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Small's World
By John Chambers

Characters:

Jamie Small.....a young man

Linda.....his mother

(JAMIE RUMMAGES THROUGH THE DRESSING TABLE DRAWER. HE WEARS ONLY A WASPIE OF SOME DESCRIPTION. IDEALLY IT HAS SOME SORT OF GUSSET WHICH WILL CAUSE HIM SOME DISCOMFORT THROUGHOUT. HE PULLS OUT A CLUMP OF TIGHTS. HIS DISCARDED DAY CLOTHES – TROUSERS, TOP, SOCKS ARE STREWN NEARBY. THERE'S A CD PLAYER, ADJUSTABLE LAMP, PLASTIC CARRIER BAG & BOX OF TISSUES ON THE DRESSING TABLE.)

JAMIE: Tights...Why does she only buy tights? I'd get myself stockings if... (BEAT) I suppose I could go into a shop... Nah... (BEAT) Say they're a present for my mother... Nah... Sister? Nah... Girlfriend. That's right. I could go into a knicker shop – like the one on Piccadilly Station... Nah... CCTV... Nah... Still, it's not a crime... not a crime to buy stockings for my girlfriend... nice black stockings... no mink... Supposing they ask though... what her name is... Don't be a dick – you don't need an I.D. to buy stockings for a lady friend... not yet you don't anyway...

(HE THINKS HE HEARS A NOISE DOWNSTAIRS. HE ALMOST PANICS AND LISTENS. HE'S SATISFIED THERE'S NO ONE THERE.)

JAMIE: She'll be out 'til gone ten. Plenty of time... (HE CHECKS HIS "BUST" IN THE UNSEEN MIRROR) Flat as a fart...

(HE TAKES SOME OF THE TIGHTS & STUFFS THEM INTO THE BRA.)

JAMIE: They've got their uses... Not bad.

(SATISFIED THE BRA LOOKS OK, HE TAKES A BLACK WIG FROM THE PLASTIC BAG & PUTS IT ON. IT'S SORT OF CLEOPATRA STYLE. HE'S PREOCCUPIED WITH ADJUSTING IT IN THE MIRROR AS LINDA, HIS MOTHER, ENTERS!

HE FREEZES BUT REMAINS FACING AWAY FROM HER. SHE'S TALKING AS SHE ENTERS, NOT REALLY TAKING HIM IN AT FIRST, MAYBE JUST DROPPING OFF HER COAT.)

LINDA: Here you are... Pauline was off colour so I came home and I got you and me a take-away. I'll take the skin off the chicken for you...

JIMMY: (ASIDE) Every young man's worst dream. Well not every young man's – I'm probably the only person who parades in his parent's panties every Tuesday night...

(SHE STOPS IN HER TRACKS AS SHE TAKES IN THE SCENE – BASICALLY HIS BARE & WIG-BEDECKED REAR VIEW. HE REMAINS FACING AWAY.)

LINDA: Sorry... I didn't know Jamie had invited a lady friend 'round...

JIMMY: (ASIDE) Yess! She hasn't recognised me... Yess! Yess! Yesss! The wig was definitely worth the money... I can tell

her later my “girlfriend” had to leave to see her sick relative – if I turn ‘round now I’m going to have a sick mother on my hands.

(LINDA, OVER POLITE, OFFERS HER HAND.)

LINDA: Pleased to meet you – I’m Jamie’s mum.

(HE STILL DOESN’T FACE HER.)

JIMMY: (ASIDE) Oh shit a brick. (STRANGULATED FEMALE VOICE) Hi. I’m... I’m Rosalyn.

(ASIDE) Where did Rosalyn comes from?

LISA: (THROWN) You’re wearing my smalls...

(JAMIE HESITATES THEN SLOWLY TURNS TO FACE HER.)

(BEAT.)

LINDA: Arrrgh...

JAMIE: It’s alright... it’s me...

LINDA: Is it you, Jamie?

JAMIE: Who else would it be?

LINDA: I thought... seeing those legs you’d got a hairy girlfriend... I didn’t like saying – even a hairy girlfriend is better than...

