

See explanations and disclaimers at the beginning of Chapter One.

See Copyright notice at the end of the last chapter.

What Is True Love Anyway?

By Dan

Chapter Five

Part I - Christmas break

Since the episode at the pool, Dan's and Sam's reputations had spread around the school. More importantly, Randy's attitude had changed as had those of his two closest friends. They didn't become best buddies with Dan and Sam, but their friendship circles did begin to overlap, and it wasn't unusual to see them eating lunch together in the school cafeteria. In fact, it was Sam and Dan that encouraged Randy to try out for the Christmas play that was presented by the eighth and ninth grade classes. Randy didn't try for a musical part, but did get one of the speaking parts and had done a commendable job.

Dan and Sam both tried out for the lead male part and got it. You see, at their Jr. high, the lead roles were always filled by two people. Each was the lead AND an understudy. If one got sick, the other played both performances. Otherwise, one played the afternoon performance, which was meant to be primarily for the student body, and the other played the evening performance, which was traditionally for the parents and public. This year, however, their classmates had talked so much about the fight early in the year and the pool incident later on, that everyone wanted to see both performances so they could see both Dan and Sam in the lead role.

Of course, this was a tremendous compliment to the boys, and their parents had to help them control their egos, but it meant the auditorium was full at the afternoon performance and standing room only at the evening one. Kids who came to the afternoon performance came back in the evening. Parents who could, and there were lots of them, took time off from work to attend the afternoon performance and came back for the evening one as well.

Did I tell you that Dan's voice hadn't changed yet? That and pubic hair were to ignore him until well into the ninth grade, more than a year later, facts that were impossible for him to ignore and just as impossible for him to change. But because of that, his singing voice was still that of a young boy soprano.

Both performances were blockbusters. Every actor performed splendidly and made their parents and teachers proud. But there was one particular song that remained on every person's heart long afterwards and brought some of the people back for the second performance who might not have come otherwise.

Dan had drawn the afternoon performance which was fine with him because his dad could take off from work to see it. Sam's dad hadn't been able to get the time off and would have missed Sam's performance if their roles had been reversed. Being a Christmas play, it was quite naturally about the birth of Jesus. When it came time for Mary to sing the *Magnificat*, the girl in that role suddenly was struck dumb with stage fright. Her mind went blank and she stared with an agonized expression at Dan standing before her.

Instantly Dan understood what had happened. As Sam sang the intro from off stage, Dan moved to stand behind her where the audience wouldn't see him. As he passed her, he spoke in a whisper.

"Just move your lips like you're singing!"

Sam's intro:

An angel went from God to a town called Nazareth

to a woman whose name was Mary.

The angel said to her, "Rejoice of highly favored,

for God is with you.

You shall bear a child, and his name shall be Jesus,

the Chosen One of God Most High."

And Mary said,

And in his clear boy-soprano voice, Dan sang her song for her.

"I am the servant of my God, I live to do your will.

My soul proclaims your greatness, O God,

and my spirit rejoices in you,

You have looked with love on your servant here,

and blessed me all my life through.

Great and mighty are you, O Holy One,

strong is your kindness evermore.

How you favor the weak and lowly ones,

humbling the proud of heart.

You have cast the mighty down from their thrones,

and uplifted the humble of heart,

You have filled the hungry with wondrous things,

and left the wealthy no part.

Great and mighty are You, O Faithful One,

strong is your justice, strong your love,

As you promised to Sarah and Abraham,

kindness forevermore.

My soul proclaims your greatness, O God,

and my spirit rejoices in you,

You have looked with love on your servant here,

and blessed me all my life through.

As she mouthed the words, tears of joy, love and gratitude streamed down her face. Those tears, combined with the beauty of the words and the heartfelt tenderness that came from deep within Dan's very soul, had the entire afternoon audience dabbing their eyes. It was obvious from her tears that Mary wasn't really singing, and besides, everyone recognized Dan's voice anyway. Perhaps that made the song even more meaningful than it already was. Who knows?

Some of the girls cried openly at the beauty of the moment. Nobody noticed Dan slip quietly behind one of the props on stage to collapse in tears as soon as the song was over. The emotion of the moment had completely overwhelmed him and left him weeping as the adrenalin pumped through his small frame. The auditorium fell silent as Mary wiped her eyes and recovered her composure to finish the scene. The choral director allowed a full 60 seconds to pass before indicating that the play should continue. Never, in all her years of teaching, had she experienced such an overwhelming sense of awe and love as she knew everyone in the room had just witnessed.

Interestingly enough, the girl who was to play Mary at the evening performance was so overwhelmed by the experience that immediately after the play ended she sought out Sam and Dan and the director and asked if they couldn't somehow repeat it that evening. Sam's voice had already changed, so his singing the Magnificat was not an option. They finally decided that since Dan would be singing the intro anyway, just as Sam had done, he would just go ahead and perform both parts

of the song. When he agreed to do it, the girl kissed him. Right on the lips. The first real live lip kiss he had ever gotten from a girl. His face turned red as a fire engine in embarrassment, and his ears were redder still.

Word of the performance began to spread as soon as school let out. Kids told their parents, adults told their friends. Dan's mom and dad called every member of the church choir and told them. By the time the curtain lifted, every seat was filled, extra chairs had been brought in and people were standing shoulder to shoulder along the side aisles and across the back. Some were even sitting on the steps in the balcony. Even the pastor from Dan's and Sam's church was there. If anything, the evening performance was better than the afternoon. Sam's portrayal of the role he and Dan shared was awesome as was that of his co-star. The stage they set, the atmosphere that they helped to create for Dan's participation made it even more profound than the afternoon performance.

Just as he had that afternoon, Dan collapsed in tears as he finished the last note. God, how he wished Samuel could have been by his side at that moment. He felt such an overwhelming sense of love that it almost hurt not to be able to share it with the most important person in his life. Was the power of the performance perhaps due to the way the words seemed to apply to the one singing them - *how you favor the weak and lowly ones* - or perhaps the sincerity with which they were sung - *you have looked with love on your servant here, and blessed me all my life through*? Perhaps it was partly because Dan had forgotten to turn off the microphone he was holding which meant that his sobs were broadcast throughout the room until the sound technician suddenly turned off the mic at the control deck. Whatever the reason, so overpowering was it that the choral director herself had to sit down and wipe her eyes. Fully two minutes of complete and utter silence passed before anyone moved or even seemed to breathe, save for the sniffles and nose blowing.

The situation back stage after the play provided an example of one of the biggest differences between the two boys. While Dan was embarrassed by all the attention they received, his face and ears constantly red, his eyes hardly ever leaving a spot he had picked out on the floor, Sam was like a proud father. He stood next to Dan and constantly praised his work. Even as he accepted the people's praise for his own efforts, he shared it with Dan.

