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## Synopsis of Bare Ben – Books One and Two

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, but Ben doesn’t know that Mike is circumsexual and had masturbated using his severed foreskin. 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, 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 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. Although he thinks that it was just a passing whim, their son Rory ends up being brisced without Ben’s consent whilst he is away on a business trip, precipitating the end of the marriage.

During the first summer at university, Christopher and Ben spend a life-changing time together in France, renovating the gite that Christopher’s parents have just brought. During that time, their friendship really deepens as they bond over their move into being sexually active – first Christopher with a village builder, and then both of them in a foursome with a bisexual couple they meet at a nudist beach. The subject of circumcision is never far away, and Christopher begins to understand that it isn’t necessarily the wonderful thing he had always thought.

When Rory is 17, Ben and he return to the gite for a summer break, at the invitation of Christopher and his husband, Mark. Charles, Christopher's odious brother, is also there with his son James. James is Rory's age, and has long admired him, and a strong friendship develops between the two young men. It is during that time that Rory becomes aware of circumcision, exploring with uncut James. Thanks partly to the admiring gazes of Christopher and Mark, he also becomes aware of being an attractive and very well-hung young man, and gets a taste for dressing to show off his charms.

Ben and Christopher, re-living their previous momentous days at the gite, deepen their intimate friendship further, and come perilously close to consummating it sexually. The holiday ends on a sour note when Charles happens to walk in on James and Rory, finding them in the act of docking, and he and James leave.

Bare Ben Book 3 – Goldilocks

October 2016

Chapter One:

“God, I’m knackered!”

Rory dropped his rucksack on the kitchen floor and loosened his tie. With teachers piling on the pre A-level pressure, the upper sixth had proved to be hard work for him and he was more than ready for the following week’s half term break. Flopping down heavily onto a kitchen chair, he slid forward and leant back, legs wide apart. The pose made it very hard to ignore the very sizeable lump that started at his crotch and stretched down the left leg of his trousers, and Ben wondered again if any of his class mates wore their school uniforms quite as tight as his son. Rory was a stylish dresser, but Ben didn’t think that figure-hugging trousers were currently a fashion. It concerned him that Rory seemed unaware that his packet was so very obvious, but he knew that his son couldn’t exactly help the considerable bulk that his trousers had to contain. The last thing Ben wanted was to make Rory feel self-conscious about it, but, on the other hand, he’d hate him to be the only one not to realise that he might perhaps want to get some looser-fitting trousers. There was something about the shape of the bulge that puzzled Ben too, but if Rory hadn’t been so careful about scrunching up the underwear that he put, unworn, into the laundry basket every night, then his father might possibly have worked out the reason for it.

“Are you going out tonight?” asked Ben as he put burgers under the grill. Friday was Rory’s Youth Orchestra night and, since turning 18, he’d started joining the rest of the percussion section in the pub after rehearsals. As the half term meant there was no immediate pressure over homework, Ben was wondering if this might turn out to be one of his sons first really heavy-duty nights out.

“Yup, but I’ll be back by 11 – promise!”

“It’s OK - I’m not checking up on you. I know you’ll be sensible.”

After he’d eaten, Rory went up to change out of his school uniform. He took jeans and a T shirt out of the wardrobe, then knelt down by the side of his bed and pulled out a cardboard box of books from underneath. He dug into it and retrieved a small, black plastic bag, wondering if he actually had nerve enough to wear its contents out of the house for a whole evening. He’d had it on the day before when he went to the library and it had been fine, but it was a bit of a different matter when he was going somewhere where he would have company and, more importantly, when it wouldn’t be too easy to take it off if it started to get uncomfortable. Suddenly decisive, he opened the bag.

The shiny steel ring felt heavy as he held it flat on his palm; he felt his cock stir at the sight of it, as well as the memory of just how good it felt when he had it on. It had taken all of his nerve and resolve to go into the shop to buy it the previous Saturday, but he’d managed it, even though he’d hated the slight deception that he’d had to pull on his dad to go there. He’d been worried that someone would pounce on him and ask him how old he was when he went in, but no one had bothered him. He was 18 after all – an adult, and able to do anything he wanted, but it somehow hadn’t felt quite like that as he’d walked up and down Canal Street trying to decide which of the shops looked the least intimidating and finding the courage to actually go in to it.

Some of the men in the magazines that James had shown him in France were wearing cock rings, and he'd been amazed by them. It had been hard to imagine exactly what pleasure might be had from wearing one, yet there was something about the idea that had kept coming back to him. When he'd got home from France, he'd grabbed the opportunity of Bekky taking Freddie and Henry out one afternoon to get their new school shoes and spent some time in the garden shed, finding the thickest wire he could from the odds and ends of gardening stuff, winding it into loops before binding them together with duct tape and fashioning something as close as he could to what he'd seen in the pictures. It was rough and ready but, after finally working out how to get his creation on, the sensation had amazed him. As he was on the tram into town that previous Saturday, he'd constantly turned his home-made ring over in the pocket of his trousers, wondering if he'd got the nerve needed to get to own the real thing.

Luckily, the shop he finally decided on was busy. He had had no idea what most of the things on display were but it hadn't been the occasion to spend any time looking, intriguing though it all was. He'd just needed to get what he wanted and get out before anyone questioned what he was doing in there. At first, he wasn't sure that the shop had what he wanted anyway. When he finally saw they had, it was with a feeling of dismay – they had a whole range of them, but they were in a display cabinet under the glass counter of the cash desk and he was going to actually have to ask for what he wanted rather than just pick one off a rack and take it to the till. The assistant was occupied serving someone, so he'd taken the opportunity to take a more detailed look at the options before the man had a chance to pounce on him. They were mostly plain, shiny, metal rings of the sort he wanted but, intriguingly, others were more complex shapes and designs that caused him to puzzle with fascination over how they might be worn and what they would feel like. The easiest thing, he'd realised, was going to be just to point at the one that was like those he'd seen in the magazines and get out of the shop as soon as he could. Finally, the assistant was free and smiled at him, no sign in his face that Rory wasn't a welcome customer. Rory summoned up his courage, and pointed.

"Can I have one of these please."

He'd done it. His voice hadn't sounded too weird either. For some reason, he'd half expected it to come out as a boyish treble.

"Sure," the man had said. "What size?"

Rory was flustered. "Err, I'm...."

"They come in medium, large, extra-large, plus and double plus sizes. There's no small size, for obvious reasons!" the man had said with a smile.

Rory wasn't sure what he meant, but smiled back anyway.

