

Continuing the story of **Ricky**.

In the first chapter, nineteen-year-old grad student Terri rented a summer flat from Hermione, a woman whose nine-year-old son Ricky is endowed (or possibly cursed, for he has more growing to do) with a man-sized penis, already seven inches in length and proportionally as thick. The boy is indifferent, possibly even hostile, to Terri; yet he's left a deep impression on her.

She and Hermione got to know each other a little; in this chapter, the frost between Terri and Ricky begins to melt.

Feedback so far is good, and I'm grateful for that. As I said earlier there's nothing wrong with wanting short, direct fiction, especially on a space such as Nifty's; it's nice to learn that longer, more involved works are appreciated as well. I hope not to disappoint. *Trevor's Summer* had a few sexual crescendos. I'm pretty sure this story will offer quite a few more. Expect a post frequency of about one per week, at least for now.

On a more technical note, I discovered recently that Nifty accepts PDFs, which is how I'm formatting this tale. It's much easier to do it this way than to try to convert it all from RTF to HTML. It's my hope that someday they'll take RTF as well, which will make a *lot* of people's lives a lot easier. Meanwhile, you don't have to read these chapters in your browser as PDFs if you don't want to; you can right-click any of them, download, and read offline at your leisure. For longer tales such as this one, maybe that's a better way to do it.

It goes without saying, I hope, that this is fiction, at least as far as I know. Though the main voice in this narrative is that of a nineteen-year-old young woman, I'm actually a man, but I hope I've made the storyline authentic and believable from a woman's perspective. If you like it, hit me up at **arionneos at gmail** et cetera and let me know what you think (if you don't like it and want to say so, that's fine too).

Don't bother writing at all, though, if you want to tell me what a perverted freak I am as you study and analyze

every single word over and over and over again.

===== **begin chapter** =====

2. Reinforcements

I jumped a little at the knock on the door. I paused the video — a deep Japanese language/culture MP4 podcast playing back from my Mac — and crossed the little space quickly as another knock, this one more urgent, rattled the door in its frame.

Hermione's face was pinched. "I hate to bother you," she said. "But I need help."

I thought of catastrophe: The house is on fire. There are intruders. Ricky stuck his finger in a socket. Ricky stuck his finger in a socket while intruders broke in, causing a house fire. "What's wrong?" I looked past her, but there were no flames coming from the nearby roof, there was no boy stretched unconscious on the patio, and there were no dark hooded figures skulking furtively about in the shadows.

She shifted nervously. "Well, I — the whole damn mainframe just buckled and went," she said. "I'm on call and there are thirteen departments raising thirty-nine hells about..."

"How can I help?" Unbidden team camaraderie rose in my bosom. Hermione worked at the same hospital as I did; that was how I'd learned of the flat. She was in IS, and they all traded on-call nights and weekends.

"It's far too late to call anyone ... I wouldn't even have bothered you but when I was leaving I saw your light on, and ... well, I'd rather be sure he was being looked after just in case..."

It was late; it was after ten. But what was it too late *for*? "What do you need?"

"Would you..." She looked imploringly at me. "If it's no bother, I mean ... would you mind ... looking after my son for a while, until I can get everything sorted out?" She took a breath. "I'll only charge you half-rent for the month, if ... I mean, I don't intend to make a habit of this; but the 440 line blew, all the power failed and it took down the whole goddamn cluster and now the fuckers won't boot ... it might take a few hours to sort out, it was a daisy-chain, and they're really freaked about it..."

I chilled to think of it. The entire hospital's systems offline. Surgeons, nurses ... *the ER* ... all unable to get patient medical histories, search for drug interactions, call for meds on demand. There were backups, paper records, but they were slow and much less certain than a simple barcode scan. Human error compounded by stress. Chaos, some of it life-threatening.

"Of course," I said. "Of course. Go. Take as long as you need. It's no trouble."

"It could be all night," she said.

"Go," I told her again. "Don't worry. I'll make sure he's okay. Just get going. They need you; we'll be fine here."

"God," she gasped, clutching frantically at my hand with both of hers. "Thank you. I owe you. I really owe you. Look, if it goes long or you get tired, just sleep in my room, I changed the sheets this morning — don't worry about Ricky, he'll be surprised but he can handle it if..."