"Thanks, I appreciate it. It was a fun role to play. But wasn't Danny great? Wasn't that just the best singing you ever heard?"

Over and over again he said these words as their parents looked on, filled with wonder at the love they saw passing between the two boys. They were no longer concerned about whether other people might be seeing the same thing and thinking their private thoughts. What other people thought no longer seemed to be as important as it used to be. And whatever they might have thought before, the people seemed to be truly sincere in their comments about how they had been touched by the performance. Mr. Whittington remarked on the way home that the show had ended an hour earlier; it had taken that long to speak to all of the people who had come back stage to thank the performers for their work.

Part II - Summer of our fourteenth year

The second semester of their eighth grade passed much the same as had the first. Life was basically good, some tests were easy, some weren't. Each did well on most, not so well on a few. All in all, Sam did better than Dan. It did seem that Sam was the more intelligent of the two, but it might have been that he simply applied himself more. Dan was as impatient as his father and was always in a hurry to finish, whether it was homework or a test. His grades most likely reflected this.

Sam's valentine's present to Dan was a real surprise. It was on that day dedicated to love and lovers that Sam ejaculated for the first time, and it was Dan's hand that did it. The boys only spent the night with each other on weekends, so during the week they had to abstain or masturbate alone. They frequently commented that they hoped their "first time" would be with each other and not by themselves.

Dan's first time didn't happen until about six weeks later when they were once again sharing Sam's bed. Of course, this time it was Sam's hand which brought about the mighty deed. The way the boys reacted to each of these events, one would have thought the donor of fluids had just had a baby. The one being stroked had barely finished flowing when the other was on top of him, kissing his face all over, smearing the thin watery threads of semen over their bellies and pubes. Each time, they celebrated this rite of passage as it should be, with love, affection, amazement, shared joy. Hugs and kisses abounded, even as their bodies became glued together with the sticky mess.

Summer camp was even more fun that summer of 1959. They both turned 14 just before camp started, and second year campers got to go on a horseback overnight. Dan turned out to be quite the horseman, seeming to have a sixth sense when it came to handling them and making them feel comfortable. Sam was a bit more nervous around them, and the horses sensed it. For that reason, they were more jittery with him. Their two weeks at camp gave each of them an opportunity to shine - Dan with the horses, Sam on the softball field and tennis court.

On the first Friday morning, Dan woke early. Lying in his bunk with Sam in the bunk above him, he wondered what had awakened him. His watch said it was only 5:45. First call wasn't until 7:00. Then he heard a horse whinny. He climbed out of bed and wondered outside in his undershorts. Seeing no sign of any horses, he made his way towards the center of camp. Then he heard it again, a horse whinnying. Making his way to the sorts area, he found them. All twelve horses were munching grass on the softball field. The dirt tennis and basketball courts both showed signs of the horses having been stomping around on them.

Dan knew that all of the other horses would follow one particular mare named Lady. So he ran back to the cabin to look for something he could use as a rope. Looking around quickly, his gaze fell on his and Sam's tennis shoes under their bunk. Well, Sam's feet *were* bigger than his. Off he went, still clad only in his undershorts, tying the two laces from Sam's shoes together as he ran.

When he got back to the field, he approached Lady slowly and quietly. She sensed his presence and lifted her head to watch his approach. Fortunately, Dan had spent some extra time at the stables helping clean out the stalls. A smelly job, but one that gave him more time with the horses. Lady

must have recognized him because she allowed him to walk right up to her and tie his makeshift rope to her halter. Dan then led her back down the road to the corral. Sure enough, the other eleven horses followed them.

When they got back to the corral, Dan found the problem right away. The top rail of the three rail fence had been knocked loose right next to the gate. Upon close inspection, it was obvious to Dan that the nails had become loose in the weathered wood and one of the horses must have knocked the rail loose with a flank or shoulder. Dan opened the gate and led Lady in. When the other horses had all followed her into the corral, Dan closed the gate and tried to force the rail back onto the nails sticking out of the post.

But as he was untying the shoelaces from Lady's halter, one of the other horses again knocked the board loose. Dan rushed over to the fence just in time to shoo the horse away before it could get out. With nothing else at hand, the tack room being locked up each night, Dan had no alternative but to use Sam's shoelaces to tie the top rail in place. By the time he got back to camp, reveille had sounded and most of the camp was up. The boys who were already outside their cabins began hooting and hollering at Dan walking across the grounds in just his white briefs.

Sam was none too happy to find his shoes no longer had any shoelaces.

"How am I supposed to keep these things on?" he asked, pretending to be angry.

Dan answered without thinking, something he was prone to do all too often.

"Aw, just beat off and glue them shut with your cum!"

The entire cabin burst out laughing, including the counselor, leaving Dan and Sam standing there turning red as beets. This gave the other boys something else to razz them about, which one was more embarrassed, which blushed more easily, etc. To hide his embarrassment, Sam jumped on Dan and threw him down on his bunk where he started tickling him. Now just about every inch of Dan's body was ticklish, his feet, ribs, armpits, groin, behind his knees. And Sam touched them all. But when he stuck his hand in his friend's crotch to tickle him behind his nuts, he found Dan's erection.

Realizing how much more embarrassed both of them would be if the others saw it making a tent in his briefs, Sam quit tickling, stood up and started to get dressed. He stood directly in front of Dan who sat quietly on his bunk, pretending to get his breath back while his boner went away. The two friends exchanged a loving glance as Dan finally stood to slip into his walking shorts and t-shirt. This was the only time during the entire two weeks that either of them would have an opportunity to fondle the other.

Every day ended the same way, with Campfire circle. The cabins each took a turn hosting one each week. Usually the put on a skit and then told jokes and sang songs. These were wonderful times for Dan and Sam. Because they were in the same cabin, they could sit together. Except for the two nights when their cabin hosted the campfire, this gave them an opportunity to sit close, bodies touching shoulder to shoulder, hip to hip, thigh to thigh. And in the dark, they could hold hands.

Of course this was both good and bad. While they loved being able to touch each other throughout the campfire, those touches always left them hard and horny. Then they would struggle to walk back to their cabin with their boners rubbing against their briefs. Trying to get rid of them before having to disrobe for bed was difficult. Every night, one of them would grab a toilet stall, shut the door and pretend to take a dump as he let his excitement die down.

The traditional last day skinny dip was different this year. While Sam's pubic bush had grown enough to be presentable, Dan's slower development still left him bald as a cucumber. The other boys who had pubic hair made fun of those few who still didn't. As the others were kidding him and the younger campers, Dan saw Sam looking at him with a loving and painful expression. But he understood. This was one instance when Sam couldn't do anything to protect him.