"Sorry, I'm not really sure," Rory had said, blushing. He'd really hoped it would all be more straightforward than this and, for a second, he contemplated making a run for the door. The man had seemed patient - perhaps, Rory had wondered, because he had realised that this must be his first visit to this kind of shop. There had been no one else waiting to be served, and Rory had realised that the least embarrassing thing to do would be to throw himself on the man's mercy and not even to try to act cool.

"I'm sorry to be clueless," he'd said, "but this is the kind of size I want."

Fumbling in his pocket with slightly shaky hands, a pile of coins had fallen out and onto the floor as he'd fished out his home-made ring, but the embarrassment of that had somehow helped

diffuse the awkwardness of the situation as a whole. Luckily, the man had smiled as he took it from Rory, who was glad to be able to busy himself retrieving the coins as the man opened the cabinet. By the time he'd stood up again, the assistant was sizing a ring against Rory's creation.

"That's a double plus then. Lucky you!"

Rory had blushed deep red as he noticed the man's lingering gaze drop unapologetically to his crotch.

## Chapter Two

Ben was surprised when he heard a key in the door. It wasn't much past nine - little more than half an hour after the rehearsal had ended. Rory looked serious when he came in, and Ben was worried.

"All OK?" he asked, "How was the rehearsal? No pub tonight after all then?"

"Yeah - I'm good, thanks. But it's James. He isn't. I had a text from him earlier. That's why I came straight home."

"Yeah?" said Ben. "What's up with him?"

"Well, I rang him back after the rehearsal and he was in a right state. I hope this OK, but he's on his way here. I couldn't exactly stop him - he was already in Sheffield by the time we spoke."

"Blimey. Well, I suppose it has to be OK then," said Ben. "It's too late to do anything about it now. Did he tell you what on earth is up?"

"Not really. He wouldn't say much - just that it's something to do with his dad. He said he'd left school to get the train home for half term, got as far as Leicester and then realised that he just couldn't face a whole week of being with him. He said he let three Melton trains go while he wondered what to do, then one for Manchester pulled in and he just got on it. Sorry, I just didn't know what to say. He gets into Piccadilly in half an hour - can we go and pick him up?"

Ben got Charles' number from Chris and rang him straightway. Understandably, Charles was worried sick after getting just a curt text from James saying that he wasn't coming home for half term, all his calls back to him just going to voicemail. Ben managed to reassure him that James was safe and, although he had no idea what was going on, he'd take care of him and report back on what was up. There wasn't really much else to say.

James looked ashen-faced when they met him from the train. He said little in the car other than apologising for just turning up on them, that things were terrible and that he just couldn't face seeing his dad. When they reached the house, he instantly burst into tears. Ben left him with Rory's arms round his shoulders to make strong, sweet tea, knowing that there was no point in asking the boy anything until he had let out all the upset. When he'd returned with the mugs, James was sobbing uncontrollably.

Chapter Three:September 2016

Six weeks earlier, James's journey back from France had been tense to say the least. What had made it even worse was the fact that his father barely spoke at all, let alone saying anything about having barged in on him in the cow shed with Rory's glans inside his foreskin. James would much rather have faced a telling off than silence, but nothing was ever said about the incident, either then or later.

That afternoon at the gite, Charles had got his first look in a long time at his son's foreskin. It was bad enough to be reminded that it was there at all, but the long hood he saw wasn't at all what he thought a "normal" foreskin should look like - that the head was so amply covered was bad enough, but the nozzle of overhang just revolted him. It was lucky that James's new year at boarding school had started not long afterwards as the atmosphere at home was thick with unspoken issues, but James had still had to endure a couple of difficult weekends back home when the tension in the air was almost un-bearable. Then, on his third weekend back home, things had changed. As soon as Charles met him at the station on that Friday evening, James thought that his father seemed different somehow. Later, as he was doing some prep in his bedroom, Charles came in, after actually knocking for once. James was expecting the worst, but was amazed when Charles had said that he realised things hadn't been easy since they'd got back from France, and that he'd come to realise that James was growing up fast. Awkwardly extending his hand for James to shake, he said that it was time for them both to move on and make a fresh start. That was amazing enough, but he went on to say that he'd get tickets to see the Tigers play London Irish the following Sunday if James fancied a real boys' day out with him and grandad. They could make a whole day of it, he'd said, have a curry on the way, see the match and then drop James back at school afterwards. James had accepted, largely as it seemed churlish to refuse, but, when it came to it, he had actually enjoyed the rugby and, with his grandad there as a kind of buffer, even quite enjoyed being with his dad, who seemed to be making an effort and was more relaxed than for a while.

When they got back to the car after the match, his grandad said he hoped they wouldn't mind making a small diversion on the way to James's school as he needed to drop in on an old friend to sort out a bit of business. The weather changed as they left the Leicester suburbs, and sudden torrential rain made the journey along the narrow lanes painfully slow after they turned off the A6. The day had actually been quite fun up until leaving Walford Road, but the storm had made the gloom of the autumn afternoon suddenly depressing, and the diversion along so many country lanes seemed to be never ending. Finally, they turned off the road and up a densely wooded drive.

The house was a surprise when it finally came into view, looking so out of place in its rural setting. It must have been an aspirational, state-of-the art home when it was built, but now it looked a quaint example of 1950s design made less than attractive by the rather tired paintwork. There were two figures standing in the car port alongside the house, both vaping - a middle-aged woman with very obviously dyed black hair dressed in an un-flattering purple track suit, and an overweight young man, just a little older than James, who scratched un-self-consciously at his crotch as Charles killed the engine. James registered the bulk in the young man's joggers, but it wasn't an attractive sight. It was she who spoke as they left the car.

"How do. I'm Thelma, Mr Roberts' housekeeper and personal assistant."

The accent started off as un-tamed Yorkshire, but perhaps her pride in the role was shown by the distinctly more southern way that she pronounced the last two words.

“This is me son Brandon,” she went on, back in broad Yorkshire. “He does garden and helps out when we need an extra pair a’ hands. I’ll let Mr Roberts know you’re here and put t’kettle on. Come in. The study’s first on’t left.”

Inside, the house was no less of a period piece. Spotlessly clean but dated, it made James think of a set for a 1950’s TV drama. The study fitted the same bill – tidy, lined with books and boxes of papers on the desk. The large French windows looked out over dreary farmland, a large telescope on a stand in front of it. James looked casually at some of the books – astronomy, golf, but mainly medical.

“Robin! Good to see you, old man. And Charles too! It’s been a very long time. And this must be James – nice to meet you. A chip off the old block there I see!”

This, evidently, was Mr Roberts. Early seventies, well-scrubbed, jacket and tie.

“How’s the handicap these days then, Robin?”

“Well, I don’t get out so much these days - the old knees, you know - but I do my best,” said Robin, James’s grandad. “You’re still managing to tear yourself away from the links for long enough to do a bit of work then?”