"It's *okay*, Hermione," I said, feeling almost like laughing with relief. "Of course I'll do it." This wasn't so bad, it was nothing compared to what faced her — it was just a few hours of *babysitting*. I'd done it lots with my brothers, even my older brother; and for family friends to make a little cash in my early teen years. I was used to being left in charge of boys. Her emergency was barely an inconvenience to me. "Just let me get my Mac, and..."

"Fine," she said, lunging down the steps three at a time. "The back door's open," she called up, vanished into the garage beneath my feet, and then her head poked back out. "Emergency numbers on the fridge! Thanks again!"

She popped back inside, and moments later her Daihatsu was speed-shifting up the street.

I'd been living there for less than a week; I didn't even know the internal layout of Hermione's home yet, nowhere near as well as I would come to know it later. I moved cautiously, finding inside the patio the kitchen/dining room first, its table cleared from their supper earlier. On the left behind the low half-bar lay the stove, beyond it the dishwasher, opened slightly to let itself vent and dry its load for the night. The overhead light was on and the ceiling fan turned gently in the fixture, stirring the air.

The low chuff of its blades was the only sound in the place.

Next to the dishwasher was the fridge, converted to a standard mother-style art gallery. Ricky's drawings and paintings were everywhere on it — but they all seemed strangely primitive, oddly underdeveloped for a boy whom I knew to be as bright as he was. Near the top was a small list of telephone contacts, and hanging on the wall beside that was a cordless phone cradle, empty.

Okay, so now I knew where the numbers were in case I ever needed them. But where was the handset?

Around the corner opposite the kitchen was a short hallway, illuminated from farther within the house. Exploring, I found the living room, the TV still on — one of the *Law and Order* franchise — the sound muted. The missing handset lay on the coffee table before the thick leather couch, its curved back surprised on the flat blond wood, numbered keypad dark and baroque like a dead beetle's carapace.

The front door was simply deadbolted, the porch light off. This was a quiet neighborhood, Hermione had assured me; seeing my landlady had no more precautions in her own home than in the space she rented me, I nodded.

To my right the hall continued, leading to darkness at a short ell. Treading quietly I entered it, noting a bathroom at right and turning left to pass into further gloom. The next nearest door was ajar and I peered in, recognizing instantly the unmistakable spoor of boy scattered haphazardly on the floor. There were Legos and Connectix, electronics project kits and books strewn everywhere, dimly illuminated in a faint green glow coming from near the jamb. The light kept shifting and changing, ebbing and brightening, and I wondered what it might be.

A clear path led to the bed, *suspiciously* clear, and seeing a few small lumpish shapes garlanding it I recognized the form of a classic preteen-boy Booby Trap, something meant to goad — and then snare — the unwary. As in blind, deaf and insensate unwary. Probably it crossed ways with an infrared motion sensor, one of the "spy" toys, primed to launch small foam-rubber darts, a spurt of water, or just bleat a shrill little piezoelectric alarm.

I'd been able to detect and evade such traps since before Kindergarten. Brothers, you see, prepare you well for the challenges you face later in life while sitting others' young children.

On the bed lay Ricky, supine, his finely-muscled body indistinct in the gloom, but I could see well enough to know he was completely out, and he was as completely naked.

Of course: Sleeping buff is a lot more comfortable, and regular pajama bottoms would obviously be inadequate for him anyway.

He was on top of the covers — Harry Potter sheets, I saw without much surprise — sprawled across the mattress at an angle, his head on the pillow, arms flung wide and one foot dangling toward the floor, well-cleft chest rising and falling evenly with his breaths. Between his smooth taut thighs rose something I knew well, having seen my own sibs in slumber plenty of times — as well as boyfriends passed — and still I was surprised at what the half-glow from the sole nightlight revealed.

Intellectual preparation was not sufficient.

He was erect, as boys frequently can be in sleep, but what jutted up so sharply from him was entirely bizarre. The length and heft of him were anomalous, a little disturbing, vastly out of proportion. His body was healthy and lean, his muscles toned and sure, but he was a *child*, his frame and stature so *small*.