Soon he was turning the tables on the others by flaunting his nakedness and bragging about how much better it was to be hairless. The younger campers picked up on his response and adopted the same attitude, and eventually the kidding stopped. One of the counselors remembered the experience from last year and posted himself on the road leading away from camp just in case the girls should be on another hike in the area. None showed up, however, and when the time came to get out and go back to their cabins to get ready for dinner, most of the boys opted just to carry their towels and trunks. Any visitors would have thought they had just come upon a nudist camp for teenage boys.

Part V - Ninth grade

As the boys entered the ninth grade their physical differences began to become more distinct. Sam was developing more rapidly. He had more body hair - armpits, legs, even his arms were covered with fine, blond hairs. And his pubic bush was more pronounced. Actually, it was highly pronounced compared to Dan, who was still as hairless as a baby. Sam's body was developing more quickly in every way. He was taller and heavier than Dan. His muscular structure was more developed, more powerful looking. While Sam was filling out, Dan still had the "skinny little runt" body style.

Surprisingly enough their differences didn't seem to bother either one of them. If anything, it drew them closer together. Sam liked Dan's hairless condition, especially his private parts. And Dan loved the hair on Sam's body. He enjoyed running his hands along his boyfriend's arms, feeling the soft, smooth hair. And he really enjoyed toying with Sam's pubic hair that grew around the base of his penis but left his scrotum bald.

And here, too, was another difference. Sam's genitals were outpacing his boyfriend's. His penis was now longer than Dan's, about four inches hard compared to Dan's three, and a little thicker as well. In the privacy of the bedroom or bathroom, the boys joked about their relative sizes. Sam became *horse cock* while Dan was *pencil dick*, terms they used with affection.

Throughout the rest of the eighth grade and the following summer, the boys had honored their parent's wishes regarding their sexual relationship. They made love to each other with their eyes and their hands. Their lips were busy kissing each other's lips but not much else. This isn't to say that they avoided sexual contact or that they didn't enjoy each other sexually. They just didn't seem to

need or want to go beyond manual stimulation and humping against each other.

And their love for one another grew. They were always *extremely* careful in public. Remember, closets didn't have doors in those days. But at home, it was becoming more difficult to hide their feelings for each other from Dan's older brother, Bob and Sam's younger sister, Nancy. Both of their siblings had some suspicions, but neither felt sure enough to say anything to the boys or their respective parents.

Their ninth grade year provided more opportunities for the boys to develop as individuals socially as well. While they were still in the same home room and many of the same classes, Dan was in the band and Sam wasn't. Sam had joined up with a couple of other boys to start a singing group patterned after the Kingston Trio. Dan still had his paper route, but Sam had dropped his and was working at the corner grocery store making home deliveries. What was he driving, you ask? Nothing. He was only 14 years old. He rode his bike or walked. That's what they did in those days.

Once school started, however, the boys had fewer opportunities to spend the night with each other. But their love for one another continued to grow, and they took every opportunity to share that love. Not being able to risk any public display of affection, their time at home was precious. Every afternoon, they would each first go to his own home to find out where everybody was. If Dan's brother was going to be out for one reason or another, Sam would go to his house. If Nancy was going to be gone, they would meet at Sam's house.

Their mothers tried to accommodate them without encouraging them, ever mindful of what their love for one another could lead to. Of course, deep down, both mothers were hoping that this affair would turn out to be temporary, just a part of growing up. But they worked hard at allowing the boys to figure it out for themselves, guiding when and where they could, but not pushing one direction or the other.

On those afternoons when they *could* get together, the boys would try to be as discreet as possible. Usually they would start out in the living room or TV room, sitting close and holding hands, talking with whichever mom was present. But invariably they would end up moving to the bedroom where they could hug and kiss without embarrassing anybody. This usually ended up with them grinding their groins together, each of them stiff as a board but unable to achieve relief. They had long ago promised each other that they wouldn't go beyond fondling each other's privates from outside their slacks unless they were spending the night together. Then they would wait until it was time for showers or bed.

Sometimes they stopped early, choosing simply to lie together, exchanging breaths, sharing "sweet nothings" (that's 'terms of endearment' for you younger readers), staring into each other's eyes. At other times they weren't able to keep their hands off of each other and would end up horny and frustrated, frequently to the point of tears. But they each relied on the other to be forceful about stopping when it was necessary to do so.

Quite naturally, this would often result in hurt feelings and the exchange of testy words. After all, once a young boy's hormones have kicked into overdrive, they aren't easily turned off. Emotions are

extremely sensitive at such times. But their mothers were great at sensing the underlying nature of their disagreements and would step in to help the boys sort things out. It helped that they were aware of the boys' true relationship and could help the kids understand what was happening.

Thanksgiving was a special time this year. The two families got together for dinner on Thursday. Nancy helped get dinner ready and the table set, so the boys had to do cleanup. Dan and Sam grumbled about it a good deal, but Bob eventually calmed them down and got them to laughing. They ended up having as much fun in the kitchen as they would have had watching the Cowboys get beat on TV.

Right after lunch on Friday, the Russell's walked over to the Whittington's. Nancy and the moms had planned to join the rush of Christmas shoppers while the guys vegged out in front of the TV. Dan and Sam had trouble keeping their hands off of each other, and dad Whittington was getting uncomfortable with the way Bob was watching them. The look on Bob's face had just about convinced him he was going to have to say something when Sam suggested they go out and see what was happening in the neighborhood.

As soon as they left, Bob spoke up.

"Dad, is there something going on between those guys?"

"I don't think so, son, not anything to worry about. Why?"

"Well they just seem awfully friendly, ya know? I mean they're always touching each other and giving each other funny looks."

"Yeah, I know what you mean, Bob, but I'm sure there's nothing to be concerned about."

Bob seemed to be satisfied that his dad wasn't concerned about his brother's behavior and let the matter drop. Mr. Whittington was relieved. While he had spoken truthfully, he hadn't really answered his son's questions fully. As far as he was concerned, he wasn't concerned about his younger son's relationship, but he wasn't sure Bob would see it that way.

Sam and Dan spent all of five minutes checking out "what was happening in the neighborhood," which meant they walked the long way to Sam's house - around the block instead of across the alley. As soon as they entered the house, they locked the door and went to Sam's room. They knew they had at least two hours to themselves. Dinner was planned for six and it was only three now.

As soon as they were in the room with the door shut, Sam opened the bottom drawer of his dresser and withdrew the towel his dad had told them to keep handy. As he stood, he noticed Dan had already pulled the covers and sheet to the foot of the bed. Tossing the towel on the bed, he stepped over to where Dan was standing, waiting. Grasping each other's hands, they stood for a moment gazing into the other's eyes, reading the message of love each was sending the other.

