

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 Three

Part I - After the "fight"

The boys slept late the next morning which gave the Whittington's time to call the Russell's and tell them about what they had seen as they left their son's room the night before. The four adults weren't overly concerned, but they agreed that Dan and Sam should spend Saturday night at Sam's house which would give the Russell's an opportunity to observe the boys and reach their own conclusions.

When they awoke, Dan had a splitting headache, most definitely a result of cracking his head on the step at school. When Sam saw the pain in his friend's eyes, he did what he always did when his mother had a migraine. He started kissing Dan's eyes, his temples, the socket where his nose sloped down into the corner of his eye. His lips moved softly from one spot to another numerous times before Dan rolled onto his back and pursed his lips in a silent invitation.

Closing his eyes, Sam moved his lips gently onto Dan's and the two of them repeated the experience they'd had in the middle of the night. As their lips slid gently back and forth, probing new-found territory, getting to know each other more intimately, newly awakened sensory receptors kicked in. Previously unknown messages began to flow from lips to brain and back to lips (and to other parts of their bodies). As their heartbeats quickened, so did their breathing, and as their mouths opened against one another to get more air, they began to taste each other's spit. Then, without either of them understanding why, their tongues insisted on becoming involved.

Maybe it was just the natural attempt to wet one's lips, maybe it was a subconscious response to something they had heard about kissing, or maybe it was an unbidden reaction to seeing couples kissing in movies. Whatever the cause, Dan's tongue moved between his parted lips. When it touched Sam's lips, there was something akin to an electrical shock that passed between them. His tongue darted back into his mouth like a frightened animal seeking refuge in a cave. The boys spontaneously pulled away from each other, and each looked deeply into the other's eyes. They both liked what they saw and moved back together. As their lips touched, Sam's tongue slipped out to lightly caress Danny's lips. His friend gasped for breath as this soft wet thing washed lengthwise across his lips. Dan felt his heart race even faster and hugged Sam more firmly to himself as those newly awakened sensors began shooting messages back and forth faster than anything he had ever experienced before.

Then Dan's tongue pushed Sam's out of the way and began its own back and forth motion on Sam's

lips, giving Sam the same heightened awareness of life's truest joy - love. As their kiss continued, their lips becoming wetter as their tongues began a duel of affection, their breathing became harsher and more ragged. They began to moan and whimper as these new sensations increased at breakneck speed, sending blood racing into their penises until they almost hurt. Their nuts swelled and contracted without them even being aware of it, and their hormones almost stole control of their actions and thoughts, to say nothing of other basic bodily functions.

Eventually, however, Dan's inner self gained enough control to remind him of where they were and how little privacy they really had. The noise they were making finally registered on his overworked brain, and he pushed gently on Sam's chest until Sam responded by moving away and collapsing on his back. The two of them lay there gasping for air, trying to make sense of what had just happened. Each was sure the other could hear his heart beating. The skin on their faces actually seemed to tingle as though a shot of novocaine was just wearing off. Their nipples were hard, and the skin on their chests and arms seemed more sensitive than usual. Their hearts raced and their breathing was labored as though they had just run a foot race.

In fact, their upper bodies had become so involved in this, their second kiss, that they were *almost* unaware of their lower bodies. But eventually, as things upstairs finally returned to some semblance of normalcy, the downstairs regions began to make themselves known. Each looked down at the tent in his briefs with a sense of joy and satisfaction that seemed somehow different from before. Then they looked at each other's tent and smiled. Dan rolled to his side and slipped his hand under the waistband of Sam's shorts and onto his smooth but throbbing erection.

"I love you, Samuel."

Turning towards his boyfriend and sliding his hand into Dan's shorts to grip his throbbing tool, Sam replied.

"I love you, too Danny. But we better quit before we get started. You know there's no privacy here, and besides, I gotta pee."

Dan leaned over and gave Sam a quick kiss on his chest as he squeezed the hardon in his hand. Then he jumped out of bed.

"Race ya to the John!" he said in a loud whisper.

The boys ran around the corner into the only bathroom in the house, shut the door and dropped their shorts to the floor. Their erections stood out in front of them, throbbing and proud. They grabbed each other's cock and pointed it towards the commode, but had to wait until they subsided enough to release the pee that filled their bladders. The fact that they were holding each other's pricks made the wait longer than normal, of course.

Part II - A Father's love

After breakfast, the boys sat around in their undershorts watching cartoons on TV. The fact that they

were comfortable dressed this way was a sign of the closeness the boys felt with each other's parents. Their newly expressed love for each other didn't mean they weren't careful outside the bedroom, but the Whittington's still thought yesterday's events had somehow added a new dimension to the boys' relationship. Perhaps it was merely the fact that the boys seemed to prefer staying in their undershorts. Although everyone *was* comfortable with it, this wasn't the way the boys normally dressed.

After lunch, the kids walked across the alley to Sam's house. Dan's mom and dad had used their monthly canasta game with neighbors as an excuse to suggest that Sam should go home. It was easy for them to say yes when he asked if Dan could go with him and spend the night.

Now that the boys had experienced their first kisses and expressed their mutual love for each other, they were even closer than before. Although it wasn't obvious to *them*, their behavior did not go unnoticed by the Russell's who had been forewarned by the Whittington's. Actually, the advance notice probably would not have been necessary. The boys were so unaware of the subtle changes in the way they touched each other and looked at each other, they made no attempt to hide anything.

This was the age of *television*, black and white, of course, but TV nonetheless. Computers hadn't been invented yet, so *The Net