And yet, not everywhere.

There it stood, a solid column of absolute boy, completely rigid, man-long and man-thick on his hairless prepubescent groin.

The emotional shock set in at last and I felt viscerally what my brain already knew.

Ricky had a *huge* penis.

It was as long as his forearm, wider than his wrist, and it throbbed gently in the air as he slept on, pumping in time with his heartbeat. I could take his pulse from across the room.

Modesty demanded. I went in to him, staying clear of the too-clear pathway he'd carefully laid, and drew the sheet along his body until it was settled over his smooth bare chest, just below his nipples. He didn't stir at all, and when I stepped back to leave the room I saw the source of the light; he had a computer on the wall, its LCD blanked to a screensaver that I recognized from my time in physics labs; it was a rotating hypercube, and was the mark of status for Linux users.

Ricky's PC wasn't running Vista. Its OS was that of engineers, of chemists and astronomers and biologists; it was a hand-installed and hand-tweaked scientist's choice, not the kind of thing any nine-year-old would want unless that nine-year-old was phenomenally gifted. The only thing more nerdy on his screen would have been a Mandelbrot probe.

And then I remembered that the living room's entertainment center included a widescreen plasma set, a DVD and Blu-Ray player, but no Xbox, PS3 or Wii. None of the things a boy his age might want — at least, an ordinary boy.

To Ricky, it seemed, technology was not merely a toy. Well, it was that, surely, in its way; but to him it was mostly a means to get things accomplished.

My respect for him grew by another order of magnitude. Hermione had called him a genius. And I at last began to suspect she was right.

I made my way back to the door and turned to look once more at him lying there, covered now, with an impossible peak thrusting up like a circus tent's pole in the middle of his careless youthful sprawl, and felt the years fall away from me until I was his age and in awe of glimpsing the forbidden.

It was so very much like what I had done a few times at slumber parties ten years previous, peeking in on Sam and Clint, looking at them and suppressing giggles as they slept naked and unaware of being spied on by the giddy preadolescent schoolgirl friends of their middle sister, catching fleeting, frightening, tantalizing glimpses of handsome boys, aged ten and eight, nude and in full tumescence.

For a moment all I could think of was Alan.

He simply was not anywhere *near* as well-endowed as the innocent nine-year-old whose care had been thrust, unexpectedly, into my hands. Had he seen that simple boyish jut, he would have burned with envy, knowing himself outdistanced by a good two inches.

And as for Shelly ... if she had seen what I just had...

Well, the slutty fucking cunt would probably have seriously begun to consider taking up child molestation.

I had to stifle a sudden well of insane giggling.

I shook my head and shuddered, feeling deeply ashamed of myself, even though I knew it was an innocent moment, that the feeling of *naughtiness* was coming from me, not Ricky. I hadn't meant to spy and he, sleeping and innocent, hadn't meant for me to look; but still, the amazing — the *alarming* — mass he bore was all I could see as I withdrew, blinking rapidly, seeing another, open door at the end of the hall: Hermione's bedroom.

My informal unguided tour of their home finished, I went back to the living room, killed the tube and — after a while — was able to focus once more on my Japanese studies.

I woke to NPR and was disoriented for a few moments, struggling to consciousness in a room and bed that were not my own, even though the radio-alarm program was.

I sat up and stretched in Hermione's bed, stifling the radio after several awkward fumblings for the right button. Six AM. My time of day, too.

Apart from me the bed was empty. She hadn't come home yet.

I yawned and tossed my panties on the floor, doffing my tee as well as I went into the master bath for a shower. I'd come down last night in cutoffs and the other things I slept in, but had stripped the shorts off for bed. Figuring my landlady-cum-customer wouldn't begrudge me a rinse and a robe at least, I showered, then wrapped myself in a nice terry froth and went down the hall to check on my young charge.