“Well, I keep my hand in, but it’s largely as a favour for old friends these days,” replied Mr Roberts. “I was scaling back a bit anyway, then the old headmaster at the school up the road retired and it went very quiet after that. First of all, the new man changed it from ‘required’ to just ‘strongly recommended,’ then some parent decided to make a ridiculous issue out of it, and now it’s down to just ‘suggested.’ Things move on I suppose, but some of us still believe the old ways are the best.”

“Indeed, even if it takes some of them a little while to do actually anything about it, eh Charles?” said James’s grandfather, winking at his son.

“Well, it’s just good he got there in the end,” said Mr Roberts. “I must say there is something satisfying about fitting the final piece in a family jigsaw before I finally throw in the towel.”

James had drifted off. He had no idea what they were talking about and, as an only child, he had endured enough of this kind of adults’ conversation to know that the best thing to do was just to put his mind into stand-by mode until it was all over. He looked idly at the telescope. The talk droned on in the background, then suddenly he heard his name and came to.

“James,” said his grandad, “we’ve got a little bit of paperwork to attend to, but it won’t take long. Just amuse yourself for a bit, eh? I’m sure Dennis won’t mind if you try his telescope.”

“Too cloudy for it to be much use tonight, I fear” said Dennis, “but do by all means, James.”

James had given up trying to see anything at all through the telescope when the door opened. It was Brandon with a tray – full tea service, orange and brown flowers, Habitat, circa 1963.

“Help the-self,” said Brandon. James noticed with distaste that rather more than the crack of hairy arse than he wanted to see was revealed as Brandon bent over to put the tea things down none too carefully on the Formica coffee table. Some tea slopped out of the spout of the pot and started to spread across the cloth that covered the tray.

“Me mam made cake. Have a bit - it’s good. She does a good bake, does me mam.”



James muttered something, awkwardly. Brandon's faded "Guns and Roses 2012 Tour" T shirt struggled to contain his stomach, and there was a considerable gap between it and his slightly grubby jogging bottoms. He made no move to leave, and James was a bit surprised when he picked up a piece of cake and put most of it in his mouth in one go. As he ate, his hand was scratching at his crotch again. James wondered if he even knew he was doing it.

"The doc did me last year," said Brandon. "He offered to do it as a thank you to me mam after she'd laid on a bit of a spread for one of his golf club do's."

James didn't have a clue what he was on about, but luckily Brandon didn't seem to expect any reply.

"She said that what with all them posh kids coming here for it, there must be summat in it or else they wouldn't do it, would they, so we'd best as well not look a gift horse in't mouth. It were a bit funny, what with her helping him and that, but there's now't much to it. It didn't seem fair really – it only took him half hour to do it after me mam had been at the cooking for days, but she says they pay hundreds for it, them daft posh buggers. Can't really see what t'fuss is about it me'sen. It don't seem any better really, but suppose it must be good or they wouldn't get it done, would they. Mind you, it felt like t'were a bloody long wait for one afterwards, and then it took a bit of getting used to I can tell you, but ..."

James was still none the wiser and rather relieved that his father had re-appeared at the door. Brandon deftly had another piece of cake in his mouth, and was gone.

"Do join us James – we're just across the hall."

The room was another period piece, but this time it would been a set for a 1950's medical drama. Thelma and Mr Roberts were in medical scrubs now, hers grotesquely struggling to contain her bulk. It was only when he saw them dressed that way that things suddenly fell into place for James, and he felt like he'd been kicked in the stomach as realisation dawned.

"No!" said James. I don't want to be....

"James – it's for the best," said Charles. "You must realise that. That ugly thing – you'll be better off without it. It's time to man up for once for once in your life and stop making such a damned fuss."

James struggled. It was uneven odds with two men to hold him down on the table, but the situation became hopeless when Thelma called out for Brandon to come in too. Adrenalin flowing perhaps, James suddenly became hyper-aware of his surroundings - the crack in the ceiling above him, the fact that the calendar on the wall was still showing the previous month but, most of all, the cloying sickliness of Thelma's perfume mixed with the sour, stale odour from Brandon's armpits as he stood there holding him down. Hypodermic in hand, Thelma started cooing at him: "Not to worry, my duck. It will all be over in a moment. Just be a good lad for 't doctor, eh."

Somehow, it all seemed so surreal that it was as if it wasn't happening. Suddenly, James realised that he could do no more to protect himself other than putting his mind into a different, far-away place. All he could focus on was how, in the struggle, Brandon's jogging bottoms had started to fall down and that, with both hands occupied holding him down, a thick patch of his pubes was showing. As he felt the needle enter the base of his penis, James almost laughed as they started to fall further and the base of a thick, pale penis was revealed. As he felt the needle come out again, all he

could think about was the grotesque, stark shape of the Brandon' glans that was outlined through the thin, cheap material.

Chapter FourOctober 2016

James's story, when it started to emerge, came out in tearful bursts. As he pieced it together, Ben became angrier and angrier – angry with Charles, angry with a doctor who would force circumcision on a boy who was clearly old enough to express an opinion, and angry with himself that he had been helpless to save someone else who, like him, had been forced to undergo the act of circumcision without his consent. To Ben, Charles seemed just as despicable about the way he had gone about things with James as Roger had been with himself.

James told Ben and Rory that he had firmly said no, but it had done him no good. Encouragement, assurance and - finally -insistence had done nothing to change his mind, and he had been dropped back at his boarding school without his foreskin and, despite being in a lot of discomfort, just told to man-up by his dad. The time since had been mental as well as physical torment for him, with merciless teasing from the other boys to add to the distress at what had been taken from him against his will. There was worse too as, James told Ben and Rory, over the last couple of weeks as he had started to heal, he had become sure that it just “wasn't right.”

“Sorry, but can I show you? I just need to know,” James said.

Ben's heart went out to James, admiring his dignity in his distress. He stood up, un-zipped the fly of his school trousers and took out his penis. The result, even two weeks on, looked far from good. Ben felt his guts twist as he saw the bruised and swollen penis that reminded him so much of how his had looked after his own circumcision decades earlier. Even allowing for it settling down more over time, it didn't seem to have the potential ever to look good. Amongst Ben's many feelings was a guilty relief in realising that things could have been a whole lot worse for both him and Rory, had they not both been circumcised by cutters who were actually good at their craft.

“The thing is,” said James, “when it gets hard, it's just not right – I know it isn't. I realise it's all different when – when you are circumcised, but something's not right with it.”

“Listen,” said Ben, “it's late. I think the best thing we can all do is get some sleep, but I'm going to make a call to a mate of mine. He'll know what to do.”

