhaps, there had been no talk of further cycling the following day. Breakfast was rather spoilt by Charles going on endlessly about the special dinner he was going to cook for them all that evening. In the end, it did turn out to be the amazing feast that he had promised, but the pleasure of the food had been somewhat spoilt by the way that Charles seemed to expect everyone to faun over how delicious each mouthful was and how perfectly every wine he had chosen complemented each course. He left the kitchen in a complete mess too, and Rory and James felt as if they had to wash up just about every pot and dish in there. After his endeavours, Charles clearly thought he was entitled to a few more post-prandial drinks than normal, and Ben was dispiritingly aware that his more bombastic side which, to his credit, had been well under control since he and Rory had arrived, was starting to show through. To make things worse, the evening was oppressively and unpleasantly hot and, seemingly out of nowhere, and a rather heated BREXIT debate blew up. Ben was amazed to learn that Charles, a genuine lover of France and the French and fully admitting that it would do his business harm, had voted "leave". Chris didn't hold back from disagreeing with him and Mark, sensing the way the mood was changing with a depressing feeling of déjà vu, realised that he'd have to do his best to keep the peace, hoping that Ben would be quick enough on the uptake to help.

Mark finally managed to angle things so that everyone, if only in a rather grudging way, at least pretended to see the others' points of view. It was a relief when, after enough time and innocuous chat had passed for it not to seem as if anybody was stomping off in a huff, Mark kicked Chris under the table, said he was tired and was going to bed. Chris ignored the prompt but, mercifully, Charles followed Mark's lead. Left alone, Chris and Ben were both glad to be able to enjoy some companionable silence.

"Phew, what a scorcher," said Chris after a moment, "and I don't just mean the weather."

"Yes, said Ben, some of that got a little too close for comfort. Sorry Chris. I should have had the cop-on to shut up sooner."

"It's not your fault," said Chris. "Sometimes he's just so pig-headed. Look, I think we both need some medication after all that."

He returned a minute later with two glasses and a bottle of Pastis.

"Remember when we discovered this stuff all those years back? said Chris, "and how much better it tasted when we realised that you're supposed to put water in it!"

"Yes, said Ben. "Happy, amazing, times. I'm so glad to have been here with you then, and just as glad to be back again now. Thank you for having us, I really mean that. And Rory is loving it too."

"The pleasure is all mine, dear boy, it really is," said Chris. "We just don't get to see each other often enough these days, and it's great to get to know Rory a bit better as well." He felt ashamed that there was perhaps a little more to that statement than his best friend would have realised.

"In fact," Chris continued, "Rory and James are rather reminding me of us two when we were together here before. After all, they are only a little bit younger now than we were then."

"Yes," said Ben. "Amazing to think that – it's all ahead of them. God, when I think of what we got up to – I suppose they'll be at it soon too!"

“But a couple of years does make a difference though, doesn’t it,” said Chris. “They’re still only boys really.”

“Which reminds me,” said Ben, “did you get a chance to have that chat with Rory?”

Chris had been wondering if Ben would ask how it went, or if he’d even remember his promise to talk to Rory. Even, in fact, it he’d remember the situation that had raised the need for it in the first place. Chris had drunk enough to speak in way that he might normally have censored a little.

“Seriously, that was quite a sight, wasn’t it?” he said. “That was some content in those shorts – your little boy isn’t so little any more, is he?”

“Yeah,” said Ben. “I must say I got a bit of a shock. I haven’t seen him naked for a while, and you forget how quickly things change at that age.”

“I think we can safely say he’s a chip off the old block there,” said Chris

“Well, I think I’m probably going to be overtaken very shortly, if I haven’t been already,” said Ben. “He’s still a growing lad too. His grandad would be a proud man anyway!”

“But not you?” said Chris, trying to sound jokey but interested to know.

Chris was the only person with whom Ben would ever have had this kind of chat.

“Well,” he replied “I think I’ve told you that my normally-shy old dad has always very uncharacteristically open about such matters and keen to be proud of what he’s got too. That was what really did it in between him and Roger, remember? Me? Well, I suppose I’m glad for Rory, as long as he isn’t going to be embarrassed by it.”

“Something tells me that that won’t be a problem!” Said Chris, smiling.

“Why, what did he say then when you had your little chat then?”

“Well, it’s more what he didn’t say really. But he’s a sensible lad, and he took it on the shoulder. I think he got the picture,” said Chris, aware again that he wasn’t sharing the whole truth of the conversation.

“He’s quite shy normally, so I was really surprised he didn’t notice himself,” said Ben. “Do you think we’d have ever gone out looking like that?”

“Well, can you imagine me in cycling shorts, even at that age?!” said Chris. “I’d have frightened the horses even then. You, on the other hand...”

Ben smiled and took the compliment for once, though the memory of just how clear Rory’s circumcised state had shown through the Lycra that morning horrified him. He knew that, at Rory’s age, he would certainly have been very keen to avoid any sign of the outline of his own bared helmet showing through his clothes, but he felt glad that he had at least managed to avoid passing on his own hang-up on that score to his son. There was silence for a while. Ben hesitated before asking his next question.

“Do you think that a bloke can ever – well - have too much between his legs for comfort? Forgive me asking but, well I’ve often wondered how you lot..... I mean, if a guy is really big, can you always.... well, “host” them OK?”

“Dear boy!” said Chris with a laugh, “You know you can ask me anything at all, but what a question to hear from your decorous lips! Well, let’s just say that most of us think it’s just a nice problem to have if a playmate has a rather generous portion. There are some who seem to prefer the more compact version for some reason that I’ve never understood, but I think it’s a case of never having too much of a good thing for most of us. How have you found it with the ladies?”

“Well, I’m not sure if I’d actually put myself in the ‘generous portion’ bracket!” said Ben, laughing.

“Come, come dear boy. This is me you are talking to! No false modesty needed here!”

“Well, thanks! I’m no Casanova as you know, but it’s never been an issue really. I suppose I’ve always assumed that the ladies are purpose-built for the job whereas... Well, you know what I mean. For a man, a finger can be nice if you are in the mood, but I’ve always thought it must be like giving birth in reverse trying to get anything bigger up there. The ladies are designed for two-way traffic after all, but for men it’s more of a one-way street.”

“True,” said Chris, “but I think that some men are physically better suited to the challenge. Then again,” he added after a moment’s thought, “perhaps some are just more determined!”

“I just can’t imagine what it must be like for a man to take a cock,” said Ben. “It just seems impossible that it could be enjoyable, yet clearly it can be, or you lot wouldn’t do it”

“Dear boy! You’d have to experience it to understand, but of course there is more to it than just the physical pleasure. But you straights always think that my team are at that sort of thing at the drop of a hat. There’s much more fun to be had from another willing body than just plugging its holes, as I’m sure you know.”

“Indeed,” said Ben. “Very true. We’re all the same when it comes down to it, whatever team we’re on.”

“Going back to the plus-sized man, something has always intrigued me,” said Chris. “I often wondered about the day-to-day practical difficulties of having been dealt a really good hand, as I think Rory might have discovered today. But I suppose it’s a bit like you said before about circumcision - if you’ve grown up being seriously hung, it’s all you know and you get used to managing it, as well as getting used to the inevitable attention. I suppose you either embrace it and enjoy it, or try to hide it as best you can. I can imagine it being a real bonus when the old juices are flowing, but does it get tiresome managing the excess baggage when you’re not?”

Ben was unusually prepared in that un-inhibited moment to accept and admit tacitly that he was indeed well endowed. A small, vicarious glimmer of pride and excitement came from having heard Chris describe him as that.

“Hard to tell,” Ben said. “Like you say, we don’t know any other way, but I suppose there have been times when it’s been a bit of a bother. I think perhaps you just have to take a moment to stow things away carefully rather than just pulling up your keks and getting on with it.”

Ben thought back to a couple of unfortunate incidents before he found the sort of underwear that worked best for him. He thought too about his days as an uncut young man, remembering rather poignantly how at ease he had been with his own body, unconcerned to let his penis be seen and accepting without difficulty that he was considerably better-hung than his peers. He recognised now the extra confidence that that it had given him when naked around others, and how losing his foreskin had cost him that ease.

“By the way,” said Chris, sounding suddenly serious, “I’m really sorry about what Mark said this morning – about it being obvious that Rory is Jewish.”

“It’s OK. I know he wouldn’t have realised what he was saying,” replied Ben. He was glad Chris had raised the subject. He wouldn’t have done so himself, but it had been on his mind and he was pleased to be able to work through his thoughts with his friend. “Did it really show, do you reckon?”

“Well,” said Chris slowly, “you know what Mark’s like. He’s a compulsive crotch watcher and rather an expert at taking in what a man’s got, but- well, yes, I’m afraid that it did.”

“OK,” said Ben, thoughtfully. “Thanks for being honest.”

Chris knew that he was being slightly disingenuous; he too had instantly taken in Rory’s clearly circumcised outline.

“Mark asked once ages ago if Rory had been circumcised as he knows he’s half Jewish, but I just said that I didn’t know,” said Chris. “And, by the way, I’ve never told him about you either, in case you are worried. No reason to of course. And Mark would be truly horrified to hear what happened to you.”

Ben was relieved. He’d often wondered if Chris had told Mark his story but had not wanted to know the answer.

“Thank you,” said Ben, sincerely. “I appreciate that.”

“So,” continued Chris, “Mark had no idea what he was saying. It was just a joke for him.”

“Of course,” said Ben. “Circumcision is just a huge joke for everyone. They just don’t realise how awful it is. Sorry, I know that you ...”

“Don’t worry,” interrupted Chris. “Thanks to you, I had a bit of an epiphany on that score long ago, as you know.”

“Mark – is he...?”

“Mark? An Irish lad from the back of beyond?! I think that circumcision in his part of the world is just a word they read in the bible. Most of them have no idea what it actually means, let alone having actually seen one. I think I was a bit of a sharp learning curve for Mark when we got together. So, no - he’s not. Nor would he want to be.”

“What does he make of it all then?”

“Mark? “Well I’m glad to say that he thinks what’s on the body end of a man’s cock is much more important than what is or isn’t covering the business end, and he’s not bothered either way.”

Again, Chris was aware that this was really only part of the story - there was much more to it than that, but he wasn’t sure that this was the moment to share any more of it with Ben. He thought back to the amazement he’d felt at Mark’s horrified reaction on discovering that he was circumcised. He doubted too that Ben would have any idea what docking was, and that perhaps it would be too much information for him, as well as being unkind to tell Ben how much he loved the ultimate intimacy amazing sensation of pulling Mark’s long foreskin over his glans and using it to pleasure them both.

“And you,” said Ben, “Do you ever regret it? asked Ben, genuinely interested to know.” I know you didn’t in the old days, but now? Are you ever curious about what might have been?”

“Well, said Chris, I think that I’m a bit like Rory, and that you just accept what you’ve got.”

In truth, Chris still didn’t really know if he wished he still had his own skin. Like Rory, it was just the way he had always been. At that moment, part of him really didn’t want to deal with those thoughts, and he changed the subject.

“Rory,” asked Chris, going into territory that he had often wanted to explore with Ben but had been wary of raising, “Is he OK with it?”

“It’s never been an issue, thank God,” said Ben, “as far as I know”. Of course, the Jewish thing is a big get-out clause and it’s an easy answer to awkward questions. Ironic really - he likes coming to Mass with me and he was really pissed off when he had to miss out on all the first communion malarkey with his church mates. I often wonder if he’ll convert and get baptised one day – I wouldn’t be at all surprised if he does. I’d suggest it to him, only I don’t want to risk setting his mum off on one, thinking I was trying to hijack him from his heritage. He never goes to a synagogue from one year to the next, and his bar mitzvah year passed without anyone noticing. God, I remember feeling so sorry for him at Bekky’s mum’s funeral -him there with a bloody skull cap on, looking so ill-at-ease, poor kid, So I doubt there is anything spiritual in being circumcised for him, and really don’t know if he thinks it’s better or worse in any other terms. I suppose for him it’s like what you said earlier– it’s just the way he has always been. Never had it, don’t miss it, why question it?”

“Well, I suppose I can see that,” said Chris. “A lad is bound to be curious though. Does he know about you and your feelings after your experience?”

“No, I’ve never told him and I never will. Best just not to go there. He’s always known I’m done, of course. There was just one time when he was small when he asked if I was Jewish too. He’d come back from Bekky’s and obviously had some kind of chat with her, so I just fobbed him off and said that some boys needed their willies made like his by the doctor. So I didn’t actually lie, as they do of course, but I just let him assume I’d been one of them.

“And did you ever have the ‘bachelors’ friend’ chat with him?” asked Chris.

“Lube? Yes, that was awkward!” said Ben. “But much more so for me than for him, I think! Yes, I did that very early on, way before I thought he needed it, just so it was never going to be an issue for him like it was for me. I just left some around in the bathroom cabinet, made sure he noticed it, and said that boys like him and me used it sometimes for their willies, and he was to help himself when he thought he needed it. It was quite a morning when I went to shave and saw the cap had been left off! Not my baby boy anymore!”

“So you didn’t go into detail?” asked Chris, a little vicariously.

“No! I was a boy too myself once! I think lads can work that sort of thing out for themselves when the time is right!”

“Too true,” said Chris. “Just that you had to do it twice over!”

“Well, with a little help from my friend, bless him!” said Ben, raising his glass to Chris.