Ricky was still asleep and lying on his belly, the sheet I'd covered him with the night before pushed down to his ankles. His face was nestled between his pillow and the wall, the back of his head showing only as a thick tuft of blond hair, random cornsilk strands waving gently. His naked back and shoulders rose and fell softly as he breathed, spine a knobby ridge between his tight muscles, his cute little butt firm and lean. His utterly smooth skin was sun-golden except where his Speedos normally covered him, the flesh on his haunches the color of rich cream, a narrow strip of tan-line running around his hips to disappear beneath him. Lower, his thighs and calves were gleaming with tone and strength; Ricky, I saw, had very well-shaped legs, muscular and limned in latent young power.

I wasn't trying to stare, but the innocent beauty in his lithe, healthy body held me captivated for several breathless moments. His brain was oversized, much like his penis, and both would probably be a real source of grief to him as he got older; yet in that moment, facedown and completely relaxed, he simply looked like a lovely little boy, a *normal* little boy without any concerns more grave than staying up past his bedtime or beating his friends at Yu-Gi-Oh!.

I realized that I was slightly jealous. Hermione had a delightful son, one I wouldn't mind having for myself, attitude and *problems* and all. He was splendid.

Looking at the wreckage of play on the floor I saw his boyish booby-trap clearly in morning's light and smiled softly at it, then went to meet my next responsibility, to him and to myself.

The kitchen was narrow and deep, laid out like a galley, counters and cabinets on one side, sink at the end, stove and food-prep surfaces on the other side against the bar. I found mixing bowls, pans, turners; I found a whisk, got eggs and milk out, located the right miraculous veggies — Hermione's palate seemed to match mine marvelously well — got the butter, and began whipping up my Morning-After Special.

I'd only ever made it, previously, for new lovers, treating them to breakfast in bed; and thereafter for anniversaries, birthdays, and sometimes just the sheer hell and joy of it, the pure and simple delight of waking up early after having been thoroughly and gleefully fucked all night long. I reserved it for special occasions, and figured this was probably pretty special in its own way this time, for some obscure reason.

Maybe it was because the last time I'd made it for anyone, it had been the day following my threesome with Alan and Shelly. Maybe I wanted to undo that night, or to exorcise ghosts ... or possibly to dispel a curse.

The Morning-After Special ordinarily followed a night of incredible sex, yes; but I decided that today I'd do it just for Ricky, for a reason that didn't really exist, and that wouldn't have mattered in any case. I just wanted to do something nice for him, a young boy who would be waking soon to learn his mom was at work already, that he'd been looked after in the night, all unknowing, by someone else, a near-total stranger.

Maybe I was playing mom myself, then, just a little. Making a special breakfast for a cute little boy I'd already decided was something pretty special himself. It was different, yes — and another difference was that, until that morning, I'd always made the Morning-After Special while I was naked.

That was one reason it was the Morning-After Special: *Breakfast in bed*. What it led to, dessert in bed ... tart in bed ... brunch in bed ... lunch in bed ... late-afternoon bed in bed...

That was the other reason.

And for the first time in my life I was making my specialty without a full load of a lover's semen in my womb, without anticipation of being filled with even more; in a way, it was a new beginning for me. Liberating. Freeing. In opening the eggs for our innocent breakfast, I was being reborn.

The omelet turned perfectly over the stove, and as I filled it and let it finish cooking I caught movement from the corner of my eye. "Hi, Mommy," I heard.

“Hey, Ricky,” I began, “It’s me, Terri. Your mom got called in for a server crash, so it’s just you and me this morning, kid...” and then I turned and saw him.

He was standing at the end of the little kitchen, blinking up at me in shock.

He had woken up just moments earlier and his nose had led him down the hall, seeking food, and he had been blindly rubbing at his eyes and only then, just then, lowered his hands when he heard my unexpected voice.

I wasn’t his mom, and I wasn’t making him his usual food, and it was obvious that I wasn’t what he thought he would find in his home this early in the morning: He was still naked, his too-long penis hanging limply halfway to his knees.

“Shit,” I said, turning away suddenly. “Uh, breakfast in about five minutes...”

But he had already fled.

From behind his closed door I heard a small, shrill battery-powered alarm, then stifled cursing.

I knocked softly at his door. “Ricky?”

“Go away,” he said miserably.

“Breakfast,” I said.

“No.”

“Yes. Omelets. Eggs, cheese, spinach and walnuts.”

There was a pause. “Spinach? In an *omelet*?”

