

## JAMIE WRESTON - 16

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## CHAPTER 16

### (Revisiting Chapter 15)

"Well, what do you think, butthead?" Matt pressed. "Which way of handling things looks best? Or, if you insist, which way seems to promise less pain and danger?" After pausing and sighing deeply, Jamie said, "I think I'm willing to try going back, dad." "What about you? What about the College?" "Well, Big Red," Matt answered somewhat flippantly, "I did have a nice slot identified up in Pennsylvania. Nice place...nice people... If, however, you think I'm going to go up there and leave you here, you've got another think comin'!"

The big redhead guffawed and slowly...very slowly and very sensually...turned over.

### (Continuing Our Story: Confirmation)

Things worked out just about the way in which they figured they would. That is, Jamie returned to Anne's Harbor High School and initially DID meet many a cold shoulder and strange looks, as well as scattered expressions of disgust. He was prepared for it. He quietly went about his business, quickly getting into his studies and going out for football. Slowly, but in reality, very surely, the story changed. The boy was smart - and now rather than being torn apart by unresolved sexual issues, he just had a normal fifteen year old's anxieties. (**Author's Note:** That's attempted humor!) He used that previously wasted energy on the books. He was also in fantastic physical condition.

The "Mariners" weren't supposed to go anywhere that year. In fact, they went 6-2, much of it due to a sophomore running back who simply ran over many opposing

players and gave his few returning teammates a chance to use their skills. Gradually, as classmates saw him helping others in several AP classes, as well as being excitedly pounded on the back and helmet by teammates who admired a great play, they began to warm up a bit. When students like Dylan Smith - who was no sob sister and was so straight that he had trouble turning right or left in the high school corridors - suggested that they might have gone "a bit far", they listened. When several of the female leaders of the class let it be known that they thought he was "SO CUTE" - and that everybody should really give him a chance - his time in purgatory fast came to a close. The wrestling season only put frosting on the cake! The Mariners won the league championship for the first time in their history, taking two non league matches against traditional Mid-Atlantic powerhouses plus a third non league match against a fine northern Virginia team. No one questioned to whom thanks were due.

On Matt's part, he also saw some changes. When he actually found a top publisher for his new book, for instance, colleagues began to openly value his presence. Yes, faculty at more prestigious schools published books, but not too many came out of the small college on the Bay. It was also the case that many of those same faculty had teenagers. On closer examination - and having had to face a few problems of their own - they began to wonder if his actions vis-a-vis Craig Bristol exemplified irresponsible (if not immoral) parenting or, perhaps, merely a momentary lapse of judgment under great pressure. (With that crew, the distinction made a real difference.) Continuing our efforts to hew to honesty, it was also the case that Matt thoroughly enjoyed viewing some of the high school muscle that was increasingly found in the gym addition on weekends. And need we dwell on the fact that "getting a little" for the first time in his life did add a certain cachet to his mood!

When in the spring Jamie's adoption came through and he officially became the son and heir of Matthew Wreton, a great party celebrated a good year, the adoption, the 16th birthday of his beloved Jamie, and the immense effort that had brought all this about.

### **(Dr. F)**

In the heat of the summer, Dr. F passed away in New York City. Andy and Ned Tyone who were making final arrangements invited Jamie and his father to come up to the city for the memorial service. They would stay at Tyone's home in the Village.

For Matt it was a unique experience. In Anne's Harbor, he played a carefully crafted role. He was a respected faculty member, one who had adopted his late brother's son under difficult conditions. If pushed to the wall, most friends would have probably guessed that he was gay. After all, he had never married - and there was common agreement about Jamie. These same people - and many others in the community - also agreed that there were far more important things than one's sexual orientation. In any case, it was not a matter for common discussion. They were good people, and that was rather the end of the matter.

For the first time in his life, Matt found that Ned Tyone's circle simply accepted him as a

gay man. Even more - and this really blew his mind - many quietly, nonjudgmentally accepted him as a gay man who liked teenagers! In truth, he was envied for his excellent taste! At both the memorial service and the invitational reception at Ned's house that followed, he was frequently approached with courtesy, respect, and affection. If there was any difference in the way in which the two Wrestons were received, it lay in the way that Dr. F's community welcomed Jamie as a full and beloved member of their brother's immediate circle. More than once, while in New York and afterwards, Matt wondered aloud to Jamie whether doing what one had to do to maintain a semi-closeted place in the world of the straight majority was worth it! For instance, he shared that question and more with Ned Tyone on the second night of their visit.