Sam was just enough taller than his boyfriend that Dan had to tilt his head upwards a little to make

eye contact. Actually, Sam was about half a head taller. This height difference seemed perfect for the emotional relationship that had developed and was continuing to grow between them. With Dan being the smaller in overall body structure and strength, and Sam always acting as the more assertive of the two, and his friend's protector, it just seemed more natural that Dan's head rested against Sam's collar bone when they hugged.

As they gazed into each other's eyes, allowing their love to fill the room with emotional warmth, Sam gently released Dan's hands and slid them up his arms. When they came to rest on either side of Dan's face, cupping his cheeks, he leaned his head forward and downward slowly. Never breaking eye contact, Sam rested his lips against Dan's ever so gently. As usual, Dan's sudden intake of breath at this most wonderful of touches was the trigger which set Sam's boyhood to growing. And of course, Dan's soon followed suit.

As their eyes closed and the pleasure of their kiss grew, Dan slid his hands across Sam's jean-clad buttocks and up his back. Finally, with one hand between his lover's shoulder blades and the other on the back of his neck, Dan pulled Sam closer to him, their cocks pressing against one another. His lips parted and his tongue slipped between them to gently wash across those which had started this episode.

Sometimes when the boys got together, it was a wham-bam-thank-you-man moment. Grab a tool, stroke, release, clean up and go about their business.

More often, though, they waited for opportunities such as this, opportunities where there was time to spend just loving each other, time to make love not just have sex. These times were truly special for both of them. Because sexual contact and release was the result rather than the objective, it was so much better when it finally happened. The boys could easily spend the entire two hours ahead of them just hugging, kissing, rubbing their hands all over each other's bodies from head to foot, toying with their lover's treasures and not reach the ultimate culmination of the experience until the very end of the time they had available. This was what love was all about. The love each gave to the other gave meaning to an act that they could just as easily perform by themselves.

After several minutes, however, their clothes became a nuisance. Each needed the tactile response of hands touching bare flesh. Breaking their kiss, they stepped back just slightly and began unbuttoning each other's shirt. When shirts and t-shirts were on the floor, they reached for belt buckles and zippers. Following a pattern that had developed over the recent months, they each avoided touching the other's erection. This wasn't always easy to accomplish, depending on how their stiff members were situated in their briefs.

Once belts, buttons and zippers were undone, their pants dropped to the floor and were quickly discarded. Only then did they begin the ritual of each working his way towards the tent in the other's shorts. Being the shorter of the two, Dan's hands started at about the middle of Sam's thighs. He slid his hands softly up the back of his lover's legs to the elastic of his briefs, then around to the front, sliding just the first joint of his fingers under the leg band. When he got to the front, he moved his hands down the front of Sam's legs to the original starting point.

As he repeated this journey over and over again, always avoiding Sam's butt cheeks and privates, Sam was paying the same homage to his lover's frame. His hands would start on Dan's chest, slide softly down across his stomach to the waistband of his shorts, then move around to his back. Sometimes, with his palm against Dan's stomach, he would slip his fingers down the front of his shorts just a few inches and then slide his hands to the sides as though he were about to remove the offending material. But invariably, when he reached Dan's hips, he would pull his fingers out of the briefs and up his sides where they would rub his lover's back before starting their journey all over again.

When one or both could no longer stand the tension, they moved to the bed. Lying on their sides facing each other, their hands quickly moved to the other's shorts, grabbing their lover's throbbing erection through the cotton material. They spent several minutes drawing their fingers lightly along the stiffened shafts, tracing that hard ridge along the underneath side and toying with the mushroom head at the top. Testicles were not ignored either. Their hands cupped the other's scrotum and tenderly rolled the contents back and forth, sliding their palms softly over the entire genital area.

As their passion grew and the ballsacs shrunk, drawing the contents tightly against their bodies, especially Dan's which were much smaller to begin with, their hands finally moved down into each other's underwear where skin on skin made both gasp anew. It never took long to rid themselves of the last vestige of clothing when they got to this point. On this particular day, however, Dan seemed too impatient to wait. He hastily removed his own briefs and then knelt at Sam's side.

Pushing gently against his lover's chest, indicating that he wanted Sam to lie back, he grabbed the waistband of his briefs and pulled them off. He loved the way Sam's hardened penis snapped back to his belly with a slapping sound. Dropping the briefs to the floor, he moved both hands to Samuel's groin, cupping his lover's nuts with one hand and his erection with the other. His lover, however, was not to be denied the same pleasure.

"Turn around, Danny, and lay down so I can touch you, too."

"Oh, Samuel. I love you so much," Dan said as he did Sam's bidding.

The boys then began gently stroking each other's tool, marveling at the joy each could bring to the other, each wondering which joy was greater, that given or that received. As he played with his favorite tool, Dan gave voice to his joy.

"How do I love thee?" Dan quoted some famous line, giggling as he did so.

"Let me count the ways. I love your nuts, so much bigger than mine. I love your hair, so soft and furry, so much thicker than mine..."

"You don't have any," Sam interrupted, chuckling as he played with Dan's penis.

"Oh, hush up. You'll make me lose my train of thought," Danny said, laughing.

"That wouldn't be too easy, silly, seeing that it's tied to the thing in your hand, and *that* sure as heck isn't going anywhere," Sam responded, still giggling.

"Maybe not, but hush anyway. You'll spoil the moment. Now where was I? Oh yes, I love your hair, so soft and furry, so much thicker than mine. I love your penis, ditto..."

"Ditto?" Sam interrupted again.

"Yeah, ditto," Dan answered, laughing. "So much thicker than mine."

"But..." Sam started to interrupt again, but Dan cut him off.

"No buts! You'll get your chance. Now hush and let me finish. Now let's see, I love your penis, ditto, with its beautiful head so round, so full, so firmly packed." (There used to be some radio/TV commercial that used that line, cigarettes, I think.) "With its skinny little eye so tightly closed. But look! What is this I see, but a single tear leaking forth to rest upon the lids. Allow me, O lover of mine, to brush away thy tear and savor its taste upon my lips."

Where in the fuck did that line come from? Dan asked himself as he rubbed his thumb along the underneath side of his boyfriend's penis, applying pressure along the way. By doing so, he forced a larger drop of fluid to appear which he squeezed onto his thumb. As he licked his thumb clean, Sam just stared at him. *He's never done that before*, Sam thought to himself as he felt a tear of joy drip down his face.

Dan had thought his last remark would bring a chuckle from both of them, but his actions turned the moment from one of levity to one of deep, loving affection. He had just taken some small part of Samuel other than spit into his body, and the experience was not lost on either of them. Nor could either of them have explained just how deeply that experience affected them.

