

**Two Parents In One**



**Simone Reynolds**



A "New Woman" Novel



***Mags, Inc/Reluctant Press TG Publishers***

This story is a work of fiction; any similarity to persons living or dead is entirely coincidental. All situations and events herein presented are fictional, and intended only for the enjoyment of the reader. Neither the author nor the publisher advocate engaging in or attempting to imitate any of the activities or behaviors portrayed.

For more, visit [reluctantpress.com](http://reluctantpress.com) or [magsinc.com](http://magsinc.com).

***Protect Professional Fiction on the Internet***

We need *your* help! We spend several hundred dollars to edit, illustrate and typeset *each story*. It is important, therefore, that everyone works to help keep professional fiction alive on the Net.

The civil penalties for copyright infringement can be severe, including substantial monetary damages, injunctive relief, and liability for attorneys' fees incurred in prosecuting a case. In addition, criminal penalties may be imposed if someone willfully infringes a copyrighted work for commercial advantage or private financial gain.

Mostly, though, we just want to be able to keep offering this service to our authors and our readers.

**Report stolen books by using the contact form at [reluctantpress.com](http://reluctantpress.com) or call us at 800-359-2116**

*Thank you.*

# Two Parents in One

**By Simone Reynolds**

The car pulled to a halt at the curb and the door flew open, two scruffy boys fell out.

“I hope you’ve got everything!” Jan shouted after them. Either Jeremy or Michael always managed to forget something. She hated the school run, but twice a week it was her turn, Norman did the other three.

Soon she was back in the traffic, slightly flustered, as she was late. Eventually she pulled into the car park and hurried into the lab. Only a little late, but the viruses wouldn’t be complaining!

Dr. Jan Hodgson was a research scientist, on Herpes viruses, her favourite. She had been working on them for the last 14 years, since her post doctoral days and now she was reckoned something of an expert. She sat down in her office seat and momentarily took in the view across the fields by the science park. Not for long. There was smart knock at the door.

“Can you help us with the subbing? Mike’s not turned in ‘cause his kids are sick”. This was Gemma, her technician, a mousy girl in her early twenties.

“Do you think I still can?” she joked as she pulled on her white coat. Jan rarely did anything practical now, but liked to keep her hand in. If called upon by her team she felt confident that she knew what to do.

They donned their gowns and goggles and made their way into the lab. The cultures were kept in a clean room with care taken to ensure strains were kept separate as contamination could wreck years of work.

“It’s this one today Jan.” Gemma indicated rows of tubes. The strain was a Herpes simplex. Jan knew it carried a gene, which allowed it to insert new genes into its human host, and indeed clip out existing ones. They had a whole range that they were working on, just in culture. Seeing what could be established and then looking for it with probes, so that their success, or indeed, mostly failure could be examined.

“This has been our most promising. It seems to be able to pick up sequences and maintain them OK.”

“Let’s hope you’re right Gemma, we’ve waited long enough”.

They worked their way down the rows making the subcultures into the new broths, which Gemma had produced. Jan wasn’t quite as dextrous as she had supposed and splashed a little on to her cheek, left exposed by the goggles. She wiped with some tissue and they continued. With the job done, Jan returned to her office and a cup of coffee, made in her rather sor-did stained mug.

Across the city the other Dr. Hodgson was busy in a meeting. He was a Public Health Doctor, a “Snoddy”, as they were still known after Dr. Snoddy from Dr. Findlay’s Casebook – it wasn’t meant to be a compliment, but medicine was like that! It was the usual stuff, arguing over health care needs for the local population, trying to prioritise purchasing with a pretty limited budget. Today had been a discussion about fertility and how much they could afford to spend on IVF – not much it would

seem in the face of a high demand. So many women left things too late and that meant problems. He was glad he and Jan had had their children relatively early. The last item was paying for sex change operations; essentially the cupboard was bare on that one!

Once the meeting was over Graham headed back to his office. He looked at himself in the mirror. Thirty-eight years old, balding, podgy and none too fit these days. He always called himself Dr. Hodgson SHV – short fat hairy version. He didn't mean his head either. His wife had stayed slim and attractive. What did she see in him? Anyway he could do the right thing today and he picked up the phone to book a restaurant table and order some flowers for their anniversary. At least he could get that right. It was three days away and would be a perfect night out.

