

JEFF. Greg's mum and dad don't know about him yet, Dad.

DAD. Oh, I see. That's a pity, don't you think, Greg? I mean, you're their son.

GREG. It's just—there's never been the chance.

DAD. I expect you could make the opportunity, if you really wanted to.

JEFF. Leave it, Dad—

DAD. I've always been very grateful that Jeff's been so honest with me. Not that I had a lot of choice, really, walking into the back shed when you were—what?—fourteen and finding you up Willy Jones's bum.

JEFF. I wasn't up his bum!

DAD. As near as dammit.

GREG. You're very broad-minded, Mr.—um—

DAD. I try to be, lad. After all, this is Jeff's home, if he can't be himself here, where can he be? And you think of this place as a second home, Greg. You're welcome here anytime you like. We don't have secrets from each other here.

GREG. (*Touched.*) Thanks very much, Mr. Mitchell.

DAD. Oh, none of that. Either "Harry" or "Dad." But I suppose that depends on how long you plan to go on seeing my Jeffrey, doesn't it?

(*GREG gives a half smile of agreement.*)

JEFF. Nothing on telly, Dad?

DAD. Nothing worth watching. This is much more fun. Family.

JEFF. (*Throws his eyes to heaven.*) I think I need another beer. Anyone else?

GREG. No, I'm right.

JEFF. You want something a bit stronger? There's some Scotch, and there might be a drop of brandy left.

GREG. Wouldn't say no to a drop of Scotch. (*HE relaxes a little.*) You know what they say. Whiskey makes you frisky.

JEFF. Yeh, and brandy makes you randy.

DAD. (*Can't resist it.*) Pity we haven't got any rum.

GREG. (*Laughs.*) That's a good one, I like that.

JEFF. Make it double then, eh? Just get the ice. (*HE goes into the kitchen.*)

(*DAD sighs happily.*)

GREG. Nice place you've got here, Mr. Mitch—Mr. M. I like that feature wall.

DAD. Thanks, lad. Getting a bit shabby here and there, needs redecorating. Get around to it one day. Was it busy, at the Prinny?

GREG. Yeh, packed.

DAD. Nice pub.

GREG. You've been there?

DAD. Oh yes. When it became obvious that Jeff was, you know, that way. I thought, well, it's his life, his heart. And since I'd never really met any Willie Woofsters—sorry, I meant Gay Persons—not that I knew of, I thought I'd better try and find out what it was all about. I wanted to know who his friends were, I didn't want him to have to keep them secret from his dad. So I got him to take me on a pub crawl.

GREG. I think that's wonderful. Where'd you go?

DAD. Oh, we had a great time. I didn't realize there were so many places. I liked the Priny best, a very nice crowd. We ended up at a disco at two in the morning, The Barracks, I think it was, all done up like a prison inside, and everyone wearing torn clothing. I thought it was a bit aggressive at first but then I got talking to these two blokes, nice lads, a bit nancy, but really good fun, and they called the place "Woman's World," that made me laugh, I can tell you, and I realized it was all a bit of a game. One of them—

*(JEFF comes back with the ice, and pours the drinks.)*

DAD. I think he must have thought I was that way inclined, too, because he asked me my name, and when I said Harry, he said, oh no, he said, that doesn't suit you, you'll always be Harriet to me.

JEFF. *(To Greg.)* This is funny, this is.

DAD. Well, it's not a name I've ever been fond of, reminds me of one of my aunts, on my dad's side, she was called Harriet, and a right proper bitch she was too, so I said "Harriet?" I said, "Harriet? Never. Call me Henrietta."

*(GREG laughs and JEFF cracks up.)*

JEFF. I heard him, clear as day. Nearly wet meself. Henrietta! Him! Can you imagine!

GREG. It doesn't really suit you.

DAD. Don't you think? I thought it was rather good myself, a bit refined, you know?

JEFF. One large Scotch.

GREG. Ta.

JEFF. Well. Here's to us.

*(THEY drink.)*

DAD. What do you do for a crust, Greg?