Ben was lucky to get Mike just before he started a shift in A&E. Now a firm friend after playing a part in nailing Roger for his part in engineering it, it had been Mike who had assisted at Ben's unnecessary circumcision. To Ben's relief, Mike said he was off work the next day and would be round in the morning.

Ben found it hard to sleep that night. He was shocked by what had happened to James and angry with himself that he hadn't stopped it happening, even though he knew that, in reality, there wasn't actually anything he could have done. As well as his distress for James, it brought back memories of his own circumcision that were still hard to deal with, even so many years later.

Rory lay awake much longer than usual too. He was just as upset for James as his dad, but part of him had other feelings which he was finding it hard to own. Although he felt guilty about it, he realised that he was selfishly disappointed that he and James would now never get to explore docking again. Their penises had only just connected inside their one foreskin before Charles had burst in on them, and the thought of delving further into the experience was one that Rory had often returned to since they had been back from France. It wasn't just that though. Rory knew that there wasn't likely

to be anyone else quite as open to letting him explore the uncut state as James had been, certainly without it getting into dangerously gay territory. There was even more still, and the worst of that was that, much though he pitied James, for a reason he just couldn't understand, Rory realised that there was something very erotic for him in the knowledge that his friend had had a perfect foreskin taken from him.

## Chapter Five

“Fuck,” the bastard’s cork-screwed you,” said Mike. He’d arrived late the next morning after driving straight over from his shift. “Sorry James mate, but there is no point in pretending that he’s made a good job of it, but you know that anyway. He’s stitched it up out of alignment, so I’m not surprised you aren’t happy. He should be bloody well shot, whoever he was – there’s just no excuse. That’s why it doesn’t feel right when you bone up - everything’s twisted.”

Mike saw the distress on James’ face, mixed perhaps with some small bit of comfort from finding that he had been right in thinking that all was not well. Already knowing from Ben that he had been circumcised against his will, Mike stopped himself asking James if he had struggled during the procedure as that could be a possible reason, if not an excuse, for the poor outcome. It was irrelevant in any case, as what mattered was putting things right.

“Right, don’t worry,” Mike said. “I’ve seen a few patients come in like this before and we can get you sorted out, OK? It will mean re-doing you, but the good thing is that he’s not cut you too tight so there’s still plenty of scope to get you a good result. I’m gonna make a couple of calls, OK?”

Ben made coffee whilst Mike was out in the conservatory on the phone. It was some time before he came back in.

“Well? said Ben. “Any joy?”

“Right,” said Mike. “Good news and bad news. The bad news is that the fucker made a right mess of it - it’s just shameful. The good news is that he only gave him a very loose cut – don’t know if you noticed, but there was enough skin left to still go a bit over his rim, so there’s room for manoeuvre in putting it right. I’m not an expert here, but I expect the doc will tell him that the he’ll have to decide between a result that looks good but fuck-tight, or else have a bit of slack and put up with a bit of a patchwork quilt. Either way, at least the poor kid will end up straightened out when he pops one, and have it look a whole lot better than it does now.”

“That’s a relief,” said Ben. “I’m so sorry for him. He had no idea it was going to happen and he really didn’t want it done either.”

“Yeah, I can see that must have rung bells for you, mate,” said Mike. “Nasty stuff – again.”

“Did you manage to find someone that can sort him out, then?” asked Ben. “Just do what it takes. Don’t worry about the money - I’ll pay. It’s the least I can do to make up for...”

Ben wasn’t quite sure exactly what it would be making up for, but he knew what he had to do.

“So, the best man in the field is Dr McGraw at the Woodlands Clinic – I’ve done some stints there and he’s a real ace, but the bad news is that he’s back home in South Africa for two months. So, I got on to one who is nearly as good, and the good news is that he can see him Monday morning.”

“Thanks Mike,” said Ben. “That’s brilliant. I can take a day off and take him wherever.”

“There’s just one snag,” Mike interrupted, looking suddenly worried. “I don’t know how you’ll feel about this, mate. It’s Dr. Argent - at Burden Park.”

## Chapter Six

James was quiet on the drive. Ben soon gave up trying to make conversation after re-assuring him yet again that he was going to be in the best possible hands to sort things out, and left him to his thoughts. It was the first time since the day of his own circumcision that Ben had gone anywhere near Burden Park, and he felt a tightening in his guts as he turned off the A16 and onto the country road that led there. Ben had been bracing himself for the encounter with Dr Argent, and it perhaps made things easier that the meeting came sooner than he had expected. As Ben pulled up the handbrake in the car park, someone else pulled into the space alongside them. It was the man's hair that Ben noticed first - how obvious it was that it had been dyed black. A second later, he realised it was Argent. Getting out of the car, Ben took the lead and introduced himself.

"Dr. Argent? I'm Ben Cook. I'm here with James Hilton-Smith. Mike arranged it. I'm very grateful for...."

"Mr Cook - of course," said Argent, looking rather unsettled as he extended his hand. "It's my pleasure. I'm just so pleased to be able to help in such a difficult situation and it seems only fair after..."

Argent paused, then made a fresh start, his tone slightly less guarded.

"Look, I just wanted to say that I'm truly sorry for what happened all those years ago. It was an unforgivable irregularity in our admin procedures and I can promise you that we immediately tightened things up to ensure that nothing like it could ever happen again. I think that, under the circumstances, seeing James is the least I can do to make amends, and of course there will be no charge."

"Thank you," said Ben. "I'm very grateful to you, and very pleased to see James under the care of such a safe pair of hands so he can get the best outcome possible."

Argent smiled, looking somewhat relieved.

"Well, I'm delighted to hear you say that. Even though you had it all rather thrust upon you, I'm so glad that you've come to appreciate the benefits of circumcision."

"Oh I didn't say that!" interrupted Ben, forcefully. "There are no benefits. I hated it then, and I hate it now. It's barbaric, and it should be banned, full stop."

Argent looked shocked, unable to think what to say. Ben saved him from having to respond.

"But, that said, I trust you to get as good a result as there can be for James. Much as I hate being circumcised and the whole idea of it, I've seen others who fared far worse than I did, so I accept that you are good at what you do, even though I think you are completely and utterly wrong in doing it. I think we'll probably have to agree to differ on that, but may I shake your hand again as a sign of my thanks for today and my trust in you, despite our differences?"

Chapter Seven:

Ben was very proud of the sensitivity and care with which Rory helped James through the weeks after his re-circumcision. They were constantly emailing and texting and, a month after the crisis had happened, James was back in Manchester for the weekend for which Rory, very unusually, had been allowed to stay rather than going to Bekky's. Ben knew he shouldn't have done it but, as he went into the kitchen to start on Saturday lunch, he couldn't help listening a little too intently through the serving hatch to the boys' conversation in the other room, intrigued by some of the details that he learnt from his eavesdropping.