Chapter Eight: The Dark Horse

As Chris and Ben chatted, Rory was wide awake in the cowshed. He had waited an interminable fifteen minutes after James had turned out his light before getting out of bed again, and was increasingly puzzled as he searched his room. He couldn't find the cycling shorts anywhere. Had his dad taken them, not wanting him to wear them anymore? Had he been so ashamed of him that he'd taken steps to ensure that he couldn't? Or had James simply taken them back?

James had indeed taken them back, but not "simply". He hadn't put them in the washing basket or re-folded them in his drawer as Rory suspected. Instead, they were under his pillow. James, finally, asleep, had wanked until he was sore, the used shorts held tight over his nose as he tried to take in their intriguing, mysterious but sadly fading aroma of the mix of Rory's sweat and shower gel. When the shorts were eventually under his pillow, Rory's scent had been replaced by that of the thick load of cum that James had unleashed into them.

Long after James and Rory were finally asleep, the rain started. It was only then in those small hours that the special mood was finally broken and Chris and Ben headed off to bed. On the table, the bottle of Pastis sat empty. Up in his stifling room, Ben was very aware that he had drunk far too much. His mouth felt horrible – furry, and full of the sickly taste of aniseed - and it was only after he had undressed that he remembered that he hadn't cleaned his teeth or filled his bed-side glass with water. Pulling on his dressing gown, he headed silently for the bathroom. Pushed open the door, he got a shock as he walked in - Chris was standing at the basin, naked, toothbrush in hand.

"God! Don't do that!" whispered Ben "You made me jump."

"Sorry," said Chris. "I forgot to bolt the door. I suspect I'm a little the worse for wear, dear boy."

His words were a bit unclear as he was talking with his tooth brush in his mouth, and it reminded Ben of that extraordinary evening in their university dorm when Chris had done the same thing once before - the first time Ben had seen him drunk, seen his likeable side, and the first time he had opened up to his new friend about the grief he felt over his circumcision. Ben suddenly felt a little unsteady. The humidity in the bathroom was intense. He sat down heavily on the edge of the bath. Chris nodded to the bath, his words clear now as he had rinsed and put his tooth brush away.

"Do you remember me sitting there on the edge of that bath all those years ago?"

"Of course," said Ben, "I don't think that's a moment I could ever forget!"

"Like I said at the time," said Chris, "a man in need never had a better friend in deed than you were to me that day."

"But I can see you didn't keep it up," said Ben, looking at Chris's well-thatched pubes, his balls hanging low in their hairy scrotum in the sweaty heat.

"No," said Chris. "It's hard work keeping on top of it when you have my kind of oh-so-manly coating of fur - which Mark rather likes, to be honest. And when I told him what you said about my lower portions looking like your mothers Christmas turkey after I'd shaved them, well, the way it made him laugh was the last straw to my dignity. So, it was back to how nature intended down there for me after that."

Chris paused. "Well, back to nature in that particular detail anyway. There's no going back from the other change."

Ben picked up Chris' subtext straight away. He wondered if perhaps Chris hadn't shared all his thoughts on the matter earlier, but it wasn't the time to dig any deeper.

"It's a shame you were never tempted to try the smooth look," said Chris, changing the subject with a teasing tone and a cheeky smile. "It would have suited you."

The way Chris's face changed as Ben opened his dressing gown was something that he would never forget. Although his pubic hair was intact above and around his cock, Ben's balls were totally hairless, smooth and sleek.

"Well," said Chris, "as you once memorably said to me all those years ago, you old dark horse you! That will teach me to tease you! When did you start doing that then?"

"There you are you see! I'm glad I can still surprise you, even though we know each other inside out. You remember that Miranda I went out with for a bit last year? Well, she said she really liked the smooth look and I was so smitten and eager to please her that I risked giving it a go. I stopped when she dumped me of course, and it grew back OK, but the first day here, I was sitting on the edge of the bath drying my feet when it struck me that I was in exactly the spot you'd sat in all those years ago. So, I thought "what the hell. Live on the wild side for once in your life."

"Mmmm, well it does look good on you, dear boy," said Chris. "Very good - in fact pretty much in the Fernando league, I'd say. Remember him?"

"Yeah, right! Course it does!" said Ben, sarcastically.

"No, I'm serious," said Chris, and he was. "It looks amazing. Really good. You never thought of going the full Monty, though?"

Sweat was running down both their faces, the stickiness in the bathroom almost unbearable. Ben said nothing. After a second or two, he just moved his legs very slightly further apart. The silence was intense as the two men held eye contact. After what seemed a very long time, Ben opened his legs imperceptibly wider still. Chris slowly reached behind him onto the shelf for his razor, still holding Ben's gaze. He reached again for his tube of shaving cream, but Ben's expression still didn't change, his legs again moving just a little wider apart again. Chris's angled his head slightly, his eyes asking a silent question. Their gaze remained unbroken. Ben gave an almost imperceptible nod.

The men felt the heat from each other's bodies as Chris closed in, and a bead of sweat fell from Ben's face onto his head. Chris worked quickly and expertly, no nicks or cuts this time. When he had removed all of Ben's pubic hair, he didn't stop. Gently running the razor over Ben's balls, he removed the tiny amount of stubble that had re-grown over the last couple of days. When he was done, he held a face flannel under the tap and then wiped the sweat, foam and gel from Ben's body, starting gently with his face and working down, seeming in no rush to finish the job. Finally, the flannel removed the last of the stubble and cream from Ben's crotch and revealed the complete smoothness and new nakedness there. Ben made the quietest of noises somewhere in the back of his throat as Chris held up the shaving mirror for him to see.

Chris put down the mirror and, slowly, reached towards Ben. With four fingers behind it, he rubbed his thumb backwards and forward over the smooth sleek, skin on the front of his heavy scrotum. Perhaps, thought Ben afterwards, it was all the drink that had made him too amazed to react. At that moment, all he could think about was remembering how he had discovered from Miranda,

once he had offered up to her the total smoothness of his special skin, the pleasure that a mouth and fingers could draw out from a man's balls - a part of him that, up until then, he had only thought of as offering the potential for hurt. Sitting on the edge of the bath, Ben suddenly realised how much he had missed the unusual, perhaps slightly taboo, feeling of edgy pleasure from his testicles that he hadn't experienced since he had split with her. Ben had slept with very few women and, apart from Miranda, and all the others had seemed so wary of his balls. Perhaps they were too conscious of the potential for pain that they offered and that had made their explorations very cautious, or, perhaps, they just barely noticed that they were there as they played such a small part in the pleasure a woman might get from a man. Somehow, playing with them himself wasn't the same at all. Perhaps, Ben realised, there was something very deep-seated about the trust needed to place, both literally and metaphorically, such a vulnerable part of oneself in the hands of another person. All Ben knew was that, at that moment, he had total trust in the person to whom he had entrusted his.

Ben became aware that Chris was exerting just a little pressure on his balls, squeezing them very gently between thumb and fingers. He rolled one nut then the other, moving them slowly and gently around through the skin. Then his hand was right around the scrotum, and Ben tensed slightly as there was the gentlest of tugs downwards. The sensation was slightly alarming at first, but he gave into it and found it was actually far from unpleasant. With a finger and thumb round the neck, Chris gently closed his hand round Ben's sack, moving his balls down to the bottom of the bag, stretching the skin tight over them so that their shape started to show through. There was a slight burning sensation but, to his surprise, Ben heard himself moan slightly. His cock was starting to stiffen. Once again, Chris looked Ben straight in the eye, his gaze returned unblinkingly. With one hand still gently pushing Ben's balls down, Chris rubbed a finger tenderly over the stretched, sleek surface of Ben's sack. As Chris knelt down and took Ben's balls into his mouth, Ben couldn't stop himself and just let his cock go brazenly, rampantly and un-apologetically hard. For once, he didn't care that his nude, exposed and immodest glans was just inches from someone's face. Chris was using his tongue expertly, working on each ball separately and then together. The sensations were exquisite. The big bead of pre-cum that formed in Ben's slit dropped onto Chris's face and ran down his cheek.

With his tongue still on Ben's balls, Chris felt behind him again for the shaving cream and squeezed a little out. Ben tensed when he felt the finger at his sphincter, prepared to wince over what he knew was about to happen, yet somehow ready for the pain and almost welcoming the inevitability of it. To his amazement, Chris's finger just slid deep inside him, meeting no resistance. He found Ben's prostate and pushed hard on it, still sucking Ben's balls gently. Ben's back arched, and he instinctively thrust his hips forward. Moments later, the force of his ejaculation amazed them both when rope after rope of thick cum hit Chris full in the face.

The two men held each other tight. Ben had been concerned that the sound of so much running water as they cleaned up would wake someone, but all had stayed quiet in the house. Now, as they embraced, Ben's dressing gown still loose over his shoulders, he was aware of Chris' soft cock resting on his as they held each other close for a long moment.

"Chris," said Ben, finally. "I'm so sorry. What was I thinking? And Mark. What on earth.....How can I face him tomorrow?"

"It's me that should be sorry. Except that I'm not," said Chris. "And don't worry about Mark. Like we once said all those years ago, what happens in France stays in France, and what happens in this bathroom most certainly stays in this bathroom."

When he spoke again a long moment later, Chris's tone was completely different, as if, somehow, a line had been drawn under things.

"Now Ben, dear boy, don't forget to floss, and sleep well."

Chris smacked Ben's bare bottom playfully on his way out.

Chapter Nine: The Hangover

The sound of tyres on gravel woke Ben. He panicked, thinking that Chris must have confessed to Mark, who had then packed his bags and gone. To his relief, Ben got to the window just in time to see that it wasn't Mark's car he had heard leaving – it was Charles', with Rory and James in it too. He felt awful in just about every way possible, both physically and mentally. The house was quiet, but he could smell coffee brewing. Ben was someone who, after his circumcision, had trained himself not to look at his genitals more than he needed to so, as he put on his dressing gown, he didn't look down to see the results of the previous night's shaving. He could feel though that something was different and, as the towelling slid across his newly smooth skin, he had an unwelcome flashback to being a teenager and feeling every movement of clothing across his new circumcision. It had been torture then, but this time the discomfort was only mental and, of course, this time he only had himself to blame. The folly of letting a drunk man with a steel blade in his hand come anywhere near one's private parts struck him forcefully - at least his circumciser had been sober. Luckily, Chris didn't seem to have done any damage that wouldn't eventually, if a little more stubbly than before, put itself right in a week or two, and he'd just have to live with the reminder of the previous night's madness until then.

The kitchen was empty when Ben got there but, as he was starting on his second cup of coffee at the kitchen table, he heard feet on the stairs. Steps as rapid and assured as the ones he heard wouldn't be coming from someone with a hangover, so he knew it had to be Mark. Ben braced himself for an unpleasant encounter that he knew would just have to be faced sooner or later. Perhaps, he thought, even though he felt in no fit state to face it, it was better done sooner. Mark barely slowed as he made his way across the kitchen towards the back door. There was no greeting or smile.

“Mark, I just ...” said Ben

“Christopher has told me,” interrupted Mark. The full three syllables didn't bode well.

“And there was me thinking that we just had two adolescent schoolboys with us on this trip, not four,” he said. “Little did I know.” His face was as serious as Ben had ever seen it. “Charles has taken the two well-behaved adolescents into town for the day to give you some peace and quiet to recover, not that either of you deserve it, and I'm going to play golf with some sensible people. And if either of you know what's good for you, you'll have some dinner organised before I get back. Here, you'll need these. “

Mark threw a packet of aspirins onto the kitchen table with some force and slammed the door behind him.

Ten minutes later, Mark turned the car into the lane that led to absolutely nowhere at all since the village creamery had closed down. He pulled over onto the verge, un-wrapped the packet of Galois he had just bought and threw the plastic film out of the window. It just blew back in at him. He smoked the first cigarette with long, hard drags, carefully aiming the smoke out of the open window. Chris would smell it on his breath later of course but, today of all days, he wasn't going to be in any position to claim the moral high ground over anyone else's lapses. When the cigarette was down to its last centimetre, Mark lit a second one from it and threw the butt out of the window.

“Bloody Hilton-Smiths,” he said out loud.

When he had tossed the second butt out of the window too, Mark kicked off his Timberlands. Looking cautiously in the rear-view mirror to ensure he was still alone, he undid his trousers and worked them down his legs and over his feet until they were in a pile under the pedals. He wriggled his tight trunks down too and stuffed them under the seat before pulling his trousers back on, just as far as his knees. After one more check in the mirror, he reached behind him and groped in the pocket of his golf caddy bag on the back seat, pulling out a tatty looking Jiffy Bag and tipping out the contents onto the passenger seat. The first thing he selected was a heavy steel cock ring. As he threaded his cock and balls through it, he wondered again if Rory had any idea that such things existed and, whether he did or not, if there was any way of getting one for him. He thought that such an obvious kindred spirit as Rory would get so much pleasure from it, and he how himself regretted coming so late to its metallic pleasures and the looks and sensations it offered. He guiltily admitted to himself the plain erotic pleasure of the idea of a heavily hung and very sexy young man like Rory wearing metal, let alone the fact that it would make his already impressive bulge into something even more spectacular.