Feeling emotionally overwhelmed and on the verge of tears *again*, Dan fell silent and laid his head on his lover's thigh. He continued to stroke Sam's rigid boyhood slowly as he stared at the beauty that was Sam's pubic region. A few moments later, Sam felt comfortable giving voice to his thoughts. It was obvious to both, however, that what Dan had started in a joking manner, Sam would finish in all seriousness.

"How do I love thee, Danny? Let me count the ways. I love your balls, so smooth and small. I love your penis, so slender and tall. I love your butt so round and cute. I love the smell that is only you, some soap, some sweat perhaps, but oh so sweet upon the palate of my nose. I love the mouth with lips so wide that sits at the crest of this beautiful head. But what is this, I see? A drop of nectar has appeared to rest between those lips. The essence of my love springs forth calling to me, 'come close and taste my love for thee.'"

And with those words, Sam leaned forward and pressed his lips against the mouth of his lover's penis, drawing that precious fluid into himself, just as Dan had done for him.

Had either of them been able to force rational thoughts through the euphoric haze that filled their heads as well as their hearts, they would have wondered where in the world such words had come from. At 14 years of age, neither had ever shown any propensity* for such Shakespearean dialogue, and it certainly wasn't part of their every day verbiage*. (*Look them up if you have to, dictionaries are fun).

From that point on, they remained silent, reveling in the joy they were giving and receiving, enjoying the feeling of penis in hand and hand on penis. Dan was the first to reach his climax and needed no verbal skills to tell his lover what was about to happen. As his orgasm approached, his body began to quiver and then convulse. His hips began to buck uncontrollably as he twisted at the waist so that his lower body was lying flat on the bed. In the throes of his passion, his arm wouldn't work, and he stopped the rapid stroking of Sam's erection. Then his fluids burst from him to spill all over his chest, stomach and Sam's hand as Sam continued to stroke him vigorously, knowing from experience just when to stop and hold his lover gently.

As soon as his own juices had finished flowing, and before he could even begin to catch his breath, Dan renewed his pumping on Sam's rigid boyhood. He was soon rewarded by Sam's equally powerful orgasm, with similar shakes and gyrations. As Sam's seed burst forth in thin youthful ropes of semen, Dan's love just seemed to grow. It always made him feel so wonderful to bring such a powerfully wonderful feeling to his boyfriend.

They lay together for several minutes, holding onto each other's wilting boyhood, coming down from their passionate high. Eventually, Sam reached his free hand out to grab the towel and used it to clean his hand and his lover's body. Then Dan took it and returned the favor. When Sam finally looked over to the clock beside his bed, he saw that they had, in fact, used almost every minute of the two hours available to them. So they dressed, stopping frequently for more kisses, and went back to Dan's house for dinner.

Author's Note: As with any story with multiple chapters, this is a sequel and will only make sense if read in chronological order. And remember, this story is set in the late fifties and early sixties. Kids with decent family lives didn't jump into bed with each other at the drop of a hat. They waited, not because they had lower sex drives than kids today, but because society as a whole did not condone such behavior. The fact that this story deals with a same-sex relationship doesn't alter that fact.

Chapter Six

Part I - How much do you love me?

When it came time to audition for the 8th and 9th grade Christmas play, the boys decided not to try out for any of the singing parts. It was a different play than last year, but they felt they might have an unfair advantage based on comments they were still hearing about that one. They went to the choral director in private and explained their position. At first she tried to talk them out of it, but

the more they talked the more she realized how committed they were to their decision. She was disappointed but she knew there were other talented kids who could fill the roles just as well. And the boys had promised to try out for other, speaking, parts.

The play went well and school let out for the Christmas break about the 20th of December. It was a normal Christmas season for the boys and their families until the week after Christmas. And then something happened that eliminated any doubts the boys' families might have had about their relationship.

Snow had started falling during the Christmas Eve candlelight service at church. By the next day, a foot of fresh snow lay on the foot of old, hard snow and ice that had been there before. On the day after Christmas, the boys took their new sleds over to the hill overlooking the lake and spent the day with friends sledding. They were having so much fun, they hardly noticed when everyone else started to drift away for dinner. Finally, they realized it was getting dark and they needed to get home.

"Come on, Dan. One last ride down the hill!" Sam hollered as he took a long run and jumped onto his sled.

Dan stood and watched until Sam was almost out of sight in the growing darkness and then followed him on his own sled. As he neared the lake and slowed to a stop, he heard Sam calling for help.

"Help! Danny, I went too far! I'm in the lake! Help!"

Dan ran, stumbling on the icy snow that had been packed down by so many kids' feet and sleds. When he got to the water's edge, he found Sam clinging there, half in the water, half out. His heavy winter clothes were soaked and preventing him from being able to climb out by himself. And his strength was rapidly being drained from his body by the extreme cold.

Sitting down as close as he could to the water's edge and digging his heels into the packed snow, Dan grabbed Sam's wrists. Then with one mighty heave, one that would have surprised them both had they been able to think about it, he pulled back with his upper body as he pushed against the earth using all the power in his legs. Sam moved forward about a foot. Dan quickly moved back and repeated the procedure, finally pulling his friend free of the water.

By this time, Sam was starting to go into shock. Hypothermia was setting in. He was so cold he couldn't move. In fact, he could hardly speak above a whisper.

"Cold. So coooold," he said.

Dan was scared. It was dark, they were out here alone, no one lived close enough to hear if he shouted. He started to cry. *What else is new?* He thought to himself as he tried to decide what to do. He might have been crying, but he wasn't disabled by it. He immediately began rubbing his hands all over Sam's body. But the wet heavy clothes prevented him from doing any good. He could barely see Sam's face in the dark, and he was worried. Sam didn't seem to be breathing right.

Suddenly something happened that Dan would wonder about for the rest of his life. Was it hallucination caused by his fear and fatigue? Or did he have an argument with God? Whatever it was, he was convinced he heard a voice.

Let him go, Daniel. Let him come home. I'll keep him warm.

"Noooooo!" Dan screamed into the night. "You can't have him! He's mine! You can't have him!"

But what can you do, Daniel? You're so small, and he's so cold and heavy. I can make him warm. He'll be comfortable with me.

"No! I'll make him warm! I'll keep him safe! You leave him alone! He's mine!"