"Lots of boys really like it," Rory was saying in a conversation that had obviously been going on for a while. "There was even a boy at school who asked to get done last term, and he didn't even need it - he just thought it was better. I've never minded being done, even though I didn't get a say because of the Jewish thing."

"But you aren't even really Jewish, are you," said James.

"Well, technically yes. But not really, to be honest," said Rory. "Even my mum has kind of given up on that, but...well, stuff happens. Look, you've got nothing to be ashamed of. It wasn't your fault or anything. And it looks good mate, it really does. It's only that bit underneath where he had to patch you up a bit, but who's going to see that. It looked good before, and it looks good now - just different. And those kids that tease boys like us, well, they know nothing. And some of them might even be jealous, despite what they say."

"Yeah, s'pose," said James. "But..."

"One thing," said Rory, smiling, "at least you know about lube after France - you aren't going to be left struggling after lights out!"

Straight away, Rory regretted mentioning France. It struck him that it was quite possible that the reasons for James's circumcision were going to get picked over in the days ahead, and that the reasons for Charles's sudden departure from the gite might get discussed again with, perhaps, a few more details coming to light his time around, leading to a rather less tolerant response from his father than before. Apart from that worry, he was conflicted about the whole business in general. He felt very sorry for James and, after his experience in France, could understand why someone might prefer to have a foreskin, especially if he had grown up being used to one. Even so, there was something weirdly horny for him about the way James's penis had been changed. James was sharing Rory's bedroom and, after France, neither of them, had any concern about being naked in front of the other. When Rory had seen James's penis the night before, settled down now since his re-circumcision and finally having become the one that he was going to have for the rest of his life, the transformation had excited him. Somehow, it was something very special to have seen the same organ in both states - before with a perfect foreskin and after, now stripped as bare as his own. It made Rory think too about what had been done to him when he was a baby - it was something James had physically struggled to stop, but Rory somehow found the idea that he himself had been so small and vulnerable and totally at his cutter's mercy strangely arousing. He thought again of Ryan at school, who had actually asked his parents if he could be circumcised, and wondered how it had been for him to go to the doctor's and have someone hold his penis with a view to part of it being removed, especially as it didn't actually need to be done.

Ben had wondered why James had been so keen to come and stay that particular weekend, and why Rory had, so unusually, asked his mum if he could alter the usual arrangements so he could be there. The reason in the back of his mind that he had chosen not to explore too deeply was, in fact, the right one; that Saturday, a month after his re-circumcision, was the day when James could safely masturbate for the first time.

That afternoon, the boys went into town, saying that they'd get a pizza before going to see a film. Their main reason, though, had actually been to do some shopping. As soon as they got off the tram, they headed to the Arndale Centre and made straight for Boots. When they got there, James had been wary enough about even standing in front of the display, but Rory, for whom it was nothing new, had stepped up to the mark and explained the differences between the makes of lube and what they were like. A tube finally in hand, James had started to make for the self-service check outs when Rory stopped him.

"Mate," he'd said. "You look like you've just shoplifted something. Look, it's nothing wrong, OK? You're circumcised, and tight too. You need lube. It's not illegal. You're just going to have to get used to buying it unless you want to have permanently blue balls, OK?"

"Yeah, I know, but...." said James. He blushed bright red as, as if on cue, a pair of girls walked past and one of them glanced down at what he had in his hand and then up to his face. James was mortified as he saw her say something to her friend as they moved on, followed by a burst of giggling from them both. Rory either hadn't noticed, or chose not to.

"Look," said Rory, "I'm going to make you go cold turkey here. In at the deep end for your own good. Trust me. You see that row of cashiers? Three girls, two blokes. So, which one do you fancy the most?"

"Rory!" said James, laughing.

"I'm serious mate. Which one?"

It hadn't been lost on James that Rory had said "which one", and not "which of the girls." Although he was a bit disquieted by that detail, there was relief there too that Rory hadn't made an assumption. All of the cashiers were clearly Saturday staff, none of them much older than themselves.

"Well, none really, but I suppose the blonde one in the middle if push came to shove."

"Yeah, she's pretty, isn't she," said Rory. Somehow, James was pleased that he'd made the "right" choice although, minutes earlier, he'd actually thought to himself just how good looking the younger of the two men behind the tills was. Despite Rory's open question, he couldn't say that – not even to Rory. Not yet. Not quite.

"OK then," said Rory. Get in her queue."

"But..." said James.

"No buts, just do it mate! Look, she's selling embarrassing stuff all day, and as far as she knows the lube might be for your granny's suppositories. Her boyfriend might be a lube-user too – we aren't exactly going to be the only roundheads in town, are we."

Reluctantly, James did as he was told. The wait to be served seemed interminable. Just as the woman in front of James put her credit card back into her purse and he braced himself to face the worst, the girl behind the till called over the supervisor. The sudden extra wait was torture. Finally,



after a discussion which seemed to go on for ever, the girl left for the break she had been pushing for and the supervisor smiled at James.

“Sorry to keep you waiting – would you mind coming over to end till.”

Working at the end till was, of course, the cute young man that James had noticed earlier. He tried scanning the lube several times before looking over James’ shoulder. James was mortified again as he called out very loudly, waving the tube in the air over his head.

“Maureen, can you bring me another tube of Xtra-glide over please?”

He turned back to James: “Sorry, the barcode’s smudged on this one. Won’t be long.”

The wait for Maureen to return seemed endless. James could only look at his feet, the silence between the men feeling deadly. Finally, Maureen was on her way back, tube in hand. She was still yards away from them when the assistant called out again.

“No, not that one – the Silk one. Xtra-glide Silk That one’s Xtra-glide Bliss.”

James felt his face go bright red. There was a big queue behind him now, and he was convinced that everyone was listening. He cursed Rory for not letting him use the self-serve.

“Sorry,” said the man. James was convinced that he would try and make conversation and that the obvious topic would be his intended purchase but, luckily, he turned to the girl on the next till and asked her when she was going on her break. To James, buying the stuff felt like he was wearing a big badge on his lapel saying “I’m circumcised.”

James felt himself blush again as the man looked up at him to ask if he had a loyalty card, but when he finally walked away, all was well. Part of him realised that Rory had done him a favour in making him face up to doing something that he was just going to have to get used to. Rory, in fact, had been a good friend to him all round in facing up to his life as a circumcised man, and he was truly grateful to him. As James turned from the tills and smiled at the hovering Rory, he thought again about the night ahead. He wasn’t sure yet just how much he wanted Rory to be around when the cap came off that tube for the first time. There were implications, and plenty of them, and he wasn’t sure yet how he wanted it all to pan out.