With his cock ring in place Mark stretched out his scrotum. His fist closed around it between his balls and body as he waited the moment or two it took for his balls to relax into the stretch. Using his other hand to stretch open his Oxballs, he manoeuvred the silicone carefully into place. His eyes closed momentarily as he released it, feeling the sudden grip and stretch on his sack and realising how much he had been missing the sensation since he had been in France. Again, his thoughts turned to Rory and how he might look with a ball stretcher on. Obviously from the massively distended Lycra over them, Rory had a good big pair of balls, but Mark wondered how low they hung and if, perhaps, they might even be able to take the higher type of stretcher that he had never been able to wear himself. Lastly, he picked up his silver glans ring. Stretching his long foreskin right back, he eased the ring over his glans until it finally dropped into place in the groove behind his sulcus. He adjusted it so that the inbuilt metal ball sat comfortably over his frenulum and then slid his skin forward so that the whole things was covered over. As always, he loved seeing the outline of the metal through his foreskin. Although you could only really make out that there was anything there if you knew what you were looking for, he thought again about all the men who had stood next to him in a public toilet or in a changing room when he was wearing it and hoped that at least some of them had realised what he had had hidden away.

He pulled his trousers up again, high on his waist this time, and did his belt up one notch tighter than before to keep them there. He eased his now impressive package down his left leg and enjoyed the feeling of the seam of his trousers sitting deep between his buttocks. He looked down at his crotch and relished the shape that had formed, thinking again of Rory. With his hand resting on his package, he smoked a third cigarette and enjoyed the total silence. When he finished it, he opened the car door and carefully picked up the other two butts, tucking all three carefully into the cigarette packet. He reversed the car and turned onto the main road towards the golf course. As he drove, he turned the recent events over in his mind. Chris, to his credit, had come clean straight away and had made no attempt to excuse himself. Mark had been hurt, but he was starting to realise that he was actually more annoyed by Chris getting so drunk and doing so little to stop Charles going off on a rant than anything else. As to the shaving and what had followed, Mark was, he had to admit to himself, beginning to feel rather intrigued by the idea. It was harmless enough and, if he was really honest about it, there was something erotic about it for him too, not least because he now had at least a glimmer of information about what was inside Ben's trousers. Mark had always known just how close "the odd couple" were and, in ways that he'd never really got to the bottom of, that their time together at the gite all those years ago had been very special and significant for them both. Mark believed Chris when he said that he'd never touched Ben's cock and vice versa. "Yeah, right", Mark

had thought at times, but then again, he knew that Chris had never lied to him about anything else. And Ben, lovely Ben – lovely sexy Ben who had no idea just how lovely or sexy he was – well, it was just nice to think of him lightening up a bit sometimes. Mark had been amazed when Chris had told him that the pair of them used to go skinny dipping. He couldn't believe that Ben would be comfortable being naked with anyone and, as a Catholic himself, he had that down to Ben's upbringing. Chris, in one of his more drunken moments, had once hinted that Ben was well hung and perhaps, Mark thought, that was why he was so shy. Chris would never go into details though, however much Mark tried to get it out of him. Frustratingly, especially as it was such a waste of a good body, Ben never wore tight fitting clothes that might give a clue to his endowment, even if the signs were only readable by an expert eye. The more he thought about it, Mark couldn't deny that he found the idea of two men who weren't lovers - and especially one as straight as Ben - being so intimate. As he thought about it all, the ring in the groove behind his glans started to feel pleasantly tight as his cock swelled.

Although neither had dressed yet, Chris and Ben were together in the kitchen by the time Mark was on the first tee.

"Well, dear boy," said Chris, "I think it's time to deploy the famous Hilton-Smith hangover cure. Three aspirins, lots of coffee, and a full fry up, whether you think you can face it or not, and all rounded off by a dip in the pool and a nap."

Perhaps the painkillers were kicking in, but Ben was amazed that he could actually eat anything. He did indeed feel a little better after making himself eat a sausage and bacon, but the fried egg that Chris did for him really was more than he could face. With the dishes in the sink, neither questioned that they were going to swim naked. Apart from the fact that there was no one else around, getting their trunks would have meant the effort of going upstairs, and it was a day to conserve as much energy as possible.

Ben made himself keep swimming rather longer than he wanted in the hope that the exercise might help his recovery, so he was tired when he finally climbed out and lay next to Chris on the grass by the pool. It was only then that it struck Ben that he was naked, in fact more naked than he had ever been in his life, and about as naked as any man could be; not only did he have no foreskin to cover his glans, but he now had no pubic hair either. In the intense midday sun, he was just too hot and tired to be bothered with thinking how he felt about that, but he was certain that there was no chance that he would be lying there in that state with anyone other than Chris.

It was only when Ben jolted awake as he heard a mosquito buzz past his ear that he realised that he must have been asleep. He was close to nodding back off when he was suddenly awakened again when the mosquito bothered him a second time, this time walking across the newly-smooth patch of skin above his penis. He put his hand down to brush the annoyance away, but it wasn't a mosquito. It was Chris's finger. Then there were two fingers. Then three. Even when the "mosquito" moved and started walking very lightly around his circumcision scar, Ben still made no move to brush it away. Despite his tiredness and hangover, by the time Chris's fingers had moved to run very lightly around the ridge of his glans, Ben was very erect indeed.

A minute later, Chris was reaching for his tube of factor 30, but not because of the sun. He squeezed some onto his fingers, parted his legs, and started to reach down between his thighs. His lube-laden fingers were already at his anus when he felt Ben's hand on his. He was fully expecting Ben to tell him to stop and to have a bit of sense, but he just silently looked Chris straight in the eye as he gripping his hand to prevent him from spreading the cream inside his sphincter. Instead, Ben opened his own legs a little and led Chris's hand between them. His eyes closed for a long second as, slowly, he guided one of Chris's slippery fingers inside him, then, with a slight moan, a second. Ben reached out for the tube of sun cream this time and squeezed more onto the palm of Chris's other hand. He guided the hand very deliberately back onto Chris's erection, gently closed the fingers around it, and then moved the hand up and down the shaft a couple of times to spread the lubrication. For a moment or two they were still, Ben's hand still over Chris's, Chris's hand around his cock. For the second time that day, Chris tilted his head at Ben, asking a silent question and, again, the reply was a slow nod. Chris gently rolled Ben onto his side and guided his legs up into foetal position. Just as Chris's glans made its first gentle push at Ben's sphincter, the phone in the kitchen started ringing. Both men froze. There was no answering machine. It just kept ringing.

"I'll have to answer it," said Ben after it had rung twenty times or more. "It could be something up with Rory".

It was Becky. Ben instantly lost his erection as he recognised her voice. She was worried that she hadn't heard from Rory since he had rung from the ferry, even though he'd promised to call again in a day or so. She'd been trying him but it had kept going to voicemail, and now it was just ringing with no reply, so she was worried that something was wrong. Ben reminded her that there was no mobile signal at the gite, reassured her that Rory was having a great time, and told her he was in town with Charles and James. He said that he'd make sure that Rory rang her later on the landline

"Well just make sure he knows how to work it," she said frostily as she hung up.

When Ben went back outside, Chris was fast asleep, still erect though. Within minutes, Ben was too – both asleep, and erect.

* * * * *

In a cubicle in the gents at the golf club after a long day on the course and spending far more than he normally would have even considered on lunch, Mark was having second thoughts. He had been about to take off his gear and put it back in the Jiffy bag before heading home in a more respectable state, but had changed his mind.

"Sod it," he thought. "All bets seem to be off today."

He compromised and left the stretcher and cock ring in place round his genitals, but he put his pants back on again and let his trousers sit a more respectably down on his waist. He looked at the results in the locker room mirror and was pleased to see he was still showing something of a packet. He would never normally have dreamt of doing it, but he liked the idea that he might, very discretely and in a way that wouldn't upset him, just give Rory a little run for his money that evening. He wondered if the boy would even notice the subtle difference to his outline, knowing it was probably a very vague possibility, but you never knew. He suspected - probably, he knew, more in hope than expectation - that Rory might turn out to be something of a like mind in these matters.

* * * * *

“Stop Chris, seriously,” mumbled Ben as he half woke. “They’ll be back soon.” He realised, even though he had a magazine over his face to protect him from the worst of it, that the sun was no longer over the poolside so it had to be late in the afternoon. His head still felt thick, and he had been deeply asleep. He realised too that he was sunburnt from lying out unprotected all day, and he didn’t relish yet another discomfort to deal with.

He had woken as he felt Chris’s fingers again, brushing again across his smooth balls, the skin there was especially sensitive in its freshly-shaved state. The fingers moved there again.

“Chris – stop it. I mean it!”

Someone giggled, but it wasn’t Chris. Ben panicked, recognising the laugh – it was Rory’s. He was instantly awake now and propped himself up on his elbows. Rory was standing over him, looking down at his father’s crotch. Aghast, Ben followed his gaze. Rory had managed to rest his sunglasses over the sleeping Ben’s cock, as if over a long, floppy nose. The brush he had felt on his balls was from Rory’s touch when he had placed a blade of grass in a curve on his father’s balls in the shape of a “smile,” completing the suggestion of a face.

“That’s going to look really good on Facebook!” said Rory. “Only joking dad – chill!” he added, as he caught the look of total horror on his dad’s face.

As if things couldn’t have got any worse for Ben, Mark was approaching down the path from the house. This was an encounter Ben had not been looking forward to and, under these circumstances, it would now be twenty times worse. Mark reached them, took in the situation and laughed heartily as he put his arm round Rory and squeezed him.

“My word!” was all he said.

“I never knew you shaved your nads, Dad,” said Rory. “It looks cool. Can I do mine too?”

Mark was talking before Ben had a chance to think what to say.

“Well Rory, if you want to do it, they say it’s very much easier if you get someone else to shave them for you. Isn’t that right, Ben?” he said, with a wink at an open-mouthed and confused Ben.

“Yeah?” said Rory. “I’d never thought of that – makes sense though. Thanks for the tip, Mark.”

“Look,” said Mark to Ben, “Chris has got Charles and James out of the way for a bit. He sent them up the village, pretending we needed a baguette, so you’ve got a chance to make yourself decent, but they won’t be long. Rory, why don’t you nip up to your dad’s room get him something to put on?”

“Mark, I.....” said Ben as Rory walked away, but Mark interrupted.

“Don’t worry Ben. What’s done is done. All forgotten.”

Mark turned to follow Rory back towards the house. After a couple of steps, he looked back at Ben, who was looking more bemused than Mark could ever remember seeing him and clearly at a complete loss as to what to do or say. Ben was in a deep dilemma, wondering if Mark had forgiven not only the night before but what had so nearly happened that afternoon too, or if he was blissfully unaware of that part of it. In the end, Ben realised guiltily that he was going to be uncharacteristically disingenuous and assume the latter.

“Looking good, Ben,” said Mark. “No sign of a Christmas turkey there!”

Chapter Ten: The Pool Table

Charles had taken the boys paintballing when, that morning, Mark had told him to get them out of the way. It wasn't his idea of a good day out but, when told that Chris and Ben would be best left alone for some quiet time with their hangovers, it was what both boys said that they'd like to do. When Rory and James had had enough time getting messy at Toropark, Charles suggested that they had a look round the shops at the mall before heading for home. With Charles deep in conversation in the wine dealers, Rory and James wandered around for a while before ending up in a clothes store. Although Rory said nothing, the T shirt with a rather garish logo on the front that James bought was, in his eyes, rather childish-looking. He himself had spent some considerable time in the changing rooms trying and re-trying on several pairs of trousers and was very pleased with himself when he'd finally made his choice. When they got back to the gite, the boys both needed proper showers and a change of clothes and, although it was still very warm, Rory decided he would wear his new purchase for the evening rather than go back into his usual shorts.

With the party assembled, Mark wasted no time in following Chris into the kitchen when he went in to fetch starters. He couldn't wait to raise the topic which had avidly held his attention whilst they had all sat outside over pre-dinner drinks.

"Rory's new trousers!" he whispered.

"Rory's new trousers indeed!" replied Chris.

Rory had chosen well, and they suited him. Anyone would have said he looked smart in them, but Mark and Chris had both instantly taken in something else as well.

"They certainly show a lot of content, don't they," Chris continued. "Do you think he realises? Perhaps he's got the taste for that kind of thing after the Lycra."

"And the arse on him – dear God!" said Mark. "And are you thinking what I'm thinking too?"

"Commando?" said Chris. "Yes, I was wondering. He has to be, doesn't he? Judging from the way that big lump looks so squishy."

Further speculation was postponed when Ben came in to offer help. Whatever Rory was or was not wearing under his trousers, his father was, very unusually for him, definitely going commando. When Rory had gone up to Ben's room earlier to get him some clothes, he had just grabbed what was lying on the bed - a T shirt and an old pair of shorts - and it had never occurred to him that his dad needed some underwear too. Ben had felt more than a little uncomfortable with the unfamiliar sensation of his long penis flopping around loose inside the shorts but, after the day's events, he didn't want to leave the scene of what he hoped was restored normality to go upstairs to sort the situation out – it was better to be around to know exactly what might or might not be said about what had happened that earlier.