With that done he headed for his next meeting, trying to sort out the MRSA targets with the Hospital Trust. They had been doing terribly, he wondered if they were completely clueless over hand hygiene and cleaning. Mind you that Microbiologist was a complete bastard so that probably didn't help much.

\*\*\*

When Graham rolled in that night, dinner was already on the table and the boys were arguing over some television programme that had been on. He was happy to let it wash over him. He kissed Jan's hair and sat down. He still enjoyed its texture and smoothness. She kept its shorter now but he still found it a turn on, he wasn't sure what she thought of him.

“Well darling how has your day been?” he queried.

“Oh, not bad I even had some practical to do. I helped Gemma with her work, because Mike was away. Then it was teaching with the undergraduates. They seem a nice bunch. I need to think of a project I can offer.”

“It’s a question of do you want someone, or to put them off as I recall!”.

“Well a nice young chap would be good,” she smirked.

“I am afraid that to a student anyone over twenty five looks like their granny,” he knew his wife didn’t, but then she was 38.

“I thought that I would go to aerobics this evening, I haven’t been for a couple of weeks and it would be nice to get out for an hour or two.”

“That’s a great idea; I might go to the gym too. At least I have some flab to get rid of,” he said, glancing down at his waist. The trouble with being in Public Health was that you knew everything about what you were supposed to do, but it didn’t in anyway improve your ability to do it.

“The boys should be OK for a couple of hours.”

“I should think so mum. We’re not idiots.” This was Jeremy. Actually they were both pretty academic in their own way, Jan was hoping at least one of them would do something artistic and not follow their parents into science or medicine, but mostly that didn’t seem likely.

“OK then, but not too much telly, as I’ll be checking those spellings...”

“Since when were you any good.”

This was a reference to a time when Jan had assisted Michael with his story and added a few embellishments, including three spelling mistakes. Oh the embarrassment! She could never quite look that teacher in the eye again. It had meant a missed star. Life is so hard as a parent.

She nipped up stairs to change. Looking the part was key in the gamesmanship of exercise. She chose her black leotard this evening. Look professional. With some grey shorts over the top, subdued and professional. Graham came into the room. He loved the sight of his wife looking sleek and smoothed his hand over her back and round to her waist. He smiled appreciatively.

“Trying to improve on perfection.”

“Maintain the possible, I think”.

The class was moderately full, about twenty heaving young to middle-aged women. Jan fitted in the middle, but definitely with an above average body for her age – though not in her own mind where she could see bulges and defects undetectable to others.

Graham had done his stint in the Gym and was now at Jim’s the bar attached in the Leisure Centre. It was titled to aid punning and for people who wanted to be seen to be exercising, without actually doing so. Graham was in that category. He put in 20 minutes of heaving on the weights machines and then headed for the showers. Soon warm and dry he needed to quench his thirst and for that he chose Timothy Taylor’s, probably the best beer in the world. Now he could in the cliché sense exercise his right arm.

Two days later, having just got home, Jan stood looking at the flowers on the table and wondered what they were doing there. The boys had brought them off the doorstep, when they had come in from school. The card gave it away.

“Happy anniversary. Don’t cook I have booked a restaurant. Sally’s picking up the boys. Love and kisses. Graham.”

Bugger she had forgotten again. Each year she tried, but only succeeded in remembering one in three times, much to Graham’s amusement. She had a busier life than him. (More relevantly she didn’t have a personal secretary.) Oh well she could make the best of it and just enjoy the meal.

Jan had a long shower, washing her hair for an especially long time. She loved running her fingers through it. It was even better if it was someone else doing it for her. After drying she chose what she knew would please Graham, not that that was too difficult. Tight black brief knickers, a low cut black bra and hold up stockings. Her black dress went over the top and she added a small amount of make up to her face. She couldn’t help

noticing a slight itch in the corner of her mouth. Probably nothing.

The meal was at their favourite gourmet restaurant. They both particularly like fish, but Graham made sure that he had a plate of potatoes with his and then came the puddings. Profiteroles. The chocolate sauce is key, not too hot and with just the right amount of alcoholic embellishment. The little buns themselves need to be fresh that day so that they are crisp not soggy. If all is perfect it's the ideal sweet. Today it was. Time for home and coffee on the sofa.