Dan's first thought was to strip off his heavy outer coat and spread it out on the snow to have something to lay Sam on. But then he realized that he needed to keep it on so it would stay warm. He began stripping Sam's wet clothes from his trembling body and throwing them aside. When Sam was naked except for his undershorts, even his boots and socks and long underwear were gone, Dan lifted him onto the sled. He stripped off his fur lined coat and began rubbing Sam's nearly naked body with it, trying to dry him off as much as possible as well as warm him with the friction of his rubbing. Then he quickly stripped down to his long underwear and started dressing his boyfriend. Sam was bigger than he was, so the clothes didn't fit perfectly, but they were better than the wet ones that did fit. Finally, with Dan's heavy coat zipped up to his neck, the hood pulled up over his head, Sam gained consciousness for just a moment. Without being aware of his surroundings, he whispered one short phrase.

"Feet, so cold."

Dan suddenly realized that all this time, Sam's bare feet had been exposed to the cold air. Kneeling quickly at his feet, he quickly shoved one under his t-shirt to draw warmth from his body as he grabbed the other in both hands and began stroking it rapidly up and down as though he were masturbating a giant dick with two hands. At the same time, he sucked Sam's toes into his mouth to warm them. It was like sucking on ice cubes. After a few minutes of moving his tongue back and forth across the toes and breathing hot air on the foot that all but filled his mouth, he put one of his own boots on that foot and moved to the other. He repeated his actions on that foot and then tied the laces as tight as he could around Sam's ankles. The boots didn't fit either, but they might do *some* good.

Grabbing the rope tied to the front of the sled, Dan began pulling Sam towards the street. Even with the sled it was tough. Sam was longer than the sled, so his feet drug the ground behind him, and without his boots on, Dan had little traction on the packed snow. When they got to the little three foot embankment that separated the sledding area from the street, he found it impossible to get the heavy sled up the steep incline. Abandoning the sled, he pushed and pulled Sam's body up to street level. Then he grabbed his nearest leg and the opposing arm and with what little strength he had left heaved Sam onto his shoulders in a fireman's carry that he had learned in scouts.

He hadn't counted on Sam's weight, or the effect of the cold on his own body which was now clad only in long johns, or the numbness that was starting to creep into his feet. Before he had covered twenty feet, he was walking bent over at the waist. He stumbled often, losing strength each time he had to force himself to stand with the weight of his friend on his shoulders.

Soon his feet were numb. *This isn't so bad*, he thought to himself. *At least my feet aren't cold any more.*

It seemed like forever, and in fact was almost thirty minutes, when Dan's last vestige of strength left him. He had covered only three blocks, still four blocks from home, when he collapsed in the middle of the deserted street. *I'll just lay here and rest for a minute*, he thought as he passed into unconsciousness, his best friend lying on top of him.

Who knows why Reverend Thomas, the pastor at Dan's and Sam's church, was on that street at that particular time of night. Even later, he couldn't explain why he had chosen that route home. But just minutes after Dan collapsed, the pastor slid to a stop just a few feet away. Rushing to their side, he immediately recognized them and knew they were in grave danger. He got the boys into his car as quickly as he could and rushed them to the hospital. As soon as nurses had taken over, he found a phone and called Sam's house. Nancy told him her parents were at the Whittington's. Without taking time to explain anything to Nancy, he hung up and called Dan's house.

"This is pastor Thomas. The boys are in trouble. I'm at Mercy hospital right now. You better get here right away," he told Dan's dad as calmly as he could.

"We've been worried sick!" Mr. Whittington said. "What's happened?"

"I'll explain when you get here. The doctors are with them now. Just come down right away. And be careful! The roads are terrible."

Now Dan's dad was a wonderful man, a good father. But he had some pretty strong opinions and some of those had to do with the Catholic church. And they weren't positive opinions, either. Mercy was a Catholic hospital. Almost all the nurses were nuns. The rooms were all private rooms, no wards, no semi-private rooms. None of this mattered, though, when it came to his son's life. Whittington put all his opinions and prejudices aside as he walked into the hospital a few minutes later.

Dan was in a room right next to the nurses' station, so that's where Pastor Thomas took the four parents first. As they watched the activity around Dan's bed, he explained how he had found the boys. The nurses and doctors were working to get him stabilized, putting IV's into his arm for fluids, wrapping heating blankets around him to raise his body temperature. Then pastor said something that caught Mrs. Whittington's attention.

"Say that again?" she said with a confused look on her face.

"I said I couldn't figure out what happened to Dan's clothes."

"What do you mean?" Mr. Whittington asked, now as confused as the rest of them.

"Dan was only wearing his long johns and socks when I found them."

With confused looks on their faces, the five adults left and walked quickly down to the end of the hall where another group of doctors and nurses was working on Sam.

For a second time, the parents looked down on a boy who looked close to death, tubes running every which way, monitors beeping, oxygen running to his nose through a tube. They watched silently for several minutes, each with their own thoughts until Dan's mother glanced over to a chair in the corner.

"What are Dan's clothes doing down here?" she asked.

One of the nurses turned around, a look of surprise on her face.

"We took those clothes off of *this* boy."

Part II - There is no greater love...

"Oh, sweet Jesus!" Mom Russell exclaimed as she burst into tears at the sudden realization of what had happened.

"Oh my God!" Dan's mother cried as she collapsed against his father.

Silence filled the room as tears flooded the eyes of almost everyone present. Even Pastor Thomas had trouble containing his emotions. A couple of the nuns crossed themselves as they went back to working on Sam.

After a few minutes, Dan's dad urged the others out into the hall where he conferred with them in low tones. Any onlooker would have known that he was very upset about something and was extremely agitated. The group soon came to a conclusion and stepped back into Sam's room.

"As soon as you have this boy stabilized, we want him moved in with Dan," Mr. Whittington said firmly.

"But all our rooms are private rooms," answered one of the nurses. "We don't have any semi-private rooms."

Now, Dan's dad was not known for his patience. In fact, just the opposite was true. His face got red (maybe that's where Dan's blushing came from) and a dangerously angry look came over it.

"Now you listen to me, sister," he said, barely able to control himself. "You'll get these two boys into

one room within the next 30 minutes or I'll raise so much hell you'll think the devil himself has entered your hospital!"

Fortunately, Father Reed, the local parish priest, chose just that moment to enter the room. This was his night to serve as hospital chaplain. He explained quickly that he had just come from Dan's room. He went on to say that his daughter was a classmate of the boys and he had attended the Christmas play the previous year. He had been quite moved by the evening performance. In quiet tones, he ushered the parents from the room and reassured them. Then he went off to make the necessary arrangements. It was rumored later that he had actually called the bishop at home and explained the situation in order to get the hospital to make the requested adjustments.

With the two beds in one room, there was barely enough room for the parents to sit down. In fact, two sat on the foot of the beds while two sat in chairs. They sat in vigil throughout the remainder of that night as the boys struggled with the effects of their ordeal. Neither had yet regained consciousness.