JEFF. He's a gardener, Dad.

DAD. Deaf and dumb, is he?

GREG. *(Laughs.)* I work at the council nurseries.

DAD. Is that fun?

GREG. Oh, it's great, they're a beaut bunch of people, very casual. Maybe it comes from looking after plants all the time, you can't hurry nature, after all, so it's not good getting ulcers because it's the middle of winter and the roses aren't in bloom. That's what I like about it, the plants just take their time, they rest in winter, and every spring they grow. Then suddenly, for a moment, they're beautiful. I don't think I've ever seen an ugly flower.

DAD. That's very nice, Greg—short for Gregory, is it? I see you appreciate the value of words, I wish you could drum some of that into Jeff's brain.

GREG. It's just the whisky talking, I expect. I'm a two pot screamer.

JEFF. I'm a bit like that myself. Two and I'm anybody's.

GREG. *(Giggles.)* Three, and I'm everybody's.

DAD. Four and I'm nobody's.

GREG. *(Very relaxed now. HE holds up his glass to Dad.)* Well—up your bum, Henrietta!

DAD. Up your dress, Griselda.

*(HE and DAD think this is a great joke. JEFF can't help feeling that he's at the wrong party, somehow.)*

JEFF. You two are well away, aren't you?

DAD. Tell me something, mate, what's your ambition, your dream? I mean, apart from playing hide the sausage with my Jeffrey, what would you really like to do in life?

GREG. My secret dream? My really, truly secret dream?

DAD. Have you got one?

GREG. Oh yes. *(His soul smiles a little.)* I'd like to plant a forest.

DAD. *(Thunderstruck.)* That is—magnificent.

GREG. Isn't it a beauty? You see, I met this bloke once, he was a violin maker, well, apprenticed to it, and he told me there's these famous violins made, oh, centuries ago, by some Stradvarious bloke, he used wood that was anything up to four or five hundred years old, and one of the reasons no one can make a violin as good as his is because they can't get wood that's old enough. All the forests being chopped down, the new trees aren't given time to grow anymore. That's when I got the idea. To plant a whole forest, and watch it grow, and stand in the middle of all the great trees and say, I planted this, I made this.

DAD. Do it! That's wonderful, eh, Jeffrey?

JEFF. *(Thinks that Greg could walk on water if he wanted to.)* My oath. Make a fair old swag of violins, too.

DAD. "A fair old swag of violins?" Haven't you got any respect for the English language?

JEFF. What's wrong with the way I talk?

GREG. I like it, it turns me on.

*(JEFF's chest swells about two inches.)*

GREG. Sorry, Mr. M—Harry—bit bold.

DAD. Please. Pretend I'm not here.

JEFF. Oh, yes, please.

DAD. Why don't you give the young man another whisky, Jeff?

GREG. No, I shouldn't.

JEFF. Go on, just a taste, freshen it up.

GREG. Well, this is really the last. I might do anything.

JEFF. Feel free. I'll get some more ice. *(HE goes.)*

DAD. *(Waits till the coast is clear, then fishes in the book cupboard.)* I'm very pleased you like my boy, Greg. He doesn't push himself enough sometimes, but he's got a heart of gold and he likes you.

GREG. I think he's very nice.

DAD. But—if you need anything to—well, he can be a bit of a lump sometimes—I've got these magazines—*(HE produces three gay porn magazines.)*

DAD. You know—if you need help—getting started—

GREG. Are these Jeff's?

DAD. No, I bought them. I wanted to find out what Jeff got up to. I had a pretty good idea, of course, but there's a few things in there I could never have imagined. And this one, it's all about safe sex. I was worried about this dreadful AIDS thing, who isn't these days, and I wanted to know if Jeff—if he was safe. He's my son, it's important to me. I left it lying about for him, so he'd know what to do, but he said he already knew about it.

GREG. It's all right, Mr. M., I do safe sex too.

DAD. Well, there you go, In case you need a turn-on. And—um—have a good time, won't you?

GREG. Yeh, ta very much.