“Yes,” I said. “It’s actually pretty good.”

There was a disbelieving silence. “And *walnuts*?”

“Yeah. With a little garlic. Some herbs, some chives. And feta.”

“That weird *goat* cheese?” he moaned.

“Try one,” I said. “You’ll like it. All my boyfriends do.”

I bit my lip too late. That was, I knew, the wrong thing to say as he got very quiet again. Then: “I’m not your boyfriend.”

Oh hell. “I know,” I said quietly. “I —”

“I never even *kissed* anyone,” he said.

“It doesn’t matter. I —”

“I’m not even your *kid*.”

“I *know*. That’s not what I meant. I just meant that ... well, that everyone likes them. They’re good.

Come on out and try one, okay?”

He was quiet.

“Ricky?”

“No,” he said, and I heard the accusation in that single word, final and absolute: *You saw me. You aren’t my mom and you don’t belong here and I was naked and you’re a girl and you saw me.*

“I’ll leave the plate by your door, then,” I said, setting it down. “Okay? Just get it when you’re ready.”

“Mom doesn’t let me have food in my room,” he murmured.

“Well, maybe we can bend the rules a little this time. All right?”

He remained quiet.

“I’m leaving now,” I said. “Down the hall to the kitchen.” I made a lot of noise as I left.

As I sat at the little bar and ate I heard his latch click, heard the scuff of china lifted, heard his door close hurriedly once more.

I was just finishing my second cup of coffee when he emerged, very tentative, dressed in a long, tentish tee with huge shorts barely visible under the hem, their cuffs flapping below his knees. “Where’s my mom?” he said, his face a mask of unalloyed suspicion.

“She got called in by IS,” I said, pouring a third cup. “She asked if I’d stay around and make sure you were okay.”

“When?”

“Last night, after ten,” I said. “You must have been asleep by then or I’m sure she would have told you.”

He glanced at the clock. “Ten hours,” he murmured, sidling to the sink and dropping his empty plate into it for a quick rinse. He turned and found himself looking right at me. Cornered, he eyed me uneasily.

“Why’d they call her in?”

“Some kind of server crash,” I shrugged. “She said they wouldn’t reboot.”

He groaned. "I keep *saying* they should switch to Linux and drop that IIS crap."

"Well," I said, "maybe now they will."

He snorted. "Right." He eyed my robe. I realized suddenly that it was too open in the front, my breasts showing as much more than simple cleavage, and I pulled the flaps over myself uncomfortably at his frank, assessing gaze. "You sleep here last night?"

"Yes," I said, not sure why I was feeling so defensive. "Your mom said I could, if it got too late. And, well, I guess it got too late."

"Happens," he shrugged. "I guess."

"It can, sometimes. Did you like your breakfast?"

"It was okay, I guess," he allowed with another small shrug. "Only I usually have juice too."

"Oh," I said as he got himself a glass and poured it full of grapefruit juice. I took the brief chance to study his attire. He was completely lost in the volumes of cloth that draped his body, and I knew exactly what that meant, how embarrassed he was to have been seen naked by me, twice now in the same week. Obviously he had expected to be greeted this morning by his mother; the idea that he might wake to find a strange woman in his home, dressed in his mother's robe and making an omelet for him, had simply never crossed his mind. "Well, I'll remember that if I ever fix you breakfast again, okay?"

He paused in gulping his drink and stared at me over the rim of his glass, then finished the juice. He set the glass on the counter and wiped his mouth with his arm. "Okay," he said, and scuttled back to his room, shutting the door firmly behind himself with an unmistakable, and very final, clack.

Poor kid, I thought. Poor, embarrassed little kid.

I shook my head and finished my coffee.

Hermione called at eight-thirty. I gave her the all's-well and she assured me she would be home in the next hour or so. "Was Ricky any trouble?"

"No," I said. "He's been quiet. He's in his room now." He hadn't come back out since getting his juice.

"Let him know I'm on my way back soon," she said.

"I will," I said, and rung off. As I turned back from setting the phone in its cradle I jumped and gave a

little shriek; Ricky was standing right behind me, looking up from under hooded brows. “Jeez, kid,” I said, my heart settling. “You spooked me. You can be pretty quiet when you want to be.”