When Ben arrived in the kitchen to help, Mark asked him to check on James's veggie roast in the Aga. As Ben squatted, pre-occupied with dealing with the hot, heavy baking tray, he was completely unaware that the legs of the loose, short-legged shorts that he never wore in public had ridden well up his thighs. When Mark happened to glance across, he was transfixed in disbelief. Seeing the stuff of his fantasies made real, he saw that the end of Ben's penis was poking out from the left leg of his shorts. The large, sculpted mushroomed head so shapely looking, the deep ridge of the glans, the skin behind it sleek and taught – to Mark's eyes, it looked just beautiful. He had often wished that

Chris still had his foreskin and missed the pleasure that playing with it would have offered them both but, at that moment, his only thought was how amazing it would be had Chris had the same sort of perfect circumcision as Ben's. For a brief moment, he almost wished that his own penis looked like that too. As he took it in, he longed to reach down and hold it. In a day when so many unlikely things had happened and, particularly, such an unexpected side to Ben coming to light, Mark wondered for an instant if he dared seize the opportunity and caress it with his fingers. He wondered how Ben might react if he did, especially when he found out the exquisite pleasures Mark was sure he could draw from it - gently stroking the scar line, running his fingers gently over the textured head, around behind the rim of the glans and then underneath - perhaps into an empty groove where the frenulum would once have been. It was, Mark concluded later as he lay in bed and brought the image back to his mind, probably a good thing that Charles had chosen that moment to come in and start fussing over wine before he had made a complete fool of himself. Perhaps it was better that it was just an image for him to remember and savour, along with the tantalising thought of what - just possibly - might have been.

They ate dinner outside. Later, in what had become an evening routine, they moved from the table to the chairs by the pool to have coffee. Mark moved unusually fast to make sure that he got prime position for his purpose, grabbing the seat directly opposite Rory. He willed himself not to be too obvious as, with no table in the way, he could now properly appreciate the view. He was sure that no one else, not even Chris, would be aware of just how often Rory was glancing down at his crotch, seeming to eye it anew every time he changed position and the lump inside his thigh assumed a subtly different shape. A couple of times, Rory had squeezed his legs together in a movement that Mark had never seen him make before and which compressed the bulge and made it stand up high. At other times, he had casually stretched his long legs out in front of him, his eyes again flitting downwards in self-examination. After a while, Rory excused himself to go to the bathroom and, when he came back, there was finally no doubt for Mark that the lad was suddenly very bulge-aware - now his packet was very clearly down the left side whereas it had been down the right before. "It's the wrong way round," Mark thought to himself. "Last night was my just deserts in advance of my rewards today!" He smiled to himself in sudden self-knowledge as he realised that, had he been drunk and squeezed into the bathroom with lovely Ben, he'd probably not have been able to stop himself misbehaving either. As to what had happened later by the pool, he was blissfully unaware of all that but, just perhaps, his feelings might have been the same had he known about that too.

After coffee Charles, who had, to his surprise, rather enjoyed his day out with James and Rory, challenged the boys to a game of pool. They adjourned to the games room on the ground floor of cowshed, leaving the other three sitting outside over more wine. Their sporadic chat was companionable, and after the upset of the day it was restoring for them all to find that things had blown over. After a while, Ben looked across at Mark and Chris, wondering why they were suddenly silent - transfixed almost. He followed their gaze across the garden to see what seemed to be absorbing them so deeply. The big double barn doors of the cowshed were wide open to let in the breeze, the pool game well under way inside. Rory was taking a tricky shot, leaning low across the table. His arse, encased very sleekly in his new trousers, was directly facing them, almost as if he was pushing it back out towards them on purpose.

"Excuse me," said Ben. "It doesn't actually need a psychic to read your minds at this moment. That's my son you're ogling, do you mind! Don't you be getting any ideas, you two!"

"Sorry!" said Chris, laughing. "It's a fair cop, but I think we all know there's no way he'd let us get within a pool cue's length of him. But you have to admit that it's a pretty amazing sight. I reckon you're just going to have to get used to him being a real head-turner."

“Yes,” added Mark. “Whichever way he’s facing!”

“Actually, it does look rather spectacular, doesn’t it?” said Ben, smiling. “Even I can tell that. Of course I know he’s safe with you two, but you are both so damn un-subtle, you know!”

“Just take it as a compliment that we don’t feel we have to hide it from you, dear boy,” said Chris. He paused. “Actually, it’s rather taken me back.”

“What has?” asked Ben.

“Well, seeing Rory over the pool table like that.”

“OK - go on, let us have it then!” said Ben, sensing that Chris was about to start on one of his stories.

“Well it can’t have been long after your last visit, Ben - before I met himself of course!” said Chris, nodding towards Mark. “I was here for a long weekend with the Ma and Da to do a bit more work on the place. Anyway, the Da heard in the village that the seedy bar that used to be by the bakers was closing down, so he went in and offered the old boy that owned it a few quid for the pool table. He said he’d be happy for the Da to take it off his hands, but you can see the size of the thing though - there was no way we were going to be able to shift it in the Volvo. So the Da had a brainwave and asked Dupont the builder to bring round his low-loader for it. Well, the three of us tried to lift it on, but no way could we budge it. So Dupont nipped home and came back with - and I use the term advisedly - some extra muscle in the form of the lovely Patrice! Remember him, Ben?”

“I could hardly forget!” said Ben, smiling.

“Oh him!” groaned Mark theatrically, obviously knowing all about him too.

“Turned out he was home because he was getting married the following week. Anyway, we finally got the thing back here and into the cow shed – it nearly killed us, but we managed somehow. So, after all that effort, the Ma and Da took Dupont senior off to the living room for a glass of something, but Patrice...”

“Yes?” said Ben and Mark, in unison.

“Well, he suggested that he and I have a game of pool to christen the table in its new home. Anyway, with the old-uns out of the way, that lasted for about two minutes before super-stud put down his cue and was all over me like a rash. Imagine! Quelle surprise – him about to be getting married! Anyway, after a rather intensive snog, his hands were wandering and it was clear he wanted more. Well, it seemed rude to refuse after him helping us out, not that I wanted to decline anyway. I could see the way the wind was likely to end up blowing after that previous time, but I could hardly go into the house for some bachelors friend with the three of them in there chatting away – the Ma and Da pretending they actually liked the village Beaujolais and pumping Dupont for village gossip - so I nipped upstairs to the bathroom in the cowshed to see what I could find to use to help things along that might do the trick in lieu of the real thing.”

“You absolute slapper!” said Mark.

Chris ignored him. “All there was in the cabinet was toothpaste and Ma’s best joboba and gardenia hand cream. Well I didn’t much fancy the idea of minty freshness up my nether regions, so the hand cream it had to be - any port in a storm. So I came down again - internally basted, shall we say, and looking forward to a good assault on my ramparts like before. But imagine my surprise! When I got back, there was Patrice - knickers round his ankles, lying face-down over the pool table pretty

much like Rory is now, positively prone and gagging for it, primed for action and clearly wanting me to storm HIS ramparts this time round!"

"Blimey!" said Ben. The possible interpretation of Rory's current pose now rather alarming him.

"The thing was," said Chris, "he'd had much the same idea as me. While I'd been hunting round upstairs, he'd done the same thing downstairs for something to facilitate the invasion. So there he was, internally basted too - ready and more than willing to receive. The trouble was, the only thing he'd been able to find to baste himself with was in the Da's tool box."

Chris paused, making them wait.

"So I made my debut performance as a top with the aid of a dollop from the Da's tub of Swarfega!"

"Ooooh, Swarfega," said Ben, daring to adopt a camp tone for once and instantly hoping that the other two didn't take offence, "How very butch, Mr 'orn!"

"Yes ducky, you can't get more man's-man than Swarfega, can you," said Chris, relieving Ben's worry by using his best Julian and Sandy. "Anyway," he continued, back in his story telling voice, "needs must, and it did the trick. But it was days before I got the smell of the damn stuff off my todger."

"Served you right, you total hussy," said Mark, laughing.

"But at least your motions the next morning must have smelt beautifully of jojoba and gardenia!" said Ben, surprised at how disinhibited he was being and simultaneously hoping that he hadn't overstepped the mark. Somehow, the events of the day seemed to have loosened things up between the three of them and, amazingly, brought them closer. "And Patrice! Mr straight guy - I'm amazed at him, wanting a seeing-to I mean!"

"Well," said Chris, "when we'd concluded operations, he went all true-confessions time on me. He said that he would be married within the week and that he just needed to know what it was like to be on the receiving end before it was too late - that just once would be enough, and that I was the perfect person to do the job. It was quite a compliment, I suppose. And I think he went away with his itch scratched, as it were. I've seen him in the village a couple of times since with wifey and a pile of kids, but I often wondered if he'd ever wanted to go back for more."

"Not from you, I hope!" said Mark.

"Rest assured, love," said Chris, with a peck on Mark's cheek. "You know me!"

"That's the trouble," said Mark, "I do!"

Ben was smiling, but cringing inside. After recent events and – even worse - near events earlier in the day, this all seemed very dangerous territory and he hoped the conversation wasn't going to veer towards issues that were best left unexplored. Luckily, Chris was keen to continue his narrative.

"I was worried that the Ma might realise that she was a good few dollops down on the old hand cream, and there was the stain too that you can still see on the baize where Patrice left a rather copious emission, but they didn't notice either, thank God," said Chris.

There was a sudden loud clonking of pool balls followed by an excited shout as someone in the pool game won a round. The three men looked across, drawn by the sudden noise. Rory's rear end

was spectacularly on show again as he bent once more over the pool table to take his next shot. All three men fell silent, lost in their different thoughts. Ben was thinking about how a man as straight as he assumed Patrice to be could need to know what it was like to have a penis inside them, how close he had come to it that afternoon himself, and how dangerous in so many ways it might have been had it actually happened. Would he get another chance? Would he even want that, or was it just something special about him and Chris? Would it be some strange kind of destiny if it were with Chris? Had the time been so nearly right, his one chance, the stars finally in alignment for something inevitable to happen? His penis stiffened as, to his surprise, he owned the unsettling thoughts as erotic, but he cursed silently as his bare glans, even less protected than normal with no underwear, snagged painfully on inside of the zip of his shorts as it erected. "Bloody circumcision" he thought. "It just never goes away."

Chris's thoughts were about Patrice, enjoying the almost smug feeling that came from recollecting the one time in his life that he had been a real top, and with a nominally straight man too. He felt his glans stroke across the inside of his shorts as it started to stiffen and he revelled, despite his change of heart about those who had been circumcised and regretted it, in the brazen, erotic feeling of his most private part being so totally exposed and open to stimulation. At that moment, he felt sorry for uncut men who had something in the way to take the edge off experiencing such blatant sexuality.

Mark's thoughts were about the perfect, prime arse that Rory was showing. He was wondering, rather hoping in fact, that the young man might actually be aware of exactly what he was doing, perhaps, even enjoying putting on such a blatant display. Ever the teacher, he was wondering too if he would prefer to be instructing Rory on the techniques of anal sex whilst flat on his back on the pool table with Rory's long, thick penis inside him, or if it would be even better to be on top of him and enjoying penetrating his amazing arse. His penis stiffened at the thought of how good either prospect would be, and he was suddenly very aware that his cock ring was getting uncomfortably tight and that his glans ring, now shifted a little out of optimum position, was biting painfully into his helmet. One of his Granny Burns' favourite sayings suddenly came into his mind: "'T'is surely the price of you."

Rory was thinking about his new discovery – the amazingly sensual sensation of wearing tight-fitting clothes. Somehow, it made him feel differently about himself in a way he had yet to fully understand but which strangely excited him. As he bent over the pool table, he wasn't concerned about whether his display was being enjoyed by anyone else or not, but simply revelling in feeling the figure-hugging snugness of his new trousers tight around his arse. As he pushed his crotch hard into the cushion around the pool table when taking his shot, the sensuality of the feeling of the sleek material clinging to his penis and sliding exquisitely over his bare helmet was just as intense. In his mind was his reflection in his bedroom mirror, the exciting shape in his new trousers of his penis, obvious for anyone who cared to look, hanging so far down his left leg where he had carefully tucked it as he pulled them up for the second time after deciding he was going to dispense with his pants.

James's one thought was how amazing it would be to kneel down and nuzzle his nose deep into the inviting crevice between Rory's tight cheeks as he leant over the pool table.

Charles's thoughts weren't at all erotic. Ever a poor loser, he was thinking about how he could come back from third place and win the round.

Chapter Eleven: Like Father, Like Son

Once he was certain Chris was asleep, Mark crept guiltily to the bedroom window in hope of seeing Rory give another Lycra-fuelled performance in front of his bedroom mirror. Or perhaps, he thought with equal anticipation, it might be something tight-trouser themed tonight. To his disappointment, Rory's room was in darkness. What Mark didn't know though was that James's bedside light was still on round the other side of the building, and that it was angled down on Rory's crotch as he sat on the edge of James's bed.

At that moment, there was anxiety in the air in James's room. Earlier, Rory had begun to have doubts about the whole thing and seriously wonder if it was such a good idea after all. He wasn't now so sure about how he'd feel appearing suddenly smooth-balled in front of his peers when they were back in the school changing rooms, or if the hair on his sack would have grown back by the first week of term if he didn't like the look or just lost his nerve. James was worried too, but for different reasons. It was partly over how a razor still felt such an unfamiliar and dangerous a thing in his hand. He would never admit it to Rory, but he had only had to shave his face a handful of times and he was seriously worried that his lack of experience in wielding a sharp blade might lead to disaster. Apart from that, the whole idea of having Rory's genitals inches from his face as he worked on them was so overwhelming that he was worried that he wouldn't be able to control himself and face the embarrassment of Rory noticing that he had an erection. That would be awful. It would be so gay, and being gay was a worry that was never far from James's mind. So many people said it was OK if you were, but not all of them – they said such horrible things at school, none of which seemed to fit with what he knew about his lovely uncle and his husband, and even his dad said things sometimes too. But of course, James had said yes to Rory's request, hoping he hadn't sounded too keen.