JAMIE: No girlfriend?

LINDA: What are you doing?

JAMIE: (LAME) Dressing up.

LINDA: Why?

(HE DOESN'T ANSWER.)

LINDA: (RELIEVED) You've joined the amateur dramatics...

JAMIE: (ASIDE) Why didn't I think of that.

(LIES) Yeh... that's right...

LINDA: What part are you playing?

JAMIE: Er... the Good Fairy...

(BEAT.)

LINDA: No, you're not. You'd have said. You never go out...

JAMIE: No...

LINDA: What you doing then?

JAMIE: Just leave it. Go back out. We can forget it ever happened.

(SHE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.)

LINDA: They're my undies.

JAMIE: Just go....

LINDA: Just like that.

JAMIE: Yes.

LINDA: I come home – with a nice take-away for us. And I find my only son dressed up like a... And you say, “Just go”! Just go! It’s my house. My home.

JAMIE: It’s my home too.

LINDA: (CONT’) My bedroom. My drawers. My draws...

JAMIE: I’m sorry... I didn’t expect you back.

LINDA: I can see.

JAMIE: So if you leave me to it...

LINDA: To what?

JAMIE: To getting changed. I won’t do it again.

(LINDA HESITATES.)

JAMIE: Please, mum – it’s as embarrassing for me as it is for you.

LINDA: I doubt it...

(CONFUSED, SHE DECIDES TO LEAVE HIM TO IT. HE’S RELIEVED. BUT SHE STOPS AS SHE’S ABOUT TO GO OUT. A THOUGHT STRIKES HER.)

LINDA: You’re one of them, aren’t you.

JAMIE: One of what?

LINDA: What d'you think - gay.

JAMIE: (NARKED) No. Course I'm not.

LINDA: Not what?

JAMIE: Gay. Why d'you go and say I'm gay?

(SHE LOOKS AT HIM – IN ALL HIS GLORY.)

JAMIE: I'm not... not gay.

LINDA: You should've said.

JAMIE: I'm not.

LINDA: I don't mind. (BEAT) It'll piss on your father's chips though.

JAMIE: He's a twat.

LINDA: Don't swear and I know he is. But if he ever shows his face again I can't wait to see the look on his fizzog when I tell him. (MIMICS MACHO FATHER) "Our Jamie's never a carpet-muncher."

JAMIE: Don't talk like that.

LINDA: He used to.

JAMIE: He's a twat.

LINDA: We've already agreed on that.

(BEAT.)

JAMIE: Anyway I'm not gay.

LINDA: I've told you, I don't mind if you are... It was just the shock of coming back early – with a nice chicken quarter and I lashed out on a portion of ribs for us both. They gave me a complimentary bottle of diet cola... But finding you all... you know... Anyone would be shocked. In fact I'm glad – glad you're gay. It'll give me something to talk about at bingo.

JAMIE: I'm not gay so go and microwave the take-away.

LINDA: And at least you'd have some friends.

JAMIE: Can we leave it?

(LINDA ABOUT TO GO AGAIN.)

LINDA: I'll take the skin off the chicken for you. (SUDDENLY AN AWFUL DAWNING) Oh my God. Oh my fucking sweet Lord.

JAMIE: And you go on at me for saying my dad's a "twat".

LINDA: This is worse than that.

JAMIE: Leave the skin on if you want – I'll take it off.

LINDA: You're never a pervert?

JAMIE: Where did that come from?

LINDA: My son... my only son. One of them. I always said you spent too much time on that personal p.c.

JAMIE: (MARKED) I'm not a pervert for Christsake.

LINDA: Are you sure?

JAMIE: Course I'm fucking well sure.

LINDA: That's something then... (BEAT) So what are you – one of those trannies?

JAMIE: Only on your Bingo night.

LINDA: (ANOTHER THOUGHT) You've not stuck pictures of yourself in that get up on that YouTube affair have you?

JAMIE: Do you think I want the world to know how pathetic I am...

(DEFEATED HE TAKES OFF THE WIG AND LOOKS AT HIMSELF IN THE MIRROR. SHE CAN'T HELP BUT PITY HIM – AND HERSELF.)