“Was that my mom?”

“Yes,” I said. “She says she’ll be home soon.”

He nodded thoughtfully, then looked up at me again. “You gonna fix her an omelet too?”

It hadn’t occurred to me. “That’s not a bad idea. You think she’d like one?”

“Yeah,” he said, smiling very faintly. “They’re actually kinda good.” His face became guarded once more.

“I mean, for something with goat cheese and stuff in it.”

I snorted and resisted the sudden urge to ruffle his hair. It looked as though it was very soft, but I was sure he would resent the gesture, maybe even draw away with a hostile glare and vanish back into his room again. Children can be very conservative sometimes, and often don’t like being fondled by virtual strangers. And I didn’t want to do anything that might crush the tiny, shy little sprout of a bond that had begun to grow between us.

He settled on one of the stools behind the bar, watching me as I started the process of making a third omelet. “Do you cook a lot?”

“I have to,” I said. “Students don’t usually make a lot of money, and I can’t afford to eat out all the time.” I cracked the eggs into the bowl and whisked them with a short grind of black pepper and coarse salt, pouring in a small dollop of milk. “And, well, I kind of like it, too.”

“You’re good at it,” he said quietly, then seemed to realize what he was saying. “Well, I mean at making omelets anyway. Um. I mean...”

I nodded. “I haven’t had much reason to make these lately,” I said, pouring the mixture into the pan.

“How come?”

“Well,” I shrugged, “I usually make them for a boyfriend after...” I stopped, realizing I’d talked myself into a corner.

“After a sleep-over?” Ricky said.

“Yes.” The omelet was set well and I loosened it carefully, then flipped it with a smooth circular toss. It spun lazily in the air and met the pan with a low splat.

Ricky's eyes got very round. "Cool," he said. "Do you always do that?"

"It's easier than it looks," I chuckled, adding the fillings and folding the eggs over them. "Easier than trying to use a turner."

"Mom has sleep-overs sometimes," Ricky said thoughtfully. "Only, not since like a couple years ago."

"Oh," I said. I wondered why not. Hermione was a good person, slim, healthy, and quite beautiful; and she couldn't have been more than thirty. Maybe juggling a career and a child didn't leave much room for a sex life ... but surely she must have had needs, urges, encounters...

Ricky's voice called me back to the moment. "Her last boyfriend was Roger." His eyes got distant and he became very quiet.

"You didn't like him."

He shook his head at me, his grey eyes very wide. "He kept asking to see me naked."

"Jesus," I said. "Jesus, kid, that really sucks. I'm sorry." My eyes met his. "And ... I'm sorry too, about what ... about this morning."

"It's okay, I guess," he shrugged, his face flaming crimson. He looked away. "I know you didn't mean it."

I thought uneasily of the guilty spying I'd done on him as he slept, suddenly very glad he hadn't woken, and decided I wouldn't ever do anything like it again. "Does your mom know about..."

"Yeah, I told her," he said. "She told him to get out and she'd call the cops if she ever saw him again."

"Good for her. And good for you for telling." I slid the omelet onto a plate, then set it in the oven to keep warm, my hands shaking a little. "Did he ever ... do anything else?"

"You mean like touching me? Like down there?"

"Y-yeah."

"No," he said. "But I think ... maybe he wanted to." He laced his fingers together and tugged uneasily at them. "One night it was just him and me. Mom was at work. And he kept asking me about, you know, about my penis. If it really was five inches, back then it was only five inches, and if I liked how it felt when it got hard, and if I ever ... you know ... like played with it. Or if ... if I ever thought about ... letting anyone else play with it."

"No one has any business asking you those things," I said.

“I know,” he murmured, his fingers writhing.

“Did he ... play with it? Then or any other time?”

“No,” he said. “He didn’t touch me. Not like that.”

“What do you mean?”

Ricky shrugged uneasily. “He ... he like put his arm around me. And he rubbed my arm and stuff. I didn’t ... I mean, I didn’t mind at first but then he kept ... saying that stuff, and I started feeling pretty weird.”

I would have too. “Did he ever ask you to play with his penis?”