In the end, the whole plan ended up being a house of cards that could so easily have fallen down but which was kept up by way both of them were taken in by how unconcerned about it the other seemed. Although both of them actually felt far from blasé, the other's apparently casualness convinced them both that it was no big deal and meant that there would be too much loss of face and embarrassment in opting out. Rory had steeled himself to ask for James's help before they went down for dinner, telling himself that it was "now or never." It was tricky territory though, and it had taken him a while before he'd managed to make himself broach the subject. They'd been getting on really well, talking long into the nights about this and that, but this was very different territory and he wasn't at all sure how James would react. In the end, Rory had just bitten the bullet:

"James, mate, can I ask you to do me a favour later on?"

When it came, James was amazed by Rory's request - it wasn't at all what he had expected, and he was really flattered that Rory felt able to ask him to do something so intimate for him. So eager was he to please his adored new best mate that he would have done anything for him anyway, but this was about as amazing a request as it could be, and James, his mind reeling, had hoped that his instant deep blush hadn't shown. That Rory wanted him to do something so personal - something that needed so much trust and openness - was just incredible. Apart from that, James had been admiring Rory's body so much and wondering intently about what the rest of it might be like that it was amazing that, suddenly, here was an opportunity to get to see.

Rory had actually wondered about shaving his balls before. Some of the older boys at school had talked about it after a rugby match, saying that girls really preferred boys to be like that as it was gross to be hairy down there and just much cleaner and tidier when you were smooth. He'd listened

with interest but not been totally convinced. Rory had been a bit later than most in reaching puberty so it didn't feel so long since he'd been relieved to finally get some pubic hair and lost the smoothness that was starting to set him apart from his friends. A few weeks after that conversation, Liam in his class had turned up at PE with his big balls shaved smooth. It had looked OK, and if Liam - the alpha male in the pack who was never short of a girl or two hanging round him - thought it was a good idea, then perhaps there really was something in it. When he had seen that his dad shaved too - shaved everything in fact, and not just his balls - it had seemed like the final seal of approval, although there was some confusion in his mind about how that childish look could be something a mature man might chose. Rory was a bit surprised too that his dad, who had been at pains to help when he'd suggested it was time to start shaving his face, hadn't ever said ever anything about shaving anywhere else. He'd wondered before what it might be like to do it but had been worried about cutting himself, so when someone as sensible as Mark had said that it was much better to get someone to do it for you, that seemed to be the answer.

That night, Rory waited until all seemed quiet in the house before heading to James's room. In one hand were his razor, shaving gel and a face flannel and in the other some hot water in a bucket that he'd found under the sink in the bathroom. He'd thought long and hard about what to wear and. at first, he was just going to keep his new trousers on. He had experimented in front of the mirror with his ball sack out of the fly but his cock still inside but, although he liked what he saw reflected, he realised that it wasn't exactly going to be practical for shaving. As he re-stowed his balls, a hair on them snagged painfully on the zip, and he enjoyed the thought of not having to put up with things like that in future once he was shaved, especially as he knew that having his new discovery of the intriguing and rather taboo feeling of not wearing pants was one that he was going to repeat. In the end, the easiest thing seemed to be to opt for just his pyjama shorts - it was just too hot and sticky to wear the top that went with them, but the shorts were loose and would allow James easy access without the embarrassment of being totally naked.

The awkwardness was palpable when Rory joined James, but there was no going back. Rory sat on the edge of James's bed, summoned up his resolve and rolled up the left side of his pyjama shorts. Careful to keep his penis hidden and tucked over to the right, he fumbled slightly as he reached in and freed his scrotum. James was glad that, apart from the Anglepoise bedside light that was directed on Rory's crotch, the room was dark enough that the flush on his face as he took in the view wouldn't show. James took in that Rory's balls were considerably bigger than his own, and that the sack they sat in hung much lower too. He was in awe, but realised too that there was going to be more skin to shave than he'd thought. He was relieved though that they were covered in only a small amount of wispy hair - rather less than he had himself - so there wouldn't be too much to remove. To his slight horror, James saw Rory's testicles move around spontaneously inside their bag as they settled into their new position hanging out of the leg of his shorts.

The silence was intense, but what was there to say? James picked up the can of shaving foam and sprayed a little onto the left side of Rory's scrotum, realising that it would only be another second or two before his first touch of someone else's genitals. He had spent the seemingly endless time waiting for Rory in anxiously planning his strategy, working out that it might be easier to see what he was doing if he didn't coat all of Rory's scrotum in gel at once. He braced himself as he picked up the razor, surprised that his hand was as steady as it was. He lifted one of Rory's balls, amazed at how large and weighty the nut felt and how freely it moved around inside the sack, and realised instantly that that looseness was going to make the job harder than it would be with his own much tighter-skinned set-up. Neither boy was expecting that the first scrape of the razor on Rory's skin would be so audible in the complete silence of the night, and James felt Rory flinch slightly at the sound.

“You OK?” asked James, glad to get Rory’s “I’m cool,” in return.

James worked with intense concentration, willing himself to take the care needed to avoid nicking Rory with the new blade. It took surprisingly few runs of the razor before he was fairly sure that, mercifully incident-free so far, he had rendered the skin on one side of the sack free of its hair. He reached for the flannel, dunked it in the bucket and gently wiped away the foam and stubble. As he did so, he worried that perhaps he should have invited Rory to do the job, but luckily Rory neither moved or spoke. He just held his pose, leaning back on the bed on his elbows.

“OK?” James asked again. Rory just nodded.

James reached for the foam again, feeling a little more confident this time. Getting at Rory’s left testicle was much harder. Somehow the folds of pyjama were more in the way now, and he felt worryingly clumsier working on his non-dominant side. Rory saw the problem, and eased the pyjama material a little higher up his thigh. This time, Rory gasped slightly at James’s first run with the razor. James was mortified that he had cut him but, to his relief after a tense second or two, there was no blood.

“It’s OK,” said Rory, “I think it just snagged a bit.”

“Look,” said James, hesitantly, “it’s cool with me if you don’t want to, but I think this might be a whole lot easier if you took your shorts off. They’re right in the way, and I really don’t want to hurt you.”

James did actually think it would be easier, but he also knew that the suggestion was coloured by his need to grab the chance, perhaps the only one he might ever get, of seeing Rory naked. There was something about the pose Rory was in too – propped up on the bed in which he himself would later sleep, prone and vulnerable to another man with a sharp blade in his hand – which was incredibly powerful for James. That the man who had imbued him with that power was someone he adored gave James a rush of feelings that he didn’t quite understand.

Rory had made no reply when James suggested that he take off his shorts. James made a show of turning away to rinse out the flannel in the bucket, hoping against hope that Rory would comply. Taking his time with the flannel was partly done out of some sort of tact, but also with the calculated knowledge that making it that little bit less embarrassing for Rory to undress by being unobserved would perhaps make him more likely to do so. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Rory stand up and slip off his shorts.

James knew that his next glance of Rory – prone again on his bed and totally naked, his genitals put on full display, even if only for a purely practical reason - was an image for which he wanted to be ready so that he could hold it in his mind. And there he was, and every bit as incredible as James had imagined. Tall, handsome, lovely Rory. There on HIS bed. Rory’s body arched as he lay back on his elbows like before, his stomach flat and taut, but below them now was his cock, finally revealed. It was every bit as beautiful as James had dared imagined, his speculations about it up-dated since the special revelation a couple of days back that there wouldn’t be the neat, perfect bud of skin on the end that James had previously assumed. Even after seeing the big packet that that he hadn’t been able to take his eyes off when Rory had been wearing his - yes, HIS! – spare cycling shorts, the penis was just so much heftier than he’d dared hope. The thick tube of flesh just lay there on top of Rory’s big, heavy balls. It was just very long, and much thicker than James had imagined too. He took in the smoothness of the skin on the shaft, so tight and sleek, with just a hint of a ridge at the circumcision line a good inch behind the deep rim of the head that was the biggest James had ever seen. There

wasn't even a scrap of foreskin - everything was just flat and sleek. It aroused James so deeply that, strangely, he didn't go hard. Nothing was said as James sprayed the other side of Rory's balls. It was easier work now and James was getting more confident too, but the knowledge that Rory's penis was just inches from his face meant he had to concentrate even harder on the job in hand.

The initial embarrassment over and feeling somehow that it was actually all going to be OK, Rory's thoughts drifted as he simply offered himself up to James and put his trust in him. It was, he mused, a bit like when he had gone to the new hairdresser and the man had finally given up on the small-talk and concentrated on his work. As his mind wandered, he thought about his dad that afternoon and the amazing discovery - so out of character - that he was shaved smooth. He'd looked good, that was for sure, and he felt a bit sorry now for teasing his dad with the sunglasses trick. In retrospect, it was clear that his dad had still been hung-over - and how out of character was that too - and not expecting to be caught naked. That was the most surprising thing of all, and Rory was amazed. He'd never seen his dad like that before - he was always rather shy in the showers when they went swimming or played badminton together, and it was good to finally see him properly. He was in such good shape too - he'd keep in trim, and his body was lean for a man of his age. And his penis. Well, Rory had been- what was it? Satisfied? Relieved? Impressed? to discover that his own cock was so much like his dad's. He wasn't quite sure why, but, somehow, it mattered.

Rory suddenly realised that James was speaking.

"All done, mate" he said. "Hope it's OK."

This time, James played safe and passed Rory the flannel and the bucket. As Rory wiped his balls, James reached for his phone.

"No!" said Rory, suddenly alarmed. "Don't."

"It's OK", said James, "I wasn't going to take a pic - it's just that there's no mirror in here so I thought you might want to see on the screen."

He angled the phone until it showed the results. As Rory took in the image, his cock started to stiffen. There was silence for a second.

"Looks OK?" said James, although the sight of Rory erecting looked far more than merely OK to him. Rory looked lost in contemplation.

"It's great," said Rory finally. "Thanks mate."

There was silence again, although there was so much that could have been said. Rory's hard penis perhaps spoke volumes. Finally, James broke the silence.

"I've never seen a snipped one hard before. What's it like then, not having a skin?"

"It's good," said Rory. For the first time, he suddenly felt vulnerable in his nakedness and prone position. James's question genuinely wasn't something he'd thought much about - it was just the way he was, but he somehow felt on the defensive - as if he had to justify something about himself over which he had no control.

"Why is that then?"

"Well, it's much easier to keep clean," said Rory. That was what the other circumcised boys at school always said, and he had never questioned it. It did, he supposed, make sense as, after all, he had to do nothing other than stand under the shower to do so whereas he'd seen others rather

secretively fiddling around with the soap, almost as if they were doing something taboo. Others, he'd also noticed didn't seem to do it at all, at least not in the shared showers at school, so it could make sense that it was somehow a hassle for some of them at least. Perhaps though, he suddenly thought for the first time, that those boys somehow felt it wasn't right to let someone else see you do something so private with your cock. Seconds later, it was a rather disquieting thought that they might possibly even think it was shameful to let someone see your glans. It couldn't be, could it? His was just there for anyone to see.

"Suppose it must be," said James, although he was actually thinking that keeping clean under his foreskin wasn't any kind of nuisance for him at all.

"And girls like it too," said Rory, again bowing to the authority of the circumcised boys that, as far as he knew, didn't actually have girlfriends.

"One of the boys at my school says it makes your mushroom grow bigger," said James. He was thinking, if Rory was anything to go by, that it did seem plausible that that was the case.

"Yeah, it does," said Rory, who had never heard that said before.

"I'm not sure I'd like it, though," said James, "I mean - having my end out all the time. It must feel weird. And having to use that lube stuff - I don't know if I'd like having to use that. And I'm not sure I could actually rub my head with no cover on it anyway."

"It feels great," said Rory, suddenly even more on the defensive. "You should try it...."

It wasn't until James started to move towards him that Rory realised with horror that he had misunderstood. As James's reached for it, Rory quickly put his hand protectively over his penis.

"No, sorry mate. I didn't mean ..." Rory was embarrassed to the core. "I meant you should try doing it yourself with your skin back to see how amazing it feels. I didn't mean... Sorry, it's just not for me, ok? I'm really sorry...."

It was James's turn to be embarrassed at the conclusion he had jumped too, but he was disappointed too.

"Shit, sorry Rory - I didn't mean anything by it, mate."

"Look, it's no problem. What I mean is, you should try some lube with your skin back to see how good it feels."

James misunderstood again. It never occurred to Rory that James would take him to mean trying it then and there, rather than in private at some other time. He was horrified anew that James was on his feet and off the bathroom, back in seconds with the bottle of lube. This was bad, but no way as bad as the idea of James holding his cock. Somehow, it was just too awkward to embarrass James by putting him right for a second time.

James sat down, Rory's bottle of lube in his hand. Rory was horrified as he pulled down his shorts, at a loss over how to stop a situation into which he had stupidly blundered. James was already very erect but, Rory noticed with interest, his glans was still completely hidden, and he just wasn't sure if that was normal or not. James flipped open the cap of the bottle and squeezed some lube onto his penis. He fisted his erection and started, cautiously, to rub. His hand slid up and down his shaft but the foreskin stayed over his head, not moving. Rory couldn't help but be intrigued by the way James's worked his cock, as it just looked so different from the way he would work his own.

“Is that how you normally do it?” Rory asked after a moment.

“Yes, I suppose so. But it doesn’t feel the same with the lube. In fact, I can’t feel much at all. It’s all just sort of sliding over the surface.”