LINDA: During all the trouble with your father – feeling worse than useless. Hardly having any kind of life. The only thing I felt I've done with my life was having you. And as you've grown up you've come to be more of a friend. Now I find out I don't know you...

JAMIE: Now you do. You can see me for what I am. You're not the only one with no life. No friends.

LINDA: Are you surprised – with a pastime like that? No wonder your one and only girlfriend – five years since - didn't stick 'round long.

JAMIE: She didn't stick 'round because...

LINDA: She found you borrowing her under-garments, did she?

JAMIE: She found me boring... Like most people do. So if I was your only proper friend... you've been mine. And if I've shattered your illusions – think how I feel. That you, my own mum, thinks I'm nothing more than a perv.

LINDA: Don't turn the blame on me - you've stood there like something out of a readers' wives magazines.

JAMIE: What's that?

LINDA: What?

JAMIE: Readers' wives magazines...

LINDA: Your dad had them. Pasty women with black masks on – he wanted to swap me...

JAMIE: For what?

LINDA: A woman with a fat arse and a hostess trolley from somewhere near Birmingham.

JAMIE: Did you?

LINDA: Course I didn't. (BEAT) Mind I'd've swapped him for a box of Quality Street any day.

(THEY LAUGH BRIEFLY.)

LINDA: I still don't understand this... you... you like that.

(BEAT.)

JAMIE: Can't we forget it?

LINDA: How can I – I'm going to wake with cold sweats, seeing you in that state. It's tainted all them lovely memories I've had of you.

JAMIE: You'll still have your memories.

LINDA: Not any more. We've been living a lie.

JAMIE: You mean I have... (BEAT) I know the fact that on the only night you go out I come in here and do this. It's the only night I look forward to.

LINDA: The night I go out.

JAMIE: You look forward to it – going out.

LINDA: (SHRUGS) I think Pauline only does it out of sympathy for me. (COLLECTS HERSELF) I certainly didn't know you were up to this.

JAMIE: What difference does it make? To anyone... except me. Yeah, I know – pathetic. I'll find myself a flat.

BEAT.

LINDA: No.

JAMIE: You've said what you think.

LINDA: I don't know what I think.

JAMIE: You think I'm the worst of the worst. The lowest of the low.

LINDA: If you aren't that...

JAMIE: I'm not.

LINDA: ...tell me what you are.

JAMIE: Lonely.

LINDA: We're all that.

JAMIE: Bored...

LINDA: You could've joined a chess club, a church, a line dancing club, a darts club, anything.

JAMIE: I'd still feel like an outsider... At best "sad". Which is a load better than I feel just at this minute.

LINDA: But you looked forward – you said – to this. Doing this. When I was out...

(JAMIE NODS.)

LINDA: Why?

JAMIE: If I tell you, can we let it drop. I'll move out and that'll be that.

LINDA: Just tell me.

(HE HESITATES.)

LINDA: Tell me, Jamie – you owe me that...

(RESIGNED HE DIMS THE DRESSING TABLE LAMP. LX CHANGE. AS JAMIE GOES THROUGH HIS ROUTINE LINDA DOES NOT SPEAK – SHE WILL NOD ENCOURAGEMENT IF HE FALTERS. SHE NEEDS TO KNOW. HE INCREASINGLY BECOMES LESS SELF-CONSCIOUS AS HE GETS INTO HIS SMALL WORLD. HE'S OBVIOUSLY BEEN THERE MANY TIMES BEFORE.)

JAMIE: Now I see everything in a different light. The world only stretches as far as the shadows.

(HE HESITATES, LOOKS FOR CONFIRMATION, WHICH HE GETS FROM HER, THEN ADJUSTS THE UNDERWEAR.)

JAMIE: Soft... silky... fresh...

(WHEN HE FINISHES THIS PROCESS HE CHECKS HIMSELF IN THE MIRROR.)