Mom Whittington frequently turned to the Bible when she was troubled and needed strength. This time, the others had asked her to read aloud. She was reading from the new testament, the 15th chapter of John. As she read the 13th verse, *greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends* Dan sat straight up in bed, his eyes wide open but unseeing, glassy, unfocused. He screamed.

"Nooooo! You can't have him! He's mine!" In his unconscious state, he was reliving his earlier experience.

As his mother helped him to lay back down, soothing his brow, Mom Russell by his side, he continued to whimper, tears streaming down his face. Over and over he repeated himself, his voice finally dying off in whispers.

"You can't have him. Take me instead. Take me instead. Take me.....instead."

As the mothers sat on Dan's bed, staring through their tears at this precious child, dad Russell spoke quietly.

"Look here, quick. I think everything's going to be alright."

The other three parents joined him at Sam's bedside. There was no significant change in Sam's expression except for the tears that were now leaking from the outside corners of his eyes and dripping down his cheek onto his pillow.

As soon as the doctors had made their appearance the next morning, the parents went home to eat breakfast, shower, and tell Bob and Nancy a little of what had happened. The boys hadn't awakened yet, but their vital signs were good, and the doctors were confident that they were out of danger.

Shortly after everyone had left, Dan woke up. As he lay there in the stupor that frequently

accompanies one coming out of a deep sleep, he looked around the room. Gradually things started to make sense and the events of the previous evening came rushing in on him. With a gasp and a start, he turned to his side and saw Sam in the bed next to his. Being careful not to dislodge the needle in the back of his hand, Dan slipped out of his bed.

As he stood leaning against the bed, feeling extremely weak, he noticed his gown. It was one of those standard hospital things that leave none of one's backside to the imagination. Reaching back to scratch his butt, he confirmed that he was, indeed, naked underneath it. *Hhhmmm* he mused to himself.

He took the two steps necessary to reach Sam's bed, moved some tubes carefully out of the way, lifted the covers and slipped into bed with his boyfriend. Cuddling up close, he laid one leg over Sam's and his arm across Sam's chest, his head resting next to Sam's on the pillow, his lips practically touching Sam's ear. Just before he dropped off to sleep, he whispered, "I love you, Samuel."

The four parents arrived back at the room just a few minutes later and found the boys still in this position. This time there was a wide grin on Sam's face, even though he was still asleep.

A few minutes after that, one of the nurses came into the room. Her reaction was immediate.

"We can't have this!" she hissed. "Get those boys back into separate beds this instant!"

Remarkably enough, Dan's dad maintained some composure. He stood, and taking the nurse by the elbow, guided her from the room. Once outside, he let her know just exactly how things were going to be.

"Now look here, sister," he began, trying hard to keep cool, "I don't know what you're thinking. In fact, I don't *care* what you're thinking. I'll tell you straight up. Those boys have known each other for years. They're more like brothers than friends. There's nothing wrong with them sharing one bed. They do it at home all the time. I'm sure they'll both recover a lot faster if they can draw upon each other's strength. You are a Christian woman, a nun, and a nurse. Now are you going to behave as any one of those three callings would dictate, or are you going to treat these boys in a way that will totally eliminate what little respect I have for the Catholic church?!"

The nurse looked at him briefly and saw the pain in his eyes.

"You're right, of course, Mr. Whittington. Those boys are both children of God, and it's not my place to pass judgement. Please allow me to apologize for jumping to conclusions and please forgive my outburst. They can share the same bed if they want, provided it doesn't interfere with their care."

Dad Whittington was so shocked by her response he was left speechless. Taking him by the hand, the nurse led him back into the room where she made the same apology to the others. Then she tended to the boys, checking their vital signs and all that other stuff that nurses do.

Part III - Some closets have no ceilings

The boys awoke just as she left the room. This time, recognition of their situation came quickly. Sam noticed how Dan was lying practically on top of him, and Dan felt Sam's arms wrap themselves around him as much as possible. They kissed, a long, slow kiss filled with love, but void of passionate physical responses. They looked up to see their parents gathered around the bed. Which face turned the deeper shade of red? No one could say.

"Uh... sorry." They said in unison.

"That's OK boys," dad Russell said. "After what you guys have been through, I'd say that was the proper thing to do."

The six of them spent the rest of the morning talking in general terms about what had happened and what the plans were for the afternoon. The parents had decided at breakfast to avoid asking Dan for any details until they got home, preferring to let a few hours pass before having him relive his experience. Besides, they wanted Bob and Nancy to hear them and didn't see any point in having Dan explain it twice. The nurse had explained that the boys weren't to be released until after the doctors had examined them following lunch. When lunch arrived, Dan had to get back into his own bed since there just wasn't room enough for two bed trays at one bed. The parents went down to the cafeteria while the boys ate. The boys were ravenous and wolfed down there food quickly. As soon as they were finished, Dan climbed back into Sam's bed.

"God, Danny, I was so cold last night I bet my pecker froze off and won't even work any more," Sam said giggling.

Dan reached over and grasped Sam's boyhood through the thin gown. As his favorite toy rose quickly to life, Dan chuckled.

"Well, it seems to work OK to me."

Sam slid his hand under Dan's gown and grasped his slender penis lovingly. It too sprang to life without hesitation.

"I'm glad to see that yours is OK, too. I can hardly wait til we get home."

They released each other and Dan laid his head on Sam's chest, holding him around the waist, Sam's arms wrapped around his back and shoulders.

"I love you, Samuel."

"I love you, too, Danny. You saved my life last night. And all this time I thought I was going to be *your* protector."

"We protect each other, Samuel. You know that."

"Yeah, I do."

They rested in that position until their parents returned with the doctor. Soon thereafter, the boys were released. They dressed in clean clothes their mothers had brought and everyone went home. They drove straight to Sam's house where Bob and Nancy were waiting. Their parents had called them during lunch and asked them to be waiting. It was time they each had a family discussion, and they might as well have it together.

As soon as they arrived at Sam's house, dad Whittington called home and asked Bob to join them. The boys went off to the bedroom to change into pajamas and then returned to snuggle down under a comforter at opposite ends of the couch. The parents grabbed the love seat and easy chairs, leaving bean bag chairs for Bob and Nancy. By the time soft drinks and coffee were ready, Bob had arrived and had claimed his seat.

"Now, Dan, tell us exactly what happened from start to finish. We all want to hear every detail," his mother said.

"And don't leave anything out, son," Mr. Whittington added with a voice filled with love and concern. "All we have so far is bits and pieces and we'd really like to hear everything."

So Dan told them what had happened, every detail. Even Sam was absorbed by the story, for he had been unconscious during most of the event and didn't know any more than the rest of them. The further Dan got into the story, the more frayed his emotions became. Reliving the near loss of the person he now knew he loved most in all the world drew those emotions ever and ever closer to the surface.