Jamie and Andy had gone off somewhere to do something...evidently something exciting, not that that seemed difficult to come by in Manhattan. After the boys had excused themselves immediately after supper, Matt accepted Ned's offer of a fine Cognac. Making himself comfortable in a room that contained some of the most beautiful paintings he had ever seen outside of famous museums, Matt relaxed and openly discussed his feelings. How wonderful it was not to have to pretend. Ned kept bringing the discussion back to Jamie. Did Matt realize how special a human being had given him his love? Was he happy with the romantic turn that their relationship had taken? What lay down the road for them? Matt smiled quietly at the question, for he had never dared to ask it of himself and now he could scarcely avoid it! He stared at the crystal snifter, holding it up against the light. Then, in a voice that he didn't quite recognize as his own, he heard himself saying, "From the time I first met him as a long-legged colt, not long into puberty but already 'special', he has been absolutely central to my life...to who I want to be as well as to who I am. It's too early now, but I pray that the time will come when I can ethically ask him to be my life partner. I only pray that he won't find the years that stand between us to be an absolutely insurmountable barrier." Ned said nothing, for no question had been asked. He only smiled quietly and softly blew on the end of his cigar.

"I can suggest one thing that you can do for him while you're still up here," Tyone stated. "Yes?" Matt stated, suddenly snapping out of his reverie. "I don't have to tell you that the young man is absolutely exquisite in body and in soul," his host replied. "When to that, one adds the fact that he is likely to win High School All-American status for his sport, there are doors that might be opened to him with but minimal effort." "Please continue," Matt said. "I don't think it would be improper to make some small preparations for the day when that happens. One of the men whom you met last night is one of the finest photographers in Manhattan. His work graces public galleries and private, it is found on the covers of some of the most competitive magazines in the country, and it has led movie studios in Hollywood to offer screen tests to two young people whom I know. Oh, yes, it also appears in the clothing and travel advertisements of several, highly selective companies. Allow him to photograph Jamie tomorrow before you must leave. Who knows what will come of it, if anything. If nothing else, it will feed his pride - and that is not an unimportant quality in a young man."

After Matt had given his approval to the idea - contingent, of course, on his son's consent - Tyone made a quick phone call. When the lad crawled into bed (some hours later) and cuddled, he gave his consent in a moment. Lawdy, he smelled good!

Came 10:00 a.m. the next morning, Jamie and Matt were at Tyson Brennon's studio. The silver-haired genius was extremely personable...and equally efficient. Matt and Jamie received a magnificent set of prints a couple of weeks later, as well as a larger photo that Brennon had finished personally and sent to Matt with his compliments. Matt valued it as long as he lived. Even Jamie said that it was the best picture ever taken of him. When they left for the train, others were waiting for the master.

### **(The Junior Year)**

Compared with his previous years in school, Jamie's junior year was a procession of triumphs. If there was one note of caution, it came in an October note from the boy's counselor, Herb Ennis, to Matt. Asked to touch bases with him, Matt swung by the school after students had left for home or were at sports practices. The plan was to meet Jamie after football practice and go out to dinner. Checking in at the Principal's Office, Matt was directed to Herb's classroom on the second floor. Despite the pile of test papers on his desk in front of him, Matt was greeted warmly. Wasting no time, Herb pushed back the light tan hair that kept trying to fall down over his eyes, grinned, and said, "You have a delightful son, Professor Wreston. We all love him around here." "I think the feeling is mutual, Mr. Ennis," Matt replied. "You have him this year in AP English, do you not?" "Yes," Ennis responded, "and he's already given me reason to stay in teaching! Not only does he retain what he's read, for instance, he seems able to grasp the several levels of meaning that fine authors often build into their work. Further, his ability to organize and express orally and in writing what he's gathered is increasing by leaps and bounds.

A fine student...but, obviously, that's not why I asked you to stop by, yes?" In answer to Matt's quiet nod, he added, "Have I the slightest reservation about the boy's growth, it lies in the way he relates to his peers. He's liked by nearly everyone and he interacts with them easily. Nevertheless, I've observed that he seems to keep them at arm's length emotionally. If you will, there's always something of a defensive shield between him and them." Speaking in a lower voice, he continued, "I've noticed this before in gay kids or those trending in that direction. If ignored, it can lead to serious relational problems in adulthood." Removing his glasses, he sat for a moment...polishing them, staring intently into Matt's eyes...before putting them back on. Quietly, he added, "Believe me, I know this personally." Matt sat back, then looked directly at the teacher and said warmly, "Both Jamie and I are much in your debt, sir. Have you any suggestions?" "First," Ennis said, "please call me 'Herb'; secondly, when the time is ripe, discuss this with your son. See if you can lead him towards 'letting others in' a bit more frequently, a bit more easily." "Thanks, Herb," Matt responded. "By the way, I'm Matt...to my friends."