The boys were still about, but they were in the other room watching sport, while Graham and Jan sat close together enjoying each other's warmth. Jan knew that when Graham stoked her thigh, as he always did, then he would feel her stocking tops and his thoughts would move elsewhere. Why were men so predictable? When they were happy that the boys had gone to bed, they floated upstairs, Graham hardly able to keep his hand away from Jan, but she was more fleet a foot.

Her dress slipped off easily and Graham was left to soak up the pleasure of a beautiful wife, as she shook her hair free. They cuddled and she helped him to remove his trousers and shirt, and they fell to the bed.

"The least I can do is offer you a little treat," she said sliding down his pants and grasping the contents. Graham smiled gratefully. The start of a lovely interlude.

Next day at 11am found Jan sitting in the kitchen dabbing at small spot in the corner of her mouth. A little painful, but she had some Zovirax ointment to apply. She didn't think any more of it as soon the boys arrived. They like to help with the cooking on a weekend and that meant cakes. Jan was an expert at chocolate cake and felt that the skill ought to be passed to the next generation.

Soon there was flour liberally spread round the room. Michael, who was 14, was the most expert, his brother who was



two years younger, was keen but tended to spill everything. Michael took charge of the mixer and was soon beating the ingredients together to produce a white smooth cream. Eggs, flour and cocoa soon followed and then they both ladled the mix into the tins. Jan watched benignly and then put the tins in the oven.

“I think you would both cope in an emergency”, she declared and the boys smiled. Parental approval was always welcome, but tended only to be voiced by their mother.

The next step in cake baking is of course to lick out the bowls and this occupied a prolonged time until the cake was nearly ready to come out of the oven. The boys like to apply chocolate butter cream and melted cooking chocolate over the top. This took another half hour to do and then everyone needed a wash.

Graham came in. “What’s that on you mouth?” he enquired of Jan.

“Not sure, a cold sore I imagine. Should know from all my herpes work.”

“Oh, has something upset you, or are you hot?”

“Not even in your preferred way I am sorry to say,” she smiled. Neither mentioned it again.

\*\*\*

Gemma entered the office. “Jan I’ve got some results I need you to see. We think we have a strain contaminant. Those ones we were subbing the other week seem to have altered their spectrum, they now seem to be able to infect other cell lines. Brian thinks they may have picked up another virus, perhaps a retro, which is inserted in our original strain. It means that it could pick up and transfer genes potentially and possibly reintegrate in the host cells in new points.”

“That’s great Gemma. Something novel to look at. Have you run any gels?”

“Yep. Definitely some non-herpes virus genes. It could be what we’ve been hoping for, or a complete mess.”

“Well get the details down and we should take it to the departmental meeting next week and get some other views. There’s usually a simple explanation, like a bacterial infection.”

“Well not this time. I’m voting for the jackpot.”

“And me, the damp squib. I’m glad you’re an optimist!”

“Anyway we should have more checks by Thursday and I will try them on some other lines and see what markers we have of the potential new virus, or whatever it turns out to be.” With that she left, clearly excited to be back to work.

That’s the kind of folk Jan had always wanted. Enthusiasts. People who wanted to do science for its own ends, not for immediate patents and cash, like the University always wanted.

\*\*\*

It was three days later when Graham first noticed the itching. It was along the shaft of his penis, but there was nothing to see and nothing to scratch. It was like a fine tingling sensation. He put it out of his mind when he was working, but whenever there was a break he could feel it again. He also seemed a little chilly; perhaps he was developing a cold. Next morning there definitely was something to see. Along the shaft of his penis was a string of little blisters and when he pulled back the foreskin, they were on the glans and under the foreskin too. Even a Public Health doctor could make a diagnosis of genital herpes.

“Well Graham if you will play away from home, what do you expect.” This was Martin his GP.

“That’s the problem I haven’t been. Not that either you or Jan will believe me I suppose.”

“Too right mate. Anyway I can give you some Zovirax. Or at least a prescription for you to buy some. Just as well that you’re a rich consultant.”

“Not like you GPs then with your items of service payments stacking up. I bet I’m one now!”

“Eat your heart out!”

“Actually don’t forget I’m epileptic, so I don’t have to pay anyway.”

“Oh of course, it says here right on the screen ‘Claims to have had a fit’. Any way that gives me the chance to review your prescription for that too. Have you considered stopping therapy?”

“Not a chance. Do you remember what happened last time?”

“No. But according to our records you had another seizure.”

“..So no go. My license is too important.”