That was enough to begin with... (BEAT)

(HE PUTS THE WIG BACK ON. THEN SOME WOMEN'S LARGE-ISH DARK GLASSES – COOL – NOT DAME EDNA – FROM THE BAG. HE STANDS IN THE SUBDUED LIGHT BEFORE THE MIRROR. THE TRANSFORMATION IS COMPLETE.)

JAMIE: Then I am in the presence of a woman, who in this light, as I half closed my eyes and... was as good as I could aspire to.

(LINDA IS SHOCKED BY THE TRANSFORMATION.)

JAMIE: A perv alright, you don't have to say it.

LINDA: What did you do then?

JAMIE: So you can have another go at me?

LINDA: I've caught you wearing my undies – you aren't going to shock me any more.

(BEAT.)

LINDA: Tell me.

(BEAT.)

JAMIE: Danced...

LINDA: You never went out like that!

JAMIE: Course I didn't. If I did I never danced... I danced here though.

LINDA: Show me.

JAMIE: (HESITATES, THEN) Oh fuck it.

LINDA: Don't swear, you never swear.

JAMIE: Neither do you but it doesn't matter now, does it.

LINDA: Dance then. Dance for me, please.

(A MOMENT THEN HE SWITCHES ON THE CD PLAYER - LOUD. IT'S CLUB MUSIC AND HE MOVES SURPRISINGLY WELL WHEN HE GETS IN THE GROOVE. THE LOW LIGHT, IN HIS OWN WORLD. THIS COULD BE ENHANCED WITH DISCO LIGHTS. LINDA IS ENTRANCED. BOTH ARE TRANSPORTED TO A NIGHT CLUB. THE TRACK FINISHES OR FADES. COLLECTS HIMSELF & SWITCHES BIG LIGHT ON. LX CHANGE. THE SPELL IS BROKEN FOR LINDA.)

JAMIE: So now you know.

LINDA: I didn't know you could dance.

JAMIE: Neither did I.

LINDA: And that's it.

JAMIE: Yes... (BEAT) Well, then I tossed myself off. (QUICK)

LINDA: What! Jamie! Urrgh.

JAMIE: I've got plenty of tissues.

LINDA: So I see... And that was it?

JAMIE: (NODS) Then did Jacobs crackers with cheese for us for when you got in...

LINDA: I hope you washed your hands.

JAMIE: If you'll let me get changed I'll get my things together.

(HE STARTS TO TAKE THE UNDERWEAR OFF.)

LINDA: Does anyone else know?

JAMIE: I'm hardly going to tell the few people I talk to at work.

LINDA: That's something...

JAMIE: Apart from...

LINDA: Apart from who?

JAMIE: I don't think he even...

LINDA: Who didn't even do what?

JAMIE: The window cleaner.

LINDA: You never told him.

JAMIE: He saw me.

LINDA: He never comes at night time. In fact it's pot luck if he turns up at all – only when they stop his benefit.

JAMIE: It was a Tuesday afternoon. I had some holiday to use up – seeing as I never go away. You'd gone to someone from across the road's funeral. Cos it was an afternoon I didn't think about the light – or curtains – besides the grey light made it different. Then I heard the rattle of his metal ladder against the window and just managed to dive behind the bed before his fat red face appeared.

LINDA: He didn't see you – thank God for that.

JAMIE: He did... I only found out when I paid him.

LINDA: Oh no – I bet he’s told everyone up and down both sides of the avenue.

JAMIE: I paid him and he said, “Tell your mother she’s got a nice arse!”

LINDA: He said that about me!

JAMIE: He said it about me! He assumed it was you, diving behind the bed.

LINDA: I hope you told him.

(JAMIE GIVES HER A LOOK OF “NO!”.)

LINDA: No... no, you did right. Fancy saying that to a lad about his mother though.

JAMIE: Yeh. (BEAT) Now I’ll get out of your life.

(HE REMOVES HIS WIG. SHE TAKES IT.)

LINDA: It’s a nice wig.

JAMIE: Real hair - from some poor woman in a developing country. eBay...

LINDA: Can I?

JAMIE: What?

LINDA: Put it on.

(HE SHRUGS YES & SHE PUTS IT ON. SHE STROKES IT.)