“You’re going to have to skin it back first I think,” said Rory.

James retracted his skin and fisted his penis again, flinching slightly at the first touch of his head in a way that surprised Rory, for whom that touch would have brought little sensation and no discomfort. James was squirming, determined to try and like the feeling to please Rory, yet finding it too intense to be sensual.

“Is that the way you normally do it, rubbing your head like that?” asked Rory.

“Yes, kind of. But I do it through the skin.”

“Is that the way most people with skins do it?”

“I suppose so,” said James. He had had a couple of quick fumbles with other boys at school, but he really didn’t know what the usual way to pleasure yourself was.

“That’s not the way I do it. I rub behind the head – on the shaft. That’s what feels so amazing.

James moved his hand to the base of his penis, behind the bunch of foreskin that had gathered behind his glans. Rory, taken aback by the different mechanics, could see that things were still very different to his own experience, the skin just moving up and down inside James’ closed hand.

“It’s incredible that the skin is all moving like that – mine’s just tight there,” said Rory.

“I’m not feeling much at all, to be honest,” said James. “It’s not as good as normal.”

Rory was frustrated. It was clear that that what James was experiencing wasn’t at all what he did himself and, from the look on his face, it wasn’t exactly pleasurable for him either. Somehow, he needed James to know how good it felt for him - that he didn’t have some kind of second-best version of a penis. Once he decided to act, he did so very slowly, his body language signalling what he was going to do and giving James every opportunity to stop him in his tracks, and actually half hoping that he would. He closed in on him and, with what he hoped was the minimum amount of contact, grasped James’s penis close to the root. He pulled the skin backwards until it was all laid out flat and looking much like his own did all the time. James moaned, his hand now working the base of his shaft and lubed inner skin, now laid out flat, tight and exposed.

“Oh my God!” said James. “That’s amazing.”

Back in his room, Rory made sure he turned his back to the mirror on the wardrobe door before taking off his pyjama shorts. He wanted his first proper look at the new version of his body to be a full, considered assessment rather than a fleeting, incidental part view. It wasn’t going to be a naked view at first though – there was more he wanted to explore before that. He reached for his new trousers and, as he pulled them up, hesitantly guided the bulk of his private parts down the left leg in an action that felt new and strange but somehow very exciting. He did up the fly buttons, turned to the mirror and took in the image with satisfaction. After a moment, his fingers began to explore the outline of the bulk that was tightly encased down the inside of his thigh and, especially, the shape

made by the ridge of his glans that was tantalisingly just visible through the material. After a moment, and leaving the top one done up, he undid the three lower buttons and reached inside to ease out his balls from their tight confinement. He let them fall, his hands by his sides, and felt his cock stiffen as he admired the new look of smoothness on his scrotum. A moment later, he ran his fingers over the newly shaved skin to explore what it felt like. After a long moment of deep satisfaction with the sensation, he opened the last fly button and put his cock and balls back inside and down the left side in the position that was already beginning to feel so right to him. The base of the V shape that the open trouser flaps formed rested just above the root of his cock. He stood in silent thought as he took in the mirror image of his pubic hair above it. His decision finally made, Rory waited a few more minutes before quietly opening his bedroom door and looking out. As he hoped, James's door was shut and his light was off. Rory went back into his room and took off his trousers, carefully hanging them over the back of the chair. Naked now, he padded softly to the bathroom. Luckily, he hadn't emptied the bucket and was relieved that the water in it was still warm enough for him not to have to risk waking James by running the hot tap. It only took a few strokes of the razor to finish the job.

With Chris soundly asleep, Mark was ten minutes too early making the last of his silent, expectant creeps to the bedroom window. Had he tried one more time, he wouldn't have missed seeing Rory masturbating, urgently fuelled by the reflection of his now totally bald crotch in his bedroom mirror.

Chapter Twelve: The Letter H

“OK?” asked James, sounding a little anxious. Wrapped in just a towel, he was on the landing outside the bathroom ready for Rory to emerge from the shower. Rory, of course, knew exactly what he meant.

“Yeah, all cool, thanks. And thanks again for last night, mate,” he replied.

“No problem – glad to help. And I’m so sorry that I ...”

“That’s all cool too,” interrupted Rory, eager to cut dead any embarrassment on either side. “It’s me that should be sorry. It’s just not for me and....”

“Yeah, no problem – I totally get it. But it was well amazing finding out what it’s like doing it your way.”

The air cleared for a moment before James went on, his tone a little lighter now.

“So, you pleased with it then?”

“Yeah,” said Rory. He braced himself before he went on, not sure what response get would get. “Actually, it looked so good when I got back to my room that - well - you’d done the hard bit and I reckoned the rest would be easy so...”

With an awareness that things were now different between him and James after sharing something so intimate, Rory did something he would never have done the week before and undid the towel around his waist and let it drop to the floor. As it fell, he saw the flush on James’s face and, for the first time, heard him swear.

“Fuck.”

Rory’s confidence wavered. “What do you think? Does it look alright?”

“It looks just awesome,” said James. He was aware that his cock was instantly hard and that, incredibly, it no longer mattered if Rory saw. There was no hesitation before he asked his question:

“Will you do me like that too?”

Ben was sitting on his bed and feeling anxious, bracing himself to go downstairs. The previous evening had turned out to be so much easier than it might have been that it seemed almost too good to be true. It had seemed that Mark had forgiven and forgotten, yet Ben was aware that it was quite likely that Mark hadn’t known the true extent of the things he needed to forgive and forget. He was concerned now that Chris, being Chris, might have come fully clean to Mark when they had gone to bed and, if he had, that things might perhaps not be so amicable as they had been the night before. In the event, breakfast seemed just like any other day, so either Chris had decided that it was ‘least said, soonest mended’ or Mark was being incredibly forgiving. Ben had wondered about asking Chris which of those it was, but decided that it was perhaps best just to let things ride and learn a lesson. It was actually Charles who turned out to be the surprise of the morning – he suddenly seemed to be big mates with the two lads after their day out, and generally more relaxed than he had been so far.

Ben caught Mark's eyes rolling when Charles said he "fancied a decent lunch for once" and asked if anyone would like to join him at the bistro in the village. Ben suspected that he wasn't the only one who would much rather have stayed at home, but all three men somehow sensed that it would seem churlish to refuse. Ben didn't see the look that James gave Rory as Charles made his suggestion, but he wasn't surprised when the boys said that they'd rather just stay behind and chill by the pool. Ben wondered if perhaps they might have had a little too much of Charles's company the day before but, although that was indeed true, it was only part of the reason.

The morning passed slowly for James, his mind filled both with anticipation of the afternoon as well as the image of Rory's sleek, smooth body. His long penis had looked so amazing freed from the distraction of any hair around, and James relished the prospect of looking even a little bit as good as that himself once Rory had rendered him equally smooth. Most alluring though was the thought of Rory's attention, up close to him in such an intimate way. The ultimate excitement for James would be for Rory to be naked while he was shaving him, but he just couldn't think of a way to make that happen. Rory, though, wasn't entirely looking forward to fulfilling his promise. As an honourable boy, he knew a promise was a promise and he'd have to do so if it came to it, especially as James had met his request for help the previous night. Part of him really hoped that James would have changed his mind and he was quite prepared not to say anything or to tease him if indeed he had. Despite his misgivings, there was actually something heady about the whole business for him too. Rory knew he wasn't gay, and much of what had been going on seemed perilously close to that, but there was a part of him which realised that it was all somehow all part of his first foray into being a sexual being, and he couldn't help being excited by it, even if it was somehow against his better judgement.

Just seconds after hearing car doors bang and tyres on gravel as the three men headed off for lunch, Rory knew there would be no backing out as, almost straight after, came the knocking in the pipes that meant that the hot water was running in the bathroom. James soon appeared at Rory's bedroom door, bare chested. He said that he'd set everything up downstairs in the games room as it was stifling in his room with the midday sun directly on it. In the time it took Rory to get downstairs, James had taken off his shorts and had just his trainers on. Rory was relieved to see that his cock was just hanging as he jumped up onto pool table, laying back on his arms with his groin presented ready for Rory's attention as if this was an everyday occurrence. Rory took in just how blonde James was, somehow pleased that the transformation of shaving would not be so extreme as removing his own thick, dark pubic hair had been. James's body was lean but rather boyish somehow. Although the sizeable cock looked somehow out of step with it, Rory thought he still looked surprisingly like the year 7s he had walked in on recently in the school changing rooms when he'd gone back to look for his lost phone. As he took in James's scrotum, Rory noticed again how different it was from his own. James's nuts were big, but the skin containing them was tighter than around his own.

Rory had been shaving his face regularly for a while and was much less wary of a razor than James, and the tightness of the scrotum made it easy enough to remove the wispy, fair hairs. He was glad that James just lay back silently as he did his work with, to his relief, still no sign of an erection. When it came to the final strokes of the razor that would take away the remaining part of James's bush - now reduced to a narrow strip directly above his penis - Rory had to get in close to angle the blade properly. The end of the long tube of the penis was now inches from his face, a tight bud of foreskin closed tightly over the glans. As James had shown no sign of erecting, Rory risked asking the question that had been bugging him since he had started work.

"What I don't get is how the end of your skin works. It looks as if it's really tight, so how does your helmet make it through awwhen you pull it back? I can't see how it doesn't hurt."

James laughed. "No, it doesn't hurt at all, it just sort of slides through it. Look."

James grasped the skin over his helmet - thumb on top and fingers underneath. Slowly, realising that Rory was genuinely curious and pleased to have something interesting to show him, he eased back. With no resistance, it slid over the glans until his head was revealed. He paused, then stretched back more until his skin was back flat on his shaft at full retraction. He held it there. Apart from the lack of a scar line, his penis looked remarkably like Rory's did all the time. Rory was totally absorbed, fascinated by the mechanics of it all. Something so routine for James was a complete and deeply intriguing novelty for him. The closest to it that he had seen before was boys in the showers at school giving a quick tug back to wash, quickly covering over again afterwards. Seeing it all in detail was a complete revelation for him, but there was something else in it for him too – some emotion he couldn't quite pin down.

"Wow," he said, "that's amazing - the way it just unwraps itself as it goes over your knob. But that stringy bit underneath - what's that all about then? I'd not realised that that was there before."

"What, this you mean?" said James, lifting his retracted cock so that Rory could see his frenulum more clearly. "I'm not sure really. It's just sort of 'there.'"

This was all news for Rory, who hadn't ever thought before that the deep, empty cleft on his underside might once have been filled with something.

"Everything's so stretchy looking," said Rory, "And loose too – everything on mine's tight. But that feels good too," he added quickly, suddenly feeling the need to stress that he didn't feel his own penis to be inferior. Actually, in that moment, he really wasn't sure if he did or not. Certainly, his own one-setting version of a penis suddenly felt very straight-forward in its looks and function compared to the complexity of what James had just shown him.

"Mate," said James, "if you want to....try..."

There was silence for a moment.

"You sure?" said Rory, rather hesitantly. He was feeling far from sure, but part of him needed to know, and he realised that this was a rare chance to seize.

"Cool with me," said James.

Rory was tentative. Touching someone else's penis was a momentous thing to do, but the fact that the one he was about to hold was complete and not modified like his own made it yet more significant. He awkwardly aped James's grip, instantly becoming aware of the squishiness of the flesh over the head and quickly sensing the way it moved so easily over the firmness of what it covered. He copied James's movements to skin him back, fascinated. When he had retracted him fully, he covered him over again, but then continued his movement a little, pushing James's foreskin forward until it was bunched fully over the head. The amount of skin that projected way past the end of his glans amazed him.

"Holy fuck," said Rory.

"Yeah?" said James, hardly able to believe what was happening and willing himself not to erect.

"There's just so much... extra. Can I...?"

"Do whatever you like. It's cool. I promise I'll say if it hurts."

Rory retracted James again, but this time let go of the skin when it had reached its full stretch back. After a second, the foreskin began to roll forward, quickly re-setting itself to full coverage. Sensing that James really was easy about letting him explore and, mercifully, not erecting, Rory lifted the penis this time, keen to investigate what happened to the frenulum as the skin retracted. James still made no movement nor said a word, so Rory dared to try the thing he most wanted to do. Hoping again that he wasn't going to hurt him, he retracted James again and then put the thumb of his other hand on top of the glans, its texture feeling so different to his own and strangely smooth. He released the foreskin, having no real idea of what might happen. To both boys' astonishment, it moved forward as before and then just rolled over the thumb, enveloping it completely.

"God, that's just incredible. It doesn't hurt?"

"No, I've never done that before, but its fine. It just feels a bit full, but nice actually. Looks wild, doesn't it."

Rory was aware that James had started to erect, but somehow it didn't seem to matter now. Rory was just blown away, deep in thought and trying to process a whole lot of new knowledge. He risked moving his thumb from side to side a little inside the skin, amazed at the way it adapted itself so easily to mould around it.

"God, I just can't imagine what it must feel like to have something like that over your bell-end," said Rory. "It must be....." He just didn't know how to end his sentence.

With Rory's thumb still under the foreskin, James reached down and grasped his penis. Rory made a quiet noise in the back of his throat as James moved the skin around over his thumb. After a second or two, wondering now if Rory would say anything, James started actively wanking, his skin still over Rory's enveloped thumb. He saw Rory's eyes close. Disappointed that Rory was wearing his loose shorts, he just couldn't tell if he was tenting in them.