By the following day there were little sores and he felt very miserable. Jan inspected the damage.

“I have an admission to make. It could have been me.”

“What! You’re seeing someone else.”

“No! It could have been my cold sore, in fact it probably was. Remember the oral sex on our anniversary. If you hadn’t taken me out for a meal it wouldn’t have happened.”

How did women always manage to make it their husband’s fault? Graham inwardly smiled, but it made no difference to complain and he had enjoyed it at the time. It was the first time she had taken him completely. Worth the pain just to remember it. She had lingered long drawing up and down his shaft with her lips and then at the end deep-throating him and sucking all his semen inside.

“Actually I don’t know really what came over me that night. I wanted to suck you off even before we left the restaurant. It

was like it was meant to be. Anyway I shan't be doing that again in a hurry."

"But it won't matter next time."

"Well if it doesn't matter, there's no point anyway", she laughed.

The next week was thoroughly miserable as the crops of vesicles and ulcers took a long while to settle down, even with the anti-viral tablets. It wasn't so good being a service user instead of an NHS worker. Gradually his pain abated, but it took a further week for him to stop feeling sorry for himself. He had a sick note to take back when he was ready and although he was received with sympathy he was not looking forward to prying questions from his fellow medics, no matter how well meant. If they found out about his problem, they would certainly tease him.

Eventually all was quiet in the nether regions and he could take a shower in some comfort. He made sure that he didn't get too excited and Jan did her best to help, by keeping her clothes on in his presence. Oh how thoughtful! Anyway he had to be right for the expedition with Michael and Jeremy, who he had promised to take on a trip at half term, the following week.

\*\*\*

They set off early on the Saturday morning into the dales, taking the bus to Horton in Ribblesdale and walking from there. Jan was going to meet up with them later on for a meal in Long Preston and the trip home. The weather was good and no one complained as they soaked in the excellent weather. The idea was to enjoy a trip with the boys and talk to them, unlike the usual pattern - they would be men together. At least that was Graham's unspoken concept. In fact, Jeremy and Michael did like to be with him, but usually didn't let on.

Generally speaking, Michael tried to stride on ahead whilst Jeremy had to be cajoled. Graham often had to carry his rucksack as well as his own. Then both boys would run off in the down hill sections and Graham would stagger afterwards, complaining inwardly about his knees. The lunch stop was a chance to commune with nature by a stream and for Graham to down a can of beer. Somewhat lively and warm by this stage. The boys had to make do with fruit juice and some of their own cake, to go with the cheese sandwiches.

They were all able to stretch out in the sun by the river, watching it splash across the rocks, leaving a small dragon fly flitting between the droplets. The last gasp of summer before the cold started to set in. Graham felt that this was the first time that the boys had been able to cope with a proper walk, up over the hills, at a reasonable pace and with not too many arguments. He definitely felt that they were growing up. He was proud of his two young men, but he was careful not to show it. Jan was rather more demonstrative with her affection, but he could never manage that. He was more of a handshake man, than a bear hug type.

By late afternoon they were completing their circuit and arriving back in Horton for the pick up. Jan should be well on her way, but as they approached the spot there was no sign yet.

Jan had a lie-in until 10 and then a lazy bath, mooching around the house for the rest of the day, doing odd tasks. It must have been last year, when she last got the chance to be alone. After lunch she planned how long it would take and reckoned that if she left by three; that would give her plenty of time.

The car slid along the country lanes at a steady forty, a perfect afternoon for a drive, she would have preferred Graham's old soft-top. It was red, but she couldn't recall that it was an MG. Graham had always wanted a Lotus, but by the time he could afford one, the feeling had worn off! The MG was the best he ever managed, but it wasn't terribly reliable. Jan's car was

built with that in mind really and in her view, elegance. The boys always moaned, but they were happy not to walk.

Over the hill in the opposite direction came a Mercedes, an old version, but making the most of the empty roads. It crested the hill, without reckoning on the sudden turn, which left it on the wrong side of the road. Unfortunately, it arrived in the space left for Jan's car.

Graham paced up and down on the pavement. It was now 6.30, with no sign of Jan. He had tried her mobile, but with no response. This usually meant that she had left it on the table. So they were left in limbo. He rang his neighbour Bob, who had by chance seen Jan leave at 3.05.