JAMIE: Suits you.

(HE HANDS HER THE DARK GLASSES.)

LINDA: Don't be daft.

JAMIE: Why not?

(SHE PUTS THEM ON.)

JAMIE: Look in the mirror.

(SHE DOES & IS SURPRISED & IMPRESSED.)

JAMIE: It works in Hollywood.

LINDA: Yeh, but that window cleaner still reckons you've got a more shapely bum.

JAMIE: You could work out.

LINDA: Who for?

JAMIE: You.

LINDA: When your father went – leaving me feeling hopeless and ugly.

JAMIE: People like you.

LINDA: Should I tell you the best present he ever got me?

JAMIE: I'd rather not know. Forget him.

LINDA: Oh I have. Apart from the loathing that stays in me (PATS HER BELLY) every waking moment.

JAMIE: Forget him. I've tried... Yeah, he's a fucking horrible fucker but I used to worship him – 'til I understood what the words meant that came out of his mouth and those looks.

LINDA: Yeah – those looks... And the rest.

(SHE PONDERES THEN GOES TO A BOTTOM DRAWER OF THE DRESSING TABLE. SHE ROOTS ROUND & PULLS OUT A VIBRATOR.)

LINDA: One Christmas – he got me this. He didn't leave it under the tree – he gave it me while you were playing on your new Playstation or something. (LOOKS AT HIM) Sorry – I've shocked you.

JAMIE: I've seen it.

LINDA: When!

JAMIE: When d'you think?

LINDA: When you were looking for underwear... I'm sorry.

JAMIE: Why?

LINDA: I've embarrassed you.

(JAMIE MOTIONS AT WHAT HE'S WEARING – “NO”.)

LINDA: He was pissed off 'cause I didn't act grateful. I was more bothered as to whether the turkey was done. (BEAT) No. I was more bothered because he didn't buy it for me. It was for him. And months after, if he'd had enough to drink, and his lady friend wasn't available, I'd be in all sorts of positions with this, stuck in every orifice and his stinking crusty cock, more often than not, stuck in another. (COULD CRY) I just tried to please him. Hang on to him. I was so lonely.

JAMIE: You aren't lonely now.

LINDA: No.

JAMIE: Why did you keep it?

LINDA: On impulse. The slimy toad'd wanted to take it when he collected his belongings. At first I thought – YES. Then I thought – NO – it was my present.

JAMIE: Good for you.

LINDA: Yeah... It was only a year or two later when I realised how good. (LAUGHS) Even I was nearly caught by the window cleaner. And I'd certainly rather have half-an-hour with my plastic friend than a feller who can't find the corners of a pane of glass...

(EACH REFLECTS.)

LINDA: I really am sorry. I feel sordid... dirty... I don't know what.

JAMIE: Mebbe we're all square then. Or mebbe not. I think I should still go.

LINDA: (QUICK) No! (BEAT) You're the only one. The only person in the whole wide world I love. (RE VIBRATOR) If you went I'd only be left with this. Still it doesn't ask much – just new batteries every once in a while.

JAMIE: That wig suits you.

(LINDA IS ABOUT TO TAKE IT OFF TO RETURN IT.)

JAMIE: (QUICK) No... I've got another...

LINDA: You've what?

(HE TAKES ANOTHER WIG FROM THE CARRIER BAG – LONG, BUT BLONDE THIS TIME. HE HESITATES, THEN PUTS IT ON, THEN FINDS ANOTHER PAIR OF “CELEBRITY” SPECS.)

JAMIE: Want to go clubbing?

LINDA: At my age? The take away...

(HE HESITATES THEN PUTS ON THE GLASSES. HE ADJUSTS THE LIGHT. LX CHANGE. HE SWITCHES ON THE CD PLAYER.)

JAMIE: Let's dance.

(A MOMENT.)

LINDA: I can't remember when someone last said that to me – yes – let's dance.

(HE TURNS UP THE CD PLAYER. SOON BOTH ARE LOST IN THEIR SMALL DISCO WORLD DANCING, LOSING THEMSELVES BUT FINDING EACH OTHER.)

END

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