That evening, as they left the cinema and turned into St Peter’s Square, their tram was at the stop. They just made it just as the doors started to close and grabbed the nearest seats. They talked about the film but, as James felt in his pocket to check that the tube of lube was still there, his mind was more on what he knew would happen later. There was a huge crowd of teenage girls waiting at the Deansgate stop, most of them carrying “Boyz Beyond Borders” programmes from the concert that had obviously just finished at the Convention Centre. Rory turned to James and gave him a wide-eyed smile, showing that the journey had just got more interesting for him than it would be for James. The high-pitched giggly noise on the girl-packed tram was deafening, and James suddenly felt uncomfortable. When he felt Rory’s elbow nudging him, he followed his gaze to the shapely arses of two tight-jeaned girls pressed up against the glass partition in front of them, part of the crush packed in front of the doors. Things eased at Trafford Bar when a big crowd got out, clearly about to start their night of clubbing, and the two girls moved into the free space and leant back against the tram doors. James felt himself shrivel inside when he saw who they were - the two who’d seen him earlier, lube in hand, in Boots. To his horror, one of them caught his gaze. Luckily, Rory chose that moment to say something about the film, but James could see out of the corner of his eye that the girls were whispering. They both kept looking across – the first girl looked wary of doing so, but the second

almost blatantly staring. For James, who always felt somehow ill at ease in the presence of girls, this was very uncomfortable stuff. He wasn't sure if Rory was even aware of it, or if he'd even care if was. Perhaps he'd even revel in realising he was being talked about by two fit girls, and James reckoned that Rory was such a good looker that he was probably so used to it that it was nothing unusual anyway. James, though, was worried. He was sure that one of the girls had seen that it was lube in his hand earlier, and surely she'd have realised that it meant he was cut, or would she? Did girls know about that kind of thing? Or perhaps they thought that he and Rory were a couple – that they were going home to use the lube for a fuck later. If they did, perhaps they were discussing which of them took it up the bum, and he assumed they were bound to think it was him. The second girl lent very obviously to the first and whispered something in her ear, causing her laugh out loud before very obviously staring across. This time, it was clearly at Rory. The first girl caught James looking at her and, embarrassed to the core, he looked away in a flash, pretending to be interested in something out of the window. It was then he realised. The lighting in the tram was creating a reflection of him and Rory on the glass and, even in the hazy reversed image, he could see the way Rory's bulge, his legs a little apart, had settled so conspicuously in his trousers. The way it was sitting made it look just huge. Even to a casual observer, there was no mistaking what it was - his long cock clearly snaking down his thigh. James couldn't stop himself from looking from reflection to reality. Although of course he knew exactly what was under there, perhaps a few others would realise what the details of its shape of it implied; he could make out the ridge of Rory's helmet through the tight cloth.

There was relief for James in knowing that it was Rory and his packet that was intriguing the girls. If they were looking at James at all, they were probably only thinking that he'd need a lot of that lube to get something as big as the contents of Rory's trousers up inside him. To his surprise, James felt his cock stir. He wasn't sure exactly what had caused it. Rory's bulge? That someone else had spotted it? Or, perhaps, the new and intriguing thought that the lube in his pocket might be used for a purpose other than helping him masturbate. It was the first girl's turn to blush when James caught her eye as she looked up from Rory's crotch. This time though, he smiled back at her, thinking somehow that he was reading her mind and she too was considering just what it would be like to have Rory's cock sliding up inside her. Perhaps luckily, the girls got off after a couple more stops. Rory was oblivious, but James noticed them standing by the stop, collapsing into laughter as the tram pulled away.

When they got home, they sat and watched TV with Ben for a while, but he didn't pick up on the feeling of tension in the atmosphere that was only relieved when, finally, he said he was going to bed and left them.

"I thought he'd never go!" said Rory. He stood up to re-open the living room door a crack so they could listen out for the sounds from the bathroom and of doors closing that would signal that his dad was finally in bed. When all was quiet, they gave it another fifteen minutes before heading upstairs themselves. On the way, James reached into the pocket of his coat that was hanging in the hall to retrieve that afternoon's purchase.

Rory shut the bedroom door and turned on his bedside light as James moved his things off the futon and opened it up. Rory was quickly naked, glad that his friend had been too pre-occupied with organising his bedding to have noticed that he had had no underwear on under his trousers. It had been the first Saturday in a long time when he hadn't worn his cock ring. He'd even taken to wearing it to school on days when he didn't have any sports and had been wondering about telling James about it, but he'd decided he couldn't. Not yet. Not quite.

James's mind was full of thoughts as he made up his bed. There hadn't been enough time after his first circumcision for him to heal up enough to wank before he'd had to be circumcised all over again. The seemingly endless wait since he had last pleased himself would have made the wank he was about to have momentous enough, but there was so much more to it than that. This was going to be his first time as a circumcised man – a man who had no foreskin to use for the purpose, no easy way to do it anymore. He was about to find out what it was going to be like for him for the rest of his life. Part of him dreaded discovering that it would be worse than before – that it no longer had the same enjoyment, that the sheer pleasure of it had been spoiled for ever - so he was as much in fear as in anticipation. Of course Rory had re-assured him that it would be fine, but even so. With his bed made, he looked over at Rory. He had his dressing gown on but hadn't done it up, and James took in again the long, thick penis with its heavy, bare mushroom head.

"OK," said Rory. "So I'm going to take a shower and I promise I won't rush. Good luck mate, and enjoy it. When you've done, open the door a crack so I know that ...well, you know what I mean. There's a towel under my bed for... well, you know what I mean too."

"Rory," said James, almost blurting it out. He hadn't made a conscious decision to say it, but the words came nevertheless. "Rory, will you stay, mate?"

"Sure. Whatever you want," said Rory, sitting down on his bed. "You know I'm here for you."

James was far from sure why he'd asked, but somehow it seemed to matter. Reassurance? Guidance? The pure eroticism of wanking in front of someone else? They were all in the mix.