“Yeah,” Ricky nodded. “That ... that night. He said I could see his if I wanted to, and play with it if I wanted to, and we could have a contest to see who was bigger. But I didn’t do it. I told him I had to get ready for bed, and then I went to my room and I locked the door. And then my mom came home and I told her about it.”

“Good,” I said. “That was brave of you, and I’m sure it was a hard thing to do, but it was the best thing you could have done. No one has the right to touch you in a way you don’t like, and no one has the right to ask you to do the same to them.”

“I know,” he nodded sadly, and I wondered then how many other times he’d had to navigate painful requests, how many other attempts on him might have been made that he simply wasn’t talking about. “It sucks,” he murmured.

“What does, honey?” I asked softly.

“My ... you know, how big it is. All the kids want to see it when they find out. Even the girls. *Everyone* wants to see it.”

“That must get pretty old.”

He nodded sadly again. “And then it just ... sticks up sometimes, and then I can’t even hide it or anything ‘cause it’s too big.” He sighed deeply and scrubbed his face with his palms, a gesture of an old, very tired man. “I wish it would just go away.”

“Oh, Ricky...”

“Can playing with it make it get bigger?” he asked suddenly, his eyes locked on his hands.

“No, it can’t,” I said. “It can make it get hard and *seem* bigger for a while, but that’s not the same thing.

It's not like your muscles, where the more you exercise the bigger you get.”

“Good,” he said, relief clear in his whisper. “I thought so. But I was afraid that maybe ... I mean, it feels good, and I don't wanna stop or anything.”

I wondered how he knew, at such a young age, about masturbation, but then understood that he probably had to make himself erect sometimes in order to get his medically-prescribed measurements. It would be a short leap from that to discovering the full act, especially for a boy as frank, curious and intelligent as he was. A few extra minutes of exploration, only once, would have taught him everything he needed to know in an unforgettable way. “Don't worry about that,” I said. “You don't have to stop. You can't hurt yourself that way, and you won't make anything grow more than it was already going to anyhow.”

He eyed me searchingly. “You sure?”

“Yes,” I said.

“But how do you *know*? You don't have one.”

“Ricky, believe me; if playing with it could make it grow, *every* boy would have a ... a penis like yours.”

“Okay,” he murmured, and then he sighed as an invisible weight left his slim shoulders. “Yeah. That makes sense. Thanks.”

“Sure, kid,” I said. “Want more juice?”

He smiled, grateful for the change of subject, and I shared the feeling. Discussing onanism and psychological molestation with a young boy is not the easiest of topics. “Yeah,” he said.

I got him a new glass and filled it. He studied me. “Terri?”

“Yeah?”

“Do you have any kids?”

“No,” I said. “Even if I did none of them would be as bi — as old as you.” I gave him the juice. “Why?”

He shrugged and took a drink. “You're pretty cool about ... you know, talking to me about this stuff,” he said. “Like my mom.”

“Well, I have brothers, and I guess I got some experience there listening to them talk about it sometimes.”

“And you're a scientist, right?”

“Yes,” I said.

“Scientists are better,” he said. “They don’t freak out as much.”

“I think they might,” I said, “only they may be a little better at dealing with it. Scientists are used to asking questions, and we’re used to getting answers, even if they’re awkward or maybe a little embarrassing. And, if you’re really lucky, the answers lead to even more questions.”

“That’s a *good* thing?” he said.

“Yes, it is, because you can end up discovering even more, or discovering that what you were asking about at first has led you to something completely new, completely unexpected. Einstein discovered General Relativity by asking questions and being surprised at the answers, then asking more questions; and then Feynman made it deeper by following lines Einstein had left unexplored. Without them, and Newton before them, we wouldn’t have electric lights or Xbox or microwave ovens. And Watson and Crick discovered DNA in much the same way, looking for one thing and discovering another, because they were open to questions. They opened the world to the idea of genetic engineering, microbiology and mitochondrial archaeology, which will help us one day cure most diseases as well as understand our evolution. All from trying to find out a few supposedly-small answers to a few little questions.”

“Cool.” He finished the juice. “I wanna be a scientist too,” he said.