With that information Graham knew all was not well and made his way to a phone box to find the number for the local police. He eventually got through to a desk sergeant somewhere, who went away to investigate.

"The lads tell me there was a head-on before Long Preston," he intoned calmly. "It was a white Clio and a Merc. Apparently. Mean anything to you?" Graham shuddered.

"Yes the Clio could be my wife." He gave the number.

"I'm sorry sir, that does match. I don't know what's happened to the people involved. Can we come and pick you up?"

Jan had been delivered to a little hospital in the countryside, some way from home.

The police went with him to the ITU and he was ushered in to one of the bays. The nurses shuffled the boys into an interview room. One glance at Jan told him all he needed to know. She wouldn't make it. A rather chubby man approached in theatre garb.

"Hello, you must be this lady's husband. I am Dr. Worrell."

"Hi, yes." Graham gave nothing away with his look. He didn't make it easy.

“I am afraid that things don’t look good. In fact we think her brain is so damaged that she won’t survive”.

Graham regarded the various screens. The ECG and respiration looked normal, on the ventilator.

“Have you done the brain tests yet?”

“Oh are you medical?”

“I’m the Public Health Doctor.”

“I see. Not yet, but I am afraid that I can predict. Has she expressed any wishes..”

“To donate? Yes. Whatever you like.”

”Thank you.” He couldn’t look Graham in the eye.

“Alright if I bring the boys in?”

“Please do.”

Graham spent ten minutes talking to the boys about what they would see. By the time they arrived at the bed, both were sobbing and Graham was holding back his tears. They spent a long time holding Jan’s hand, knowing that there would be no sign of life, beyond the automatic. Finally all of them had had enough and they decided to go.

As they departed the transplant team were being summoned and the virus tests were underway. Liver, kidneys, lungs and heart would all be going in different directions within a few hours. One life lost, but maybe five saved.

\*\*\*

A month later, the two grandmothers had gone home. Graham was left with the two boys. His mother had played with the children, diverted their attention and done school transport. The other, Margaret, had been in charge of cleaning, washing and ironing. He seemed to have done all the cooking, it wasn’t

really his strong suit, but he could do it now. He knew they had both meant well and at least the two grandfathers hadn't been too much in evidence. Both elderly couples had stayed in a hotel together and frankly they had enjoyed the time together, once the immediate grief was over.

Michael and Jeremy felt the loss most acutely. No one could replace their mother, but they were to a degree, stoical.

"We need Dad to be more like Mum," said Jeremy.

"How do you mean?"

"Just more friendly I suppose - a few more cuddles. Less cross. Chocolate cake. I dunno, really."

"You're right really. He just isn't the same. Poor old Dad."

"if only we could change him."

They were watching the television at least no one cared about that any more. They could play more computer games too!

"I heard about something at school. Women have different hormones than men, it makes them more motherly I suppose. "

"So?" Responded Jeremy.

"Well Jerry, they're in contraceptive pills, that women take to not have babies. If we had some of them to give Dad, maybe he would be better."

"How do we get those then?"

"If Mum had any they would be in her drawer still."

They both raced from the room and upstairs. Graham was out in the garden and they sneaked into the bedroom. Sure enough in the drawer on their mother's side of the bed they found six packs, with only the first started. There was even a repeat prescription for some more! They took them and left to plot. How could they trick their father into taking them?



Graham was over the immediate effects of his wife's death. He didn't sleep well. The first night was hardest, when he hadn't really slept at all. Then he found Jan's nightdress. It smelt of her and he found that by resting his head on it, he seemed to feel her presence, like a comfort blanket. She had a number of soiled clothes, which would do, but they didn't last his mother in law's attention.

She had wanted him to remove all Jan's clothes and other belongings, but he couldn't face it yet. They still filled every available space in the room. As she still did. He had all day to think about it too. He had been given two months off to sort out his affairs and to come to terms with his loss. He might get back by December. He wasn't sure that he wouldn't prefer to work.

The boys were preparing breakfast the next day. Very odd.

"We thought we would take this over to help you out", said Michael.

"Oh, OK Mike why not!". "I'll see how long you keep it up."

"Oh Dad, Mum used to give us these vitamin pills at breakfast, there are still some left." Indeed there were, the cupboard seemed full. He hadn't really noticed before, but until last week, his mother was rather in charge.

"We thought you ought to have one too."

"What rubbish. All you need is a good diet."