Once the conference had concluded, Matt hiked around the building towards the gym,

reaching it at about the same time as the team returning from practice. The redhead caught sight of him as he jogged along with several of his teammates. "Hi, dad!" he yelled, stopping together with the sweaty duo closest to him. "You, sir, are truly a frightening sight in those pads," Matt play-snarled. "What's the game...frighten the opposition to death so you can walk over them?" Jamie gave a great shout and began dancing around like a boxer, threatening to crash into Matt as he returned snarl for snarl." A fair number of his teammates stood in the background, grinning and snickering. "Gotta get a shower!" Jamie finally allowed after a minute or two. "Gonna join us inside?" "Nah," Matt replied. "I'm going sit on that ledge and enjoy what's left of the October sun. When you come out, I'll feed and water you." With a wave, Jamie and the others who had gathered 'round clattered into the gym.

When Jamie returned, he had been joined by the formerly sweaty duo. "Guys, this is my dad, Professor Matt Wreston." Pointing to a big open-faced brunette, he said, "Dad, this is Roger Curtis, otherwise known as Bo-dinks." And then, turning to a lanky blond, he completed his introductions, saying, "And this is Charlie Benson. He thinks he's a quarterback, but we know better, don't we Bo-dinks?" Bo-dinks' agreement resulted in a heavy swat to his upper arm, but no one seemed in dire danger. "Dad, is there any chance that Bo-dinks and Charlie could join us for supper tonight? We might stop by Micky D's..." Matt got the signal. Jamie and he had planned to stop by one of their favorite little restaurants in town, but in the contest between great food plus dad vs. burgers plus friends...and dad, friends and burgers obviously won. Matt drove through the picturesque little town until he reached a small restaurant nestled on a side street. "Pile out, men!" he yelled. "I'm hon-gry!" "Oh, man," he could hear Jamie whispering as they headed inside, "this place is the greatest!" About an hour later, they emerged. The pumpkin-mushroom soup hadn't gone over too well, but the entrees had disappeared with the speed of light. Further, Jamie's friends had had Creme Brulee for dessert for the first time in their lives and indicated that they liked it! (For his part, Matt wasn't completely sure that his credit card would ever recover.) He did drive the two lads home, home to houses that were in the poorer areas of the county. As they sat in their driveway prior to garaging the car, Jamie did put his arms around his father and whispered thanks into his ear. Naturally, he then sharply NIBBLED on his earlobe before escaping into the open garage - but, hey, every self-respecting teenager has his limits!

As written earlier, it was a great year from start to finish: High School All-America recognition in football (rare for a junior), and the Captaincy of his wrestling team plus All-League recognition. That plus his 3.87 academic record set off a flurry of publicity requests. Fine examples of Brennon's work appeared on several teen and sport magazine covers. Jamie also traveled to New York for two clothing shoots. Two national firms that specialized in clothing the young male weren't about to ignore his potential. (It even led to several porn feelers that he promptly rejected!)

Through all of this, Jamie continued to grow in every way imaginable. Matt and those around him, e.g., Ken Porter who came East for the spring break, were as proud of him as they could possibly be. Herb Ennis, his AP English teacher, continued to

simultaneously push and groom him. Matt even had occasion to remember the suggestions Herb Ennis had made early in the year. He noticed, for example, that those fellow students who Jamie seemed to like most were not the ones he commonly invited to the house to join him in the gym or the pool, to go hiking in western Maryland's mountains, or simply to hang on a slow Sunday afternoon. Nor did he tend to see them repeatedly. It was usually a one-time event. Proceeding in his most casual, low-key manner, Matt mentioned what he had observed. Jamie's comments were revealing. "Dad," he said, "I guess you're not too far off base. It's just that most everyone around here is straight as all hell - or covers up so you don't see much else. The guys I really like are guys that I usually find a little...hot...sometimes way hot! Given the way things have worked out at the school, I just can't afford an...accident. So I cool it."

"I understand, son," Matt replied. "Tell me, though, do you see any potential problems in handling things that way?" (Pause.) "Well," the big redhead finally said, "it would be pretty bad if I got in the habit of always pushing people away from me whom I really like. Is that the kind of thing you're talking about, dad?" "Dunno," Matt replied, "but it sounds worth thinking about." "But gosh, dad, how can I ever let down my guard with guys like Bo-dinks or Josh Herndon who really turn me on?" "Well," Matt said at length, "could you start wearing your steel jock strap when you're around them?" (The fact that Jamie look cross-eyed at him and stuck out his tongue suggested that idea wasn't of much help.) Matt sighed comically and tried again: "Everybody's different, but I always tried to put myself in a position where the other guy had to take the initiative. By that I mean that when I was trying to come on to one of these special guys I didn't do much unless I was very, very sure they wanted it - and only then where they would be comfortable... like in THEIR bedrooms on an overnight. Too easy for them to get scared and think 'fag' in other situations..." Jamie grunted as he lifted the large crate and carried it to the entrance of the garage. The discussion tailed off as the work continued, but Matt knew that he was thinking...and that he would stay with it. In truth, as school let out and the time approached to prepare for a very special trip, Matt felt that he had seen some progress. Indeed, there were a few times he caught the redhead's eye when he had a self-satisfied smile on his face, too!

(To Be Continued)