I felt a surprising little frisson of pleasure at that, one I felt was out of place. After all, he had not said he wanted to be a scientist *like me*. “I think you’d be great at it,” I said as I took the glass back. “More?”

“Yeah,” he said, “please.”

We heard his mother drive up as I poured him more juice. I took out the plate and set it on the bar beside him, digging out a fork, setting her place as she came through the front door with a weary-to-the-bones sigh. “Baby?” she called. “You up?”

“Yeah. We’re in here, Mom,” Ricky said. “Terri made you breakfast. It’s an omelet.”

“Oh, that smells absolutely *heavenly*,” Hermione said, coming around the corner and pecking her son on his thickly-tufted crown.

“It’s got *goat cheese* in it,” he said, “and walnuts and some other real weird junk, but it’s good anyway.”

She stared at him. “You ate one?”

He nodded at her as she settled beside him.

“And you *liked* it?”

“Yeah,” he said. “I guess.”

Hermione shook her head slowly at me. “I’m never able to get him to try anything new,” she said. “You must have a magic touch.”

She cut into the omelet with her fork, studied the filling, and tasted it.

“Oh my God, you *do* have a magic touch,” she managed, and fell to. Ricky grinned briefly at me, and I smiled back.

In very short order she pushed the empty plate aside and belched. “*Thank* you,” she said. “That was *fantastic*.”

Ricky giggled. “You stole a car!” he said.

She blinked at him. “Huh?”

“*Gone in sixty seconds*,” he smirked.

Hermione laughed with him. “Grand theft omelet!”

“Eggs-actly,” Ricky nodded.

She dropped her arm easily around his narrow little shoulders and he snuggled happily against her.

“God, I love you, kid,” she said.

He wriggled. “Aww, Ma...”

“*Awwwww, Maaaaaaa*,” she mocked, kissing his cheek and slobbering to his neck as he rolled his eyes at me — *Mothers! Honestly, can you believe it?* — and dissolved into giggles, a huge sappy grin on his face. “I’ve got to shower off,” she said to him, leaning back and smoothing his hair, then let out a jaw-cracking yawn. “And then I think I’ll probably go to bed. Okay, honey?”

“Kay. Can Terri stay and watch me?” Ricky said, and I felt a little swell of pleasure. He’d decided he liked me after all, and it made me glad to know it.

She slid her hand up and down along his back, her fingers scratching gently as he rolled his shoulders happily. “Watch you do what? Scratch your butt and pick your nose?”

He giggled again. “No.”

“Oh, I see — it’s *pick* your butt and *scratch* your nose.”

“*Mom-mmm*,” he rolled his eyes. “Please?”

“I’m thinking she has things to do, son,” Hermione told him. “Studying, and maybe work too.”

“Both, actually,” I nodded. “I should probably get going.” I went into the living room and collected my Mac, then headed toward the back door. “I’ll bring your robe down when I’m dressed,” I said.

“No hurry,” Hermione said. “Tonight would be better. I’m probably blowing off the shower and just going straight to bed.”

“Okay,” I nodded.

“Terri —”

I halted at the door.

“Thank you again. For everything. I’m serious about owing you bigtime.”

“Forget it,” I said. “I’m glad I could be there to help.” And I smiled at her and her boy, and left.

===== **end chapter** =====

Terri is beginning, already, to love Ricky. Her clear admiration of his healthy young body is obvious by now; the size of his penis is only part of it. He is a handsome, muscular boy, lithe and pretty; and yet, he is obviously a boy, just a boy.

His response to his mother’s ex-lover, Roger, is part of this; there’s indication here that Ricky isn’t to be so easily had. But he giggles as well, now, as he relaxes a little with Terri. Some of his intellectual formality drops away. And he shares with her a painful moment from his life. From being surprised at being naked in front of her to telling her something very personal about himself, even talking with her about something most boys never discuss with women — masturbation — it’s clear Ricky is relaxing quickly with Terri; and yet, she won’t accept her attraction to him.

That won’t begin to happen until the next chapter. But for now, notice both Ricky’s obvious boyishness, and

his obvious maturity. These are important elements later in the story. They make his ultimate lovemaking with Terri sensible.