He explained about Sam's sled going into the lake, and the trouble he had pulling him out of the water. He described the difficulty he had in untying the cold, wet shoelaces with fingers that were just as cold. When he told about stripping Sam's clothes off of him, Sam blushed and hid his eyes for a moment, something that did not escape Bob's attention. When he told of his apparent encounter with God, tears rolled down his mother's face, and his father's chest swelled with pride.

By the time he got to the part about sucking Sam's toes to try to warm them up, his tears were so close to boiling over that Bob's sudden reaction was all it took to open the flood gates.

"You sucked his toes?!" Bob exclaimed incredulously.

Dan burst into tears as he cried, "What else was I going to do?! His feet were freezing!" And hiding his face from the others, he buried his head against his knees that were drawn up to his chest and sobbed, finally releasing some of the emotion that had been building inside him.

Mr. Whittington was just about to lay into Bob for his outburst when his older son struggled out of his chair and went over to kneel at his brother's side.

"Dan... Dan! Look at me! Please!" he said forcefully, but softly, grabbing Dan's upper arms and

twisting him to face him.

As Dan looked up with tears pouring down his face, Bob said to him, "I didn't mean that to hurt you, Dan. I was just so amazed that anyone would do something like that. You make me so proud! I wish I had your courage."

The rest of the families just sat in silence as Bob hugged his younger brother, his own tears falling onto Dan's shoulders. Nerves were still frayed and emotions running close to the surface as Sam sat there with a look of utter confusion on his face. Finally, as Bob moved back to his chair, Sam voiced a series of questions.

"You really took off all my clothes right out there on the snow, left me buck naked?"

"Nooo. I left your underpants on."

"And then you took your clothes off and put 'em on me?"

"Yeah..."

"Even your boots?"

"Yeah..."

"And tried to carry me home on your back? In just your socks and long underwear?"

"Yeah...., but I got tired and fell down a lot, then the last time I couldn't get back up."

By this time, Dan had tears in his eyes again, feeling bad that he hadn't been able to get Sam home.

"And when I was bare-footed, you put my foot under your t-shirt? Wasn't it cold?"

At this, Dan hesitated.

"I don't know. I couldn't feel it," he said, speaking barely above a whisper.

Dan's mother gasped at the realization that at that point her son's body had already started to grow numb from the cold.

Sam was silent for a minute, studying Dan's face with a look of confusion, mixed with awe, and something else - love.

"How did you know I don't have athlete's foot or something?" he asked in a voice that was little more than a whisper.

The look on Dan's face said as much as his words, a look of incredulity, a look that said *what a silly*

question. Without hesitating, he answered.

"I didn't. What difference would it have made anyway?"

As the others sat in shocked silence, Sam burst into tears. Everything his boyfriend had done for him the night before paled in comparison to how innocently he had just answered that question. Sam lurched from under the blank and fell upon his boyfriend, crying uncontrollably.

"Oh, Danny, I love you so much!"

Bob looked at his parents as Nancy looked at hers. The answer to their mutual unspoken question was the same - a brief nod of the head. Their reaction was a testimony to the way they had been raised. They each got up from their bean bag chairs, crawled across the floor and knelt beside the couch where they wrapped their arms around their brothers as best they could and hugged them until they all stopped crying.

Then it was the parents' turn to wrap both boys in their arms, one at a time, and the crying started all over again, tears of pride, love and wonder from the parents and tears of love and emotional fatigue from Dan and Sam.

Eventually everyone settled down and regained control of their emotions. The moms went to the kitchen to prepare a lunch of sandwiches and chips, while the dads and the kids started channel surfing. Once in awhile, Dan would hear a brief snippet of the conversation in the kitchen, something about newspapers and TV and reporters. When they came back to the TV room with lunch, he asked them what they had been talking about, fearing the answer. His mom spoke for the two women.

"Well, Danny, (remember only his mother and Samuel called him by that name) we were just talking about all the publicity this is bound to attract and how to deal with it. You're going to be quite the celebrity when your story hits the media. It could get rather hectic around here."

There was a note of pride in mom Whittington's voice and looks of prideful anticipation on just about every face except Dan's.

"Awe, come on you guys! Please don't tell anybody. That would be so embarrassing. Besides, I didn't do anything so special. I mean, Samuel would have done the same thing for me."

Sam looked at his boyfriend with mixed emotions. He knew how painfully shy Dan could be in front of just about anybody but his closest friends, but he wanted to shout from the rooftops the story of how Danny had saved his life.

"Aw, Danny, can't we tell *somebody*? I mean, you *saved my life* for crying out loud. You're the best show-and-tell I've had since the squashed frog I took to second grade!" he added with a laugh, trying to make Dan feel better about it.

Everyone laughed except Dan who still had a distraught look on his face as his gaze traveled around the room. His sandwich lay untouched on his plate, in spite of how hungry he was.

Finally, his dad realized how upsetting this was for his son and took charge.

"I'm sorry, folks, but Dan's feelings have to take precedence here. After all, he's the hero, whether he wants to be or not, and he deserves something from us in return. If silence is what he wants, silence is what he gets."

When the others finally nodded their heads in agreement, his dad gave Dan a look filled with pride and admiration, but most importantly, love. Then he added a warning.

"But Dan, you must realize that none of us thought about this at the hospital. When we left this morning, we didn't ask the hospital personnel to keep quiet about it. It might have been too late by then anyway. There's no way to know whether one of the nurses, doctors or other staff might have said something. It was certainly obvious in the cafeteria that you boys were the subject of conversation at the other tables. So even though we all agree not to say anything, you probably should expect some attention. And you can't ask us not to answer questions or talk about it if somebody else spills the beans. Right?"

The idea of notoriety was starting to have an impact on the kid. *Maybe it wouldn't be so bad after all*, he thought to himself. But he could never have imagined the form that notoriety was to take or what it would mean for Sam and him.

"OK, dad. But only if somebody else says something first, OK?"

Everyone voiced their agreement as Sam slid over to sit shoulder to shoulder with his first love, no longer concerned about keeping their relationship secret from any family member. As they ate their sandwiches and watched TV, they were constantly turning to look at each other, or leaning into each other, touching their heads together, giggling and smirking with unbridled love. How wonderful it was to have the freedom to express their love for each other, at home at least. Even their parents and siblings enjoyed the freedom the boys now had to be themselves.

Yes, closets without doors keep things inside, but those without ceilings at least let others in.

.... to be continued

Please send comments to me at micrometer69@hotmail.com Writers thrive on feedback. I hope this story helps someone (actually, a lot of someones).

P.S. - I cried nine years ago when I wrote it, and I cried today as I re-read it. Maybe you did too. Love can do that to a person.