"Not what mum said? And they would go faster. Plus while you've been cooking there has been less fresh food," Michael scolded.

"Oh I give in."

A small red pill was planted in front of him and he took it without a moment's thought. Actually he was delighted, because from then on the boys organised breakfast. By the end of the month he was most impressed.

Graham looked at himself in the mirror. Was it his imagination or was he shaving less? He couldn't really remember, but he was sure that he used to be more spiky come morning. Who could tell? He looked at his arm perhaps that wasn't as hairy either. What of it? He thought no more about it. That morning he was set to see his Chief Executive.

"Hi Graham, come and sit down." Mark Beaufoot welcomed him in. "We're all so pleased to have you back".

"I'm pleased to be back too. I don't think I could stand another day thinking about my woes."

"I've been thinking about your proposal and I've spoken to Amanda too. The Board are in agreement. You can swap. She'll take on your role and you hers. Seems ideal".

Amanda Humphries was his fellow consultant and was going full time. She needed the money as her partner had left and she needed more work with a daughter to support. Graham was in the opposite position. He now had the money from the insurance on Jan, but needed more time for his domestic life.

"That's great Mark and it will improve your equal ops. Points!"

"Ha bloody ha. She's not black or lesbian or disabled, so she only counts a bit. At least I don't think she's lesbian - is she?"

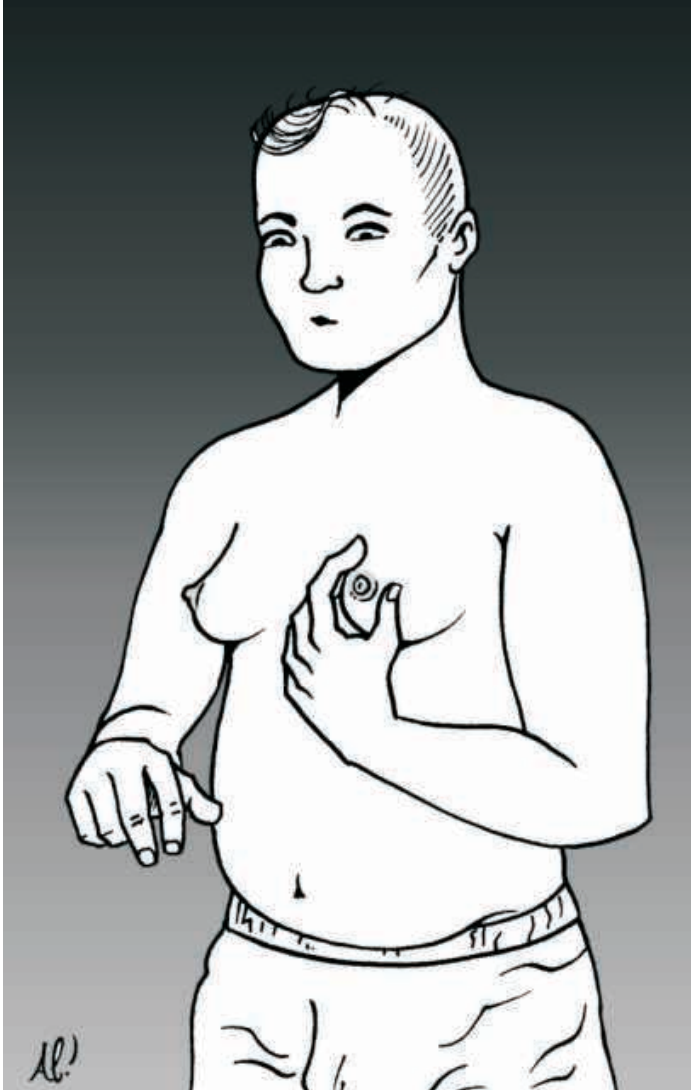
"Waiting to meet the right woman, I suppose".

When Graham met Amanda she greeted him with a warm hug. She was a little taller than him, and always had a strong feeling for him, even before her partner Ian had left. She knew it was too early to do more than be sociable. Graham breathed in her odour and realised how much he missed the feel of a woman already.

"Oh thanks Graham, you've done me a real favour."

\*\*\*

It was the week after Christmas, which he had spent with his parents and the boys. They had a fantastic time, but behind everything was their unspoken loss and when the boys went to bed he knew they ere upset and he too suppressed a sob. He seemed more emotional than 3 months ago.