Had it been anyone else there with him, James would have been embarrassed that he was already hard when he pulled down his trousers and trunks, but he and Rory seemed to be past worrying about things like that. Rory was "safe", wasn't he? James looked down at his penis. Knowing that Rory was seeing it erect for the first time since its modification made him see it himself as if through fresh eyes. Even so many weeks on, seeing the reality of it still gave him a jolt, so different was it from the image of his penis still in his mind's eye with its long, foreskin budding just past the end of his helmet. He supposed though that it would look good enough to anyone seeing it for the first time who hadn't know what it looked like before. After Dr Argent had done his work, it certainly felt more "right" than it had after his first circumcision as he could now erect without the uncomfortable feeling that he had had before, but James was still shocked by how tight everything felt as soon as arousal hit him. Argent, as Mike had thought, had offered him a choice between being cut tighter and getting the optimum cosmetic result or keeping more skin with the compromise on looks that that would entail. James, largely with the image of Rory's cock in his mind, had gone with Argent's recommendation of the former. The scar line was still angry looking and the marks of Argent's suturing still showed clearly but, although the look of it still somehow scared him, James told himself that he would have been aroused to see a penis like it on someone else. Now, he was about to hold it in a new way – not just to pee, but to pleasure himself. Despite the hint that he had got in France with Rory, he was really going to find out what masturbation was like for a circumcised man – a man like him. A man who no longer had a foreskin. A man with a modified penis. A penis that was no longer the way that nature intended. A penis that would always be noticed as being different. Perhaps it looks better, he thought. Perhaps not. Perhaps neither better or worse, but just different. Very different. He didn't know the answer to that, but he was somehow prepared to accept that the way he was now was the way he would always be. He wasn't anti-circumcision as such, but still struggled with the fact that he had been altered when he didn't want to be.

Realising that he'd been lost in thought for a moment, James looked up at Rory, only to see that he was already looking at him. Rory smiled, and the gesture touched James.

"It does look good, mate. It really does," Rory said. "All will be well – trust me. You're still adjusting. I can see that. I know it was a shock, but....."

"Thanks," said James. "Well, I suppose I can't put it off any longer, not that I want to – it's been a long time!"

"God, I don't know how you've lasted," said Rory. "It makes me glad I was done as a kid - I don't think I could have lasted as long as you have without rubbing one out."

"Rory," said James, "Can I ask you something? Have you ever – well, fucked anyone? Or has anyone ever sucked you off?"

"What's this – truth or dare?!" said Rory, laughing. "No, neither. Not yet. Why do you ask?"

James noticed that Rory hadn't asked him the same question in return. The answer would have been the same if he had.

"It's just – well - I was just wondering what it's like. If people notice that we're different. If they mind," said James.

"Nah," said Rory. "They don't care."

James wasn't quite sure how Rory knew that, but it was nevertheless the answer he had wanted to hear.

"Anyway," said Rory. "You sure you want me to stay?"

James just nodded. Suddenly decisive, he picked up the tube that lay beside him on the futon. He fumbled as he flipped the lid and aimed it at his penis, and far too much lube oozed onto his glans. Without saying a word, Rory passed him the towel so he could mop some up. James smeared the remainder down onto his inner skin and then paused, almost as if bracing himself for what was to come. Suddenly decisive again, he fisted his penis. Rory was looking at him, trying to read his thoughts, but his face was blank. Cautiously, James started stroking, his eyes closed. After a moment, he moaned slightly as his stroke started to lengthen, exploring the feelings from the head, then encompassing the whole of his shaft, then focussing more on the area around his circumcision scar. Suddenly, his eyes were open, looking for Rory's face. Their eyes met for a second, but James couldn't hold the gaze. Intent now on pleasuring himself, his strokes got firmer and more intense as he dared relax into the reality of his first circumcised sexual experience and learning how his penis now worked. Rory inched his hand imperceptibly towards James, but enough for him to notice. James' free hand reached out and grasped it, his fingers intertwining with Rory's and gripping them tightly. Rory felt himself start to harden as at James' touch and, within seconds, his full erection was sticking rampantly through the folds of his dressing gown. He did nothing to hide it, remaining intent on what James was doing, fascinated to take in the way he was exploring his penis. For James, seeing Rory's hard penis emerge was enough to set him on the start of his orgasm. Rory noticed James's balls start to squirm in their sack, something that never happened with own, and the sight excited him. Seconds later, he saw the balls pull up tight to James's body as his orgasm hit, one long arc of semen spurting out high and falling onto the floor. As James erupted, Rory's hand reached for the towel and scooped the dollop of excess lube from where James had earlier wiped it and, a second later, it was on his own cock. He worked it hard and with an urgent intensity, the fingers of his other hand still locked tight with James's.

Part Two: Five years later

2022

Chapter One

There was another loud burst of raucous laughter from the kitchen.

“Listen to that!” said Rory, “He’s even got my dad sounding camp!”

“Well,” said James, “he has been feeding him industrial-strength pink gins for the last hour! Something tells me we might have a bit of a wait before we actually get anything to eat.”

Rory had stayed on at church after Mass for his last pre-baptismal counselling session with Father O’Leary, so Leyton had already been there for a while by the time he got home. Rory knew that was a big deal for James to bring his new boyfriend home to meet him and Ben over Sunday dinner, so he was pleased things seemed to be going so well – certainly Leyton seemed to have hit it off with his dad if the laughter coming from the kitchen was anything to go by.

“So, go on - what do you make of him then?” asked James.

“He’s lovely!” said Rory. “Really, really lovely. You’ve done good there mate. And he’s bloody lucky to land you too. If I could bring myself to bat for the other team then I’d have snapped you up long ago. You know that.”

James felt his cock stiffen.

“But I can’t, not even for you, mate,” Rory continued, “but I can’t imagine a nicer man to have you instead.”

“Thanks Rory, that means a lot.”

“God, he’s bright too!” said Rory. “I must admit that I’d never have expected any of that clever stuff. I mean, you don’t really expect all that from someone who works in the soft furnishings department in John Lewis, do you!”

“You only know the half of it!” said James, pride apparent in his voice. “He speaks German and French fluently, he played hockey for the county and he’s a diploma-standard oboist. In fact, there’s only one area where he doesn’t make me feel totally inferior.”

“Yeah? And what’s that?” said Rory, although he more than suspected that he knew the answer. Even though he’d long wanted to know, he would have hesitated to ask the question had James not offered up such an obvious entrée.

“Well - there’s enough of it, but it won’t win any competitions shall we say. And, knowing you as I do, the answers to your next two questions are ‘no, he’s not’ and ‘plenty’. In fact, there’s more of that than anything else – quite spectacularly so.

“James, mate - you know me all too well!” said Rory, laughing, “but for God’s sake don’t tell him we’ve been talking about it!

“Actually, you know what, he wouldn’t give a monkey’s, bless him.”

Rory was hesitant in his next question, and probably wouldn’t have been able to bring himself to ask it had James not been the one to go so openly into that particular territory.

“Can he ..... dock you, then?”

The sensation of James’s skin over his glans head flooded back as he asked, and he was aware that he was blushing.