"God, that's just incredible," said Rory. I can just imagine what that feels like – for real."

"Mate, I've got something to show you," said James.

James cautiously retracted his skin to release Rory's thumb and stood up, his cock now blatantly erect but his foreskin still covering every bit of his helmet. Crossing to the corner of the games room where a dusty pile of household bits and pieces had been dumped and forgotten, he opened a tatty suitcase and took out a pile of magazines.

"I found these the last time I was here. Uncle Chris's secret stash, I reckon."

As James began searching through the pile, Rory picked up the first one he had discarded. Smiling at the un-subtle title "Crotch" and the dated hairstyle of the man of the cover, he flicked through it. It was full of men posing, either naked or dressed provocatively, but none of them had anything other than the suggestion of a semi. To his surprise, almost all of them seemed to be cut, and the ones who weren't were retracted. This disappointed him as, suddenly, he realised needed to know more about foreskins. He didn't look at their fit, honed bodies – that just didn't interest him - it was their cocks, and one part of them in particular, that he somehow needed to see.

"Found it!" said James.

The magazine he had in his hand was obviously a bit newer than the others. This one was titled "Prepuces Magnifique" and was a different kind of thing altogether – Rory soon saw that as James opened it and began turning the pages. All the men in this magazine had foreskins and were

obviously keen to display their uncut charms. Some were short hooded with their skins barely covering their glanses, others had full, long overhangs, and a couple had seriously long, empty hoses hanging limp and wrinkly from their ends or else stretched out to show just how much they had. There were group shots in this magazine too, and one rather alarmed Rory as it showed a man with the end of his playmate's long hood between his teeth.

James found the page he was looking for. It showed two men - one with a long foreskin and the other very clearly circumcised. They were holding their penises side by side, as if taking in the difference between them. James turned the page, and the next shot showed the uncut man retracted now, his skin flat along his shaft like James's had been earlier so that the two penises looked much more alike. James turned again. Now the men had their cocks held end to end with their bell ends touching, almost as if they were kissing.

"My days!" said Rory when James turned again and he saw the next page, his cock suddenly as hard as James's. "How is that even possible."

Rather like Rory's thumb had been earlier, the uncut man had somehow rolled his generous hood over the top of the cut man's bare glans, burying it deep inside his distended foreskin.

"Looks amazing, doesn't it," said James.

The last page showed the cut man's hand wrapped around the joined penises, clearly wanking them both with the one, shared foreskin. There was silence for a second or two.

Rory's voice was hesitant when he finally managed to get the words out. "Mate, do you want to.....try it?"

As the boys were absorbed with the magazines, things weren't going too well in the bistro. It had all been very good natured at first and, amazingly, Charles had even joined in a little when Chris and Mark had started flirting with the young waiter, although Ben noticed that he was perhaps covering himself by dropping "ma femme" into the conversation a few more times than seemed warranted. When the three of them had talked it over later, none of them could pinpoint why the row had actually started - it had just seemed to erupt out of nowhere. Charles, of course, had ordered much more expensively and extensively than the other three and chosen a vintage bottle of wine without thinking to consult the others. He had muttered something when Mark had casually said that everyone should remember what they had ordered for when it came to dividing up the bill, but what really set him off was perhaps when Chris said something seemingly innocuous about enjoying times like this before BREXIT made it all much harder. Suddenly, Charles was livid and ranting - not just about the bill or BREXIT, but with a whole tirade of grievances with everyone and everything that seemed to date back years. Open mouthed, they watched as he threw a pile of notes on the table and walked away from his untouched canard roti. It was only when he was outside and reached instinctively into his pocket for his car keys that Charles remembered that they had all driven into the village in Mark's SUV.

It was a long, hot walk back to the gite. When Charles pushed open the doors to the cowshed, his instinctive thought was that they looked like a letter H. The two tall, lean young men were naked - standing, facing each other and just a little apart. Their bodies were connected by their erect cocks, joined head-to-head inside James' foreskin. With their bodies forming the uprights, it was somehow as if their penises were forming the cross bar of a capital H.

The silence was total for a moment. Finally, Charles spoke.

“Pack your stuff James. We’re going home.”

Chapter Thirteen: The Confession

The three men sat by the pool over mugs of tea. The sound of Rory's guitar drifted down to them through his open bedroom window, the first time he had touched it since he had arrived. They picked over the day's events, trying to make sense of it all. Rory had had little to add when they got back, other than telling them that Charles had come in, told James to gather up his things, and that they'd driven off twenty minutes later without saying goodbye. "That," the only possible conclusion seemed to be, "was just typical Charles for you."

The weather finally broke that evening. The lightning was truly spectacular in the dark of the countryside, but the storm did little to ease the oppressive atmosphere. The mood at the simple supper in the kitchen seemed somehow to match the gloom, and the gathering seemed small and unpleasantly low-key after the relaxed al fresco meals of the previous days. Nobody seemed to have much to say and, perhaps keen to draw a line under a troubling day, the consensus was that an early night would be a good idea. Later, Ben was lying reading on his bed when he heard a knock on his door. It was Rory, drenched from the short dash across the yard from the cowshed. Ben smiled, thinking how young and cute his son looked with his hair bedraggled – suddenly much more like a little boy again rather than the confident young man of the previous few days. He looked anxious though, and Ben remembered that he had been scared of thunder when he was small and wondered if it was that that had brought him across to the house.

"Dad, can we talk?" said Rory.

"Anytime - you know that. What's up?"

Rory steeled himself.

"There's something I need to tell you. I wasn't honest earlier on."

Even as a small boy, Rory had been unable to maintain any deception, however minor, for very long.

"You know you can tell me anything. Sit down."

"It's Charles and James. Why they left. It was like I told you earlier, but I didn't tell you the whole truth. I'm sorry."

"Go on. What's worrying you?"

"Well, when Charles got back, he caught James and I – well, we were messing around a bit."

"Messing around? As in.....?"

"It wasn't gay or anything, I promise."

Ben hadn't been at all sure to what Rory was going to confess, but that was a bit of a surprise.

"It was something sexual?"

"Well, yes, I suppose so. But it really wasn't gay."

"Listen Rory, let's get one thing straight. There's nothing at all wrong with being gay. After you and your gran, the person I love most in this world is gay – you know that, don't you. And you know I wouldn't love you one scrap less or think one jot less of you if you were too."

"But I'm not. Gay I mean. It was James. We were talking about some stuff - I suppose it was a bit to do with sex. Then he showed me some magazines, then Charles got back and found us...."

"Oh dear!" Ben laughed. "But I bet you that he's looked at that kind of stuff too, so...."

"It was worse than that."

"Were you were having a wank over them? Look, I'm not saying I approve of you looking at pornography, but it's what blokes do - no point in pretending otherwise."

Ben paused. "Or was there more to it than that?"

"No, like I said, it wasn't gay."

"Rory, I ..."

"Dad - we were docking."

"Docking?"

"It was James – we were looking at these magazines, and there were some blokes in one of them who were doing it, and James wanted...."

"Hang on a sec, Rory. Go back a bit - you've lost me there. What on earth is docking?"

Rory squirmed. It had never occurred to him that his dad wouldn't know what it was. Having to explain it made it all worse.

"It's like – well, it's when you put the end of your willy inside someone else's foreskin."

Ben wondered if this was some kind of wind-up. His expression made his confusion plain to Rory.

"Dad, I'm serious. Charles caught us. It was James – he'd seen this picture in the magazine and he said we should try it."

Rory was guiltily aware that he had been trying to sound far more passive in the proceedings than he actually had been, and had actually just lied about who was the docking instigator. He was amazed his dad hadn't hit the roof, but it might yet happen at any moment - once he had got his head around it all. Describing what they'd done did suddenly make it all sound seriously weird.

Ben's mind was working fast. On one level, he knew this was a moment of crisis for Rory and that helping him through it was paramount, but at the same time his mind was reeling from what he had just learned.

"You can really do that, can you? You aren't winding me up here, are you Rory?" Ben was thinking back to his days with a foreskin, calculating if it was something that might, as unlikely as it sounded, actually just be possible.

"Dad, I'm deadly serious. It's a thing. Docking."

"And James - he could fit your bell-end inside his skin? Doesn't it hurt?"

"No, he said it didn't hurt at all. It was a bit tricky at first. We were going to give up, but then it just sort of slipped in. We'd just managed it, and then Charles walked in."

"Dear God," said Ben.

Rory was preparing for the worst but, to his astonishment, Ben laughed.

"Poor you – that must have been embarrassing. I bet his face was a picture! I can just imagine, especially after the total epi he'd thrown over lunch. Look, Rory, are you OK? That's the main thing – no damage done? Physical I mean - though I think it should probably be James we should be worrying about on that score. Seriously, it didn't do him any damage, did it?"

"No, no – he was fine. It was easy for him. I mean – mine just sort of went in there alongside his."

"Even with that big, Cook family mushroom on the end? I can hardly believe it's possible, but the human body is an amazing thing - you learn something new every day."

To Rory, this was like seeing a new side to his dad. He was amazed, pleased, relieved, and ashamed in turn by his father's reaction, but not a little alarmed too. Somehow, the size of someone's genitals seemed more to be the stuff of playground rather than to be talked about with your dad, let alone talking about unusual sexual practices with his apparent interest.

"Look Rory, as far as I'm concerned, boys will be boys. To be honest, Charles was in such a mood after lunch that I don't think that anything you did was the reason for him stomping off in a huff. At least not the main one, though it probably didn't help, to be honest. And as Chris once said to me, 'what happens in France stays in France' so I don't think we need to say any more about it, unless you want to, of course. Look, you're growing up fast. I know the time is coming when you are going to want to explore a bit. The main thing is that you must never do anything that you don't feel comfortable with or ready for. James didn't force you into it, did he?"

"No. No, it wasn't like that. It just – well - it just happened."

"And trying stuff like that doesn't mean you are gay," said Ben, instantly wondering if he was perhaps addressing himself as much as his son. "Look, no harm done. I just want you to promise me that you always play safe and say no to anything you aren't happy about doing, whether it's with a girl or a boy. And, when the time comes, for God's sake use a condom. You must never be shy about asking me for some if you don't feel comfortable getting them yourself."

Rory blushed deep red. This wasn't the conversation he had been expecting to be having. But his dad – he was just being so amazing about it all.

"So, Rory, all good? Or is there anything else you want to tell me?"

“No, just thanks. You’re incredible. I was so worried about what you’d say.”

There was another bolt of lightning. The rain slashed harder than ever, but the humidity was still oppressive.

“Dad, is it OK if I doss down here tonight?” asked Rory. It’s feels really empty out in the cow shed by myself.”

“Of course – if you think you can fit into that little bed! I shouldn’t think anyone’s slept in it since James was small. Look, there doesn’t seem much point getting drenched again going back to get your jim-jams, and it’s far too hot for them anyway as far as I’m concerned. I just hope you brushed your teeth earlier though - much though I love you, I don’t propose sharing my tooth brush with anyone, not even you!”

Ben took stock, glad of a few minutes alone to think as he used the bathroom. He would have been understanding under any circumstances, but he was extra aware that he couldn’t have been hard on Rory after his own recent behaviour had clearly shown that it was equally true that “men will be men” as “boys will be boys”. Part of him wondered guiltily if what Rory had got up to was something that fate had wrought on him to serve him right for his own recent impropriety. He actually dismissed the possible guilt for once as he realised, to his surprise, that he was actually at ease about what had happened with Chris, who had, mercifully, acted since as if it never happened. Mark too had gone back to being the same as ever. He wondered again if Chris had told Mark about the second part of their misdemeanour or not, not at all sure which option he would wish for. After all, nothing had actually happened that afternoon by the pool, but it was only the chance timing of Bekky’s phone call that had stopped it – had Rory answered his mobile, then he might have known what it was to have another man’s penis inside him. Perhaps, thought Ben, Chris and Mark had some kind of open relationship, or perhaps that kind of thing was just different for gays anyway. There was though, Ben had to admit to himself, just a hint of regret amongst the relief that Bekky had happened to ring when she had.

Back in the hot bedroom, Ben thought “what the hell” as they got ready for bed. Everything somehow seemed different now. As father and son started to undress, it was his turn to do something he would never have done even a few days earlier. He just stood up and took off his T shirt and shorts without making any attempt to turn to hide himself from Rory. Somehow, it seemed to symbolise the way things had moved on between the two of them into a new and welcome openness. There no longer seemed any point it keeping up his previous secretiveness over his body in general and his circumcision in particular - Rory had seen him naked in the garden the day before after all.

Standing next to the small single bed on the other side of the room, things were feeling different for Rory too, but in a rather less relaxed way. He would normally have felt no particular strangeness in appearing naked in front of his dad but, as he started to slip down his shorts, he remembered just too late that he wasn’t wearing anything underneath them. Hi mind on his hope that that his dad would assume that he’d just shrugged everything down in one go, his concern over his lack of underwear meant that he didn’t even think about the other possible issue. Naked, he spread his damp clothes out over the rail at the end of the bed to dry.

“Wow!” said Ben.

Rory blushed, suddenly realising that his concern about going commando had over-written any thoughts about what his dad might make of his new, shaved state.

“So, you did it then. And the full Monty too, I see! What do you make of it, or is it too soon to tell?”

“It’s unusual, but, well, - I kind of like it so far,” lied Rory again, who already knew that it was the way that he wanted to stay. He was aware of the twitch in his cock, aroused in some strange way but that his dad had noticed and, if only tacitly, given it his approval.