He was standing in the bathroom, looking at his body full length. He had been quite an ape before, but now nearly all his body hair was gone. Only round his balls remained. What's more his pate was no longer bald. There was a fine down on it. How bizarre! He stood on the scales. He had lost a stone in weight, and his tummy was starting to disappear – brilliant! It must be the vitamin tablets. He had a week of nausea when they first started, but he thought he might have had a bit of a bug.

By the end of the month, things had gone a little further and he was quite smooth and noticeably his chest looked a little swollen. He seemed to be developing small breasts – gynaecomastia. This could mean anything or nothing. It could be a hormone-secreting tumour. He probed each breast with his fingers there was a firm lumpy plate in each, clear glandular tissue. He cupped his hands under the mounds. Stroking the nipples, which hardened. It certainly felt good. He looked quite different, in his body, but his face remained the same. He felt his testicles. Were they softer? He didn't really know. He would have to see what his GP he thought.

On Saturday evenings they all tended to watch television together. Graham sat in the middle of the sofa with Jeremy one side and Michael on the other. He used always to sit in "his" chair, but he preferred the sofa now. He couldn't explain why. He had started on the right originally and had been joined by Jeremy, with his homework. Then Michael wanted to come as well. It hadn't worked with them both on one side so inevitably he had been pushed to the middle to keep the peace. He felt that he was being manipulated to a degree, but he didn't mind. As the evening wore on the boys often seemed to end up leaning against him and he, in turn with his arm around them. He couldn't have imagined doing that a year ago. He hadn't had to fill the role of two then!

Doctor Who had always been a favourite with Graham, and they tended to start off with that, but now he also watched the programmes, which followed, usually some talent show. If he

wasn't careful the boys would have him in front of Big Brother. It was pleasant, but his reading had dropped off a bit. Not that histories of the Spanish Civil War or the between wars Labour Government had quite the same appeal. Actually he had tried the odd saga that Jan used to read and found that to be not as bad as he had imagined.

He appreciated that it would take a while for the boys to get over the loss of their mother. Now, nearly five months down the line they seemed pretty content, but it could be only skin deep. He checked with the school, and all seemed well there, so far. He would need to see the end of year exams. He had always left school to Jan; she was the academic after all, this year he would have to be the one to turn up.

Later the boys were discussing their father while lying in their beds. They had in part moved in together since Jan had died, only some nights. They found it fun if they needed a discussion.

“I think it has worked, what do you think”.

“Hmm.. I suppose so”, Jeremy responded. “I can't remember him being quite so... so cuddly before.”

“It's so slow we can't be sure. Anyway, we've only got a packet left now. Unless we cash that prescription. Do you think we dare?”

“It's rather out of date. Anyway the chemist here knows us and that mum has died”.

“I think it would be worth a try. We can always run off if there is trouble. I will just say our mum asked us to bring it in because she has a cold or something. Anyway they don't know us in Boots.”

Monday was always difficult, this time Graham had to hunt for some clothes. He finally decided that his trousers were too loose to stay up. Luckily, unlike his mother, he never chucked anything out. You could never tell when you would need it. A

search through the loft had revealed some old suits, which would do at a pinch. He guessed that no one would notice. He was quite proud to get back into something he had expanded out of fifteen years ago.

He found himself rolling his nipples round with his fingers. Quite a pleasant feel. Yes he was sure that there was a little breast underneath.

\*\*\*\*

“Well Graham, I’m not certain”, said Steve his GP.

“Why have I lost my body hair? And I’m gaining some on top!”

“Could be alopecia, from the shock of losing Jan. It’s just fallen out and now it’s in a timed cycle. If you give it a month, it should start to grow back. ”

“What about my balls? Do you think they’re OK?”.

Graham was still on the couch and Steve gave them a reflective feel, rolling them round in his fingers. “There is such a large “normal range,” he thought.

“Yes I think so. And these tits of yours, 30% of men have some breast development. You know, manboobs.”

“Yes I know, but this is new.”

“Well, if it’s real. Anyway I can check your hormones, that’s really easy. By the way has that herpes attack recurred?”

“Thankfully no. I did feel a bit stupid with that. I hadn’t even got a new girlfriend”.

“But you could now.” Steve tested the waters.

“Quite honestly, I don’t think I could. It will be a while yet. I may need to chuck out Jan’s things first and I am not ready for that yet!”