“God, how predictable! You’re obsessed!” said James, knowing he was being disingenuous. He was no more likely to forget the amazing time when they had docked than Rory, despite the unfortunate chain of events that it had precipitated.

“Fits like a glove mate. A bit snug, but there’s certainly room enough in there for two.”

It was Rory’s turn to feel his cock stiffen. He held James’s eye, waiting to see if he would glance down, knowing that the crotch-hugging trousers that Father O’Leary had struggled so hard not to look at earlier hid nothing. As Rory expected, James made no attempt to disguise the direction of his gaze. He didn’t comment on what he saw. He didn’t need to - the two of them understood each other totally.

“If he’s got a lot, he’s never thought about getting..... ?”

“Nah,” said James. “I asked him once and he said ‘Ooh no way - you know how I love all the fixtures and fitting in the soft furnishings department!’”

Rory laughed at James’s exaggerated mimicking of Leyton’s camp delivery.

“And what does he make of you being.....circumcised?” The word had so much significance for them both that it was still not one to be used without hesitation.

Rory was resisting the urge to drop his hand to his penis.

“You know what,” said James, “he doesn’t give a toss about the details of other blokes’ cocks. I know it’s the last thing you’d expect, but he’s actually a total top.”

“No way!” said Rory, “Well that will teach me to make assumptions!”

As James was actually bi-sexual and had had a girlfriend until just before meeting Leyton, this was a bit of a surprise for Rory. The knowledge that he seemed so easy about being a bottom was intriguing, and Rory couldn’t help wondering what might, just, have happened had he known that before James had a serious partner. The idea of seeing if it were actually possible for a man to take as cock as big as his own intrigued him, but the thought of that man being James added a whole extra layer to the thought. He might just have said something to dig a little deeper, had Ben and Leyton not finally appeared with starters.

“At last!” said Ben, putting his arm round Leyton’s shoulders. “I’ve finally got someone I can talk to about industrial polymers without seeing them glaze over!”

Chapter Two:

Tall, thin, and very good-looking, it was somehow the way he wore his shoulder-length chestnut hair that made Leyton seem so feminine. It often struck both Rory and Ben that James probably couldn't have found a boy-friend that Charles would approve of less. Ben, in fact, had often wondered if, since James' relations with his father had broken down so badly after his forced circumcision, that was actually part of Leyton's appeal for James. Leyton might have been very camp, but he was very bright too. He'd got a first for his physics degree and was halfway through his Masters when COVID intervened. During the hiatus, he'd realised that his heart wasn't really in it anymore, and he'd thrown it in to do the job he had always hankered after - working as a buyer in the soft furnishings department of John Lewis.

James had gone to live in the Cook household almost as soon as he had left school when it had soon become apparent that there was no way that, after his forced circumcision, he and Charles could live under the same roof. Although it was supposed to be a temporary arrangement, it had somehow become permanent when Charles suddenly left Ursula, his wife, for his new secretary and Ursula, to everyone's amazement, had moved in with the woman who ran the local riding stables.

When things had clearly become serious between the new lovers, it was actually Ben who had first suggested that Leyton might like to move in with the three of them as he was spending most of his time there anyway. Ben and Leyton had quickly become the unlikeliest of best mates too. Rory had been amazed when Leyton had taken his dad clothes shopping, giving him a whole and very successful new, younger look, followed by convincing him to try a smart new hair-style and grow a beard. Overall, Leyton's outrageousness somehow seemed to have the effect on loosening Ben up, and he had never seemed happier. It was, though, a week or so after Leyton had officially joined the household before they were actually all at home together for an evening. Leyton had disappeared after dinner, leaving the other three in front of the television and, after a while, Ben started to wonder if he was OK.

"Where's Leyton got to then?" he asked James. "You think he's alright?"

James went upstairs to check and, when he returned, he was smiling.

"Right," said James, "I think you two might need to prepare yourselves for a shock, and please try your best not to laugh."

He opened the door and ushered Leyton in. He'd bleached his hair, and then dyed it strawberry blonde.

"Is it true then?" Leyton said, curtsying to his stunned onlookers, "Do gentlemen prefer blondes?"

Actually, it did rather suit him somehow, but Ben and Rory both thought that only he could get away with it and have the confidence to bring it off. They had both had the same initial reaction though: "What would Charles say!"

When they ribaldry finally died down, Ben said he thought they all needed a cup of tea to help them get over the shock. When he came back with mugs, the others were engrossed in the television programme that had started just after Ben had left to put the kettle on.

"Oh no!" said Ben. "Not 'Naked Attraction!' Isn't there anything less mindless on than that?"

None of the three said anything, and they all seemed strangely engrossed. Ben passed round the mugs, sat down on the small settee next to Rory and looked at the TV to see what was intriguing them so intently. The screen was filled with a close up of large, starkly circumcised penis.

“Wow!” said Ben. “That doesn’t leave much to the imagination.”

In unison, the three shushed at him. On screen, the compere was talking to two women who were looking at the man’s genitals. One of them had instinctively put her hand to her face and was giggling nervously.

“Well I think it’s just that I’ve never come across one like that before. I’m mean I’ve heard about it, but it looks so different when you actually see one. I’m just not sure, well – it’s hard to imagine...”

“So is this more to your taste, then?” said the compare, the camera following her lead to focus on the man in the next booth. His foreskin more than covered the head of his short penis.”

“Well,” said the giggling woman, “to be honest, I prefer the bigger size on the other one, so if I could have the size of that one but with this one’s foreskin – God, I’m sounding so vacuous here, aren’t I!”

“So how about you?” said the compare, turning to the other woman.

“Well I’ve never been a big one for skin, to be honest, but it’s not something I’ve never really thought much about.”

“It’s a strange one, isn’t it, “said the compare, “that there are two sorts of men out there – the roundheads and the cavaliers. We talk so much about size, but that rarely gets mentioned.”

“So,” said Leyton, putting his arm around James and turning to Rory and Ben, “there’s one of each on this settee. How about over on yours?”

Rory wasn’t surprised at Leyton asking the sort of question that few would have risked, but he was amazed that Ben answered straight away, and with no sign of hesitation or embarrassment.

“Two roundheads over here.”

“There you go then – three against one. It’s the story of my life!” said Leyton, “I’m always the odd one out.”

“Yeah, and you SO hate standing out in a crowd, don’t you!” said James, pecking him on the cheek.

Their attention went back to the screen, where the compere was asking the circumcised man if many partners had expressed a preference but, a moment or two later, the three younger men turned to look at Ben as suddenly let out a loud burst of laughter.

“Sorry,” he said. “But it’s just struck me, watching that programme. Our household – the four of us, now that Leyton’s got his lovely new hair-do. We’re ‘Goldilocks and the three bares’!”

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