“It looks good, mate,” said Ben. Strangely, although just a few days ago he would have refused had Rory asked him for his approval for doing so, he really thought it did. Ben had noticed more than just the smooth crotch but, after getting his first look at his son’s penis in quite a while, didn’t voice his amazement at just how very well hung he had become.

“I hope you realised that Mark was only winding me up when he said it’s easier to get someone else to do it for you!” said Ben.

“Yeah, I got that!” lied an astonished Rory, wondering what on earth that was all about. It seemed a strange thing for Mark to be teasing his dad about, but so many strange things had happened over the last couple of days. Guiltily, he realised that things might have been a whole lot different if he had indeed caught on that Mark was only joking and that, if he had, none of the day’s upset might have happened.

When Ben put out the light, there was quietness, the only sound the rain drumming on the roof. He considered his question for a moment before breaking the silence.

“Rory, can I ask you something?”

Rory was suddenly worried. Perhaps he wasn’t going to get away unscathed after all. Perhaps the cover of the darkness was going to make it easier for his dad to ask difficult questions and to chastise him. Ben went on without waiting for a reply.

“This might seem a weird question, but how do you feel about being circumcised? It sounds as if you might have found out a bit about what it’s like being the other way today.”

Rory hadn’t expected that, but at least it wasn’t going to be a telling off from his dad. The question surprised him though, and it was actually a hard one to answer.

“Err, it’s fine. I mean, well, it’s the way I’ve always been, so... And I’m Jewish, so...” As he spoke, Rory thought about his step brothers who, no more and no less Jewish than he, had been allowed to keep their foreskins.

Ben was irked that the cop-out religion card had been played so quickly, and how it so neatly deflected having to give a proper answer to the question, but he was reluctant to probe further.

“I’m glad you are OK with it,” said Ben. “I’ve always wondered what your feelings were but, well, it’s hard to ask that sort of question. To be honest, I would have preferred you to have had a choice about it when you were older, so I’m glad you don’t mind.”

"It's cool dad," said Rory, although he wasn't actually quite as sure about it as he might have been the day before.

Ben was genuinely relieved that Rory seemed happy but, at the same time, something in him was disappointed that he hadn't expressed regret. The implications of "when you were older" suddenly struck him too. If things had worked out the way that he had hoped and had Rory been allowed to keep his skin as a baby, then he would now be at an age when he might have reasonably have expressed an opinion on the matter. Perhaps, if things had indeed turned out differently, then both a tricky conversation might have been in the offing. As he listened to the rain on the roof, Ben thought about how he would have felt if an intact Rory had said that he wanted to be circumcised, and how awful it would have been to have had to take him to somewhere like the Burden Park Clinic to be changed in a way that Ben truly felt was for the worst. Ben was left with another thought as he lay waiting for sleep. Docking. He still couldn't quite believe it was actually possible, but it was a deeply intriguing possibility.

Both men took a long time to get to sleep. For Rory, there was so much from the day that needed processing, and going over all the implications kept him awake. It wasn't just about James and his foreskin, but the cycling shorts too. Before he had made himself come clean to Ben, Rory had made a fruitless search of James's room and had had to conclude that he must have taken them home with him. He was surprised what a big disappointment it felt that he wouldn't be able to enjoy wearing them again, especially over his newly smooth crotch. As Ben started to drift off, his thoughts concerned searching in the cowshed too, but for something else. He was wondering if James had taken the magazine with the docking pictures in home with him, or if he might still find it there somewhere if he got a chance for a surreptitious look.

* * * * *

Bonus Scenes

James

James knew all too well about circumcision. It wasn't just from the GCSE Religious Studies lesson that had caused so much mirth amongst his class-mates – some laughing in embarrassment, others in something approaching disbelief - but from several very awkward talks with his father. James had always known that his dad looked different to him, but he'd assumed that that was just another of the differences between men and boys and that he'd eventually get to look like that too as he grew up. His willy, he assumed, would change to look like his dad's as he grew, and it was quite a shock for him when, during one of those awkward chats, that he'd realised that that particular change was something that had to be made to happen. It was really only by chance that James had kept his foreskin anyway; had Charles's "get rich quick" scheme buying up champagne for new millennium not gone horribly wrong after he had invested all his savings in it, then he wouldn't have been near-bankrupt when James was born, he wouldn't have had to cancel his private health insurance, and James wouldn't have been born in an NHS hospital. Had it been a private birth, then the registrar would have been only too delighted to have had an extra service to charge for but, as it was, the NHS doctor had looked shocked when Charles had asked for a circumcision for his new son. He had been insulted when he was told in no uncertain terms that it "just wasn't done any more" and that it was "an unnecessary procedure with inherent risks." Getting his son circumcised had always been on Charles's "to do" list since but, with his only child always quite far down his list of priorities, somehow the moment had never come.

It was perhaps just as well that James had never told his father about the chat that he'd once had with Mark. It had happened on the weekend when he had been all but dumped on him and Chris, it being made very obvious to them that they were a last resort when the au pair had had to go home to Croatia because of a family crisis just as Charles and Ursula were heading off to Dubai "for a little treat." When, on that Saturday morning, Chris had asked James if there was anything he'd like to do, his heart had sunk in unison with Mark's when James had said that he wanted to go swimming.

With the ordeal of the child-packed pool on a Saturday morning finally over for the two men and James out of the way drying his hair, Mark spoke quietly to Chris in the changing room.

"Listen, don't ask questions. I just want you to do as you are told for once, OK?" he'd said. "I need to talk to James, so make yourself scarce for half an hour."

Chris's mouth opened with a question but, for once, Mark's school teachers' "don't even think about it" look worked on him. With Chris out of the way, having invented a trip to Waitrose and saying that there was no point in the all of them dragging round, Mark sat James down in the pool-side café over a hot chocolate.

"Right," said Mark, "We need to have a chat. I'm not going to be embarrassed about it, so there's no need for you to be either, OK?"

Slightly mystified, James just nodded, wondering what on earth was coming. He got on well with Mark but they'd rarely even been alone together, let alone had anything like a man-to-man chat.

"If you want to tell your dad that I've spoken to you, then it's fine by me, but if you don't then then that's fine too. I want to talk to you about your penis."

James giggled, and Mark wasn't at all surprised by the look on his face. He'd seen the like of it on many boys at his school when he'd started on similar chats with them.

"Don't worry – there's nothing wrong at all, and if I'm telling you stuff you know already then great, but there's some things I want to be sure you know about. All good so far?"

James was bright red, and just nodded.

"So, before I saw you in the showers earlier on, I'd assumed that you were like Chris and your dad, but you're not. I saw that you're like me - we've got foreskins that cover the ends of our willies, and they haven't. I don't expect it's even occurred to your dad to talk to you about yours – in fact, I expect he'd might not know much about them anyway, but someone needs to tell you some stuff, OK?"

James just nodded again.

"The first thing is, you're a growing lad, and you need to start keeping clean under there. Has anyone told you about that?"

"No," said James, surprised that any adult was talking to him in this straight-down-the line way about the kind of thing that he thought was only supposed to be giggled about in the playground.

"OK, so I'm going to start on my check-list," said Mark - something he'd had to do a few times with anxious boys at school who had heard from older peers that he was the best person to go for straight answers when it came to embarrassing questions."

"The main thing is, have you worked out how to pull your skin back yet?"

"Yes, a bit." James wasn't sure that this was the right answer.

"Good. How far can you get it back? Can you uncover all of your helmet?"

"I think so." James hoped that he'd guessed right about what Mark meant by "helmet."

"Well can you get it back far enough to see all of it, or does it only go far enough for you to see the hole where your pee comes out?"

"It only moved a bit at first, but it goes all the way now."

Actually, James had thought that retracting as far as the slit was as far as it was supposed to go, but sensed that this wasn't the answer Mark wanted to hear. He'd been worried that being able to do even that meant that there was something wrong with him until he'd half overheard a boy at school talking about "skinning back." It was a relief to him to hear from an adult that he wasn't abnormal, and that he wasn't going to do anything wrong if he tried to uncover himself even more – that in fact he should do. James had always been aware that he was different from his dad, and for a long time he had thought that that was just one of the things that, like growing a beard, changed as you grew up, and that his willy would just somehow shed its cover as he grew.

"Good. I'm glad you've worked that out. Does it go back easily, or is it a struggle?"

"No, it's OK I suppose."

"Good. If it ever stops getting easy then you mustn't be embarrassed to tell someone. You can always tell me if you don't want to tell your mum or dad. The more you do it the easier it will get, and don't let anyone ever tell you that it's wrong to do it, even if you are only doing it because it feels nice, ok? All boys do it sometimes just because it feels nice, men too - even if they pretend they don't, right?"

James nodded again. This was certainly a new kind of conversation for him.

“So, you need to make sure you peel it back and wash under there every day. As you grow up it can get a bit pongy if you don’t. Just in the shower in the morning is fine – no big deal. Some people get messier under there than others, and sometimes you might find a bit of gunky stuff under there or you might not – we’re all different and either way is normal. It’s just stuff your body makes. It’s called smegma, but most people call it cheese because it can look a bit like Philadelphia – the spready stuff that is, not the city!”

James giggled, glad of the change of mood in a serious conversation.

“Right, that’s the foreskin maintenance stuff out of the way. OK so far?”

James nodded again.

“Good lad. That’s all you need to know. It’s all really simple to do, and don’t let anyone tell you any different. Right, I’m going to say a bit more as I want you to be clear in your mind about some other things too. It’s all been facts up until now, but the rest is just my opinion, OK? Do you know what circumcision means? The thing that your dad and your Uncle Chris have had done to them to take their skins away?”

James nodded.

“Well, some people who are circumcised get weird ideas about people who aren’t,” said Mark. “You’re probably going to hear some funny stuff from boys who’ve had it done as they don’t understand it all yet. Some of them will tell you that it’s gross to have a foreskin – that they are dirty and messy and hard to keep clean, and that it’s much better to have it cut off. They might say things like girls prefer boys who are circumcised too, or just that skins look ugly and your willy looks much better without it. That’s stuff is all rubbish, ok? There are a few boys who have skins which are so tight that they can’t pull them back easily, and that’s a problem for sure. But for most of us it’s all very easy. You must have noticed that most of your friends are like us, so we are the “normal” ones, but please don’t tease anyone that’s different – they can’t help the way they are any more than we can. And don’t get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with being circumcised either. It all works fine for them too, just in a different way, but there really is no need to change what we have. OK? Lecture over. Another hot chocolate?”

Emma

"Hi love. You're back early! Another ten minutes and he'd have been out for the count. I'm just going to change him - again! It's the fourth time since you left, the little monkey."

Emma dropped her bag in the hall and went upstairs to join her husband.

"How did it go then?" asked Neil. "Nice do?"

Nathaniel whimpered a little, flat on his back in his cot. As Neil dropped the old nappy in the bin, his wife moved to pick up their son.

"I'd leave him, love. He's just dropping off at last. He'll be OK like that for a bit. Come and sit down."

"Actually," said Emma, joining him on the bed, "it was a bit of a funny one this morning. The mum.... Well, she was a bit weird about it to tell you the truth. When I got there, she said that she didn't want him done, but it all sorted itself out in the end."

"...and then you sorted his end out, eh! Boom-boom!"

"Ha, ha," said Emma. "They say the old ones are the best."

"It all went smoothly though? After you got the mum straightened out?"

"Yeah, she just sort of dropped it eventually, and I gave him a nice neat job."

"Another one upgraded then," said Neil. "He'll thank you for it, and his Mrs too when the time comes -for tidying him up."

"Course," said Emma. She reached across and squeezed his crotch.

"Mmm," she said, "and it feels to mummy that daddy's nice neat job might just want to come out to play, and mummy loves daddy's little bare mushroom SO much more since she tidied him up, doesn't she."

"Yes mummy. And I think mummy deserves a treat too, after working so hard doing all that tidying."

A minute later, their eyes met as she prepared to straddle Neil, flat on his back in a pose that somehow mirrored Nathaniel's in his cot. He winced but moaned softly as she ran a sharp finger nail slowly round the scar line on the shaft of his small penis, then along the groove where his frenulum had once been.

"Daddy was so naughty to expect mummy to put up with his nasty, dirty willy, wasn't he," she said.

"Yes, he was a very naughty boy."

"What did you say?" said Emma, firmly. Her hand was round Neil's scrotum, her fingers gradually tightening on it.

"He was a very naughty, dirty little boy to have a nasty, dirty willy."

Her fist closed suddenly, and Neil squirmed.

"He was a DISGUSTING little boy, wasn't he? Having all that skin."

"Yes mummy. He was disgusting."

"Enjoying playing with his little willy with its nasty skin on it when it should just be there for mummy's pleasure."

"Yes, I was a naughty boy to enjoy it when it should be there just for mummy."

"And what did mummy do to teach him a lesson?"

"She cut all that nasty, dirty skin off it. She taught me that my willy was just there for her pleasure."

"Mummy wasn't going to something as nasty and ugly thing go inside her either, was she?"

"No mummy."

"And what do you say?"

Neil flinched as she squeezed his balls harder.

"Thank you mummy."

"Thank you for what?"

"Thank you for cutting all the skin off my willy, mummy."

Neil released his breath as her hand finally eased on his scrotum.

"That's better. I thought I was going to have to teach you another lesson then, but I think daddy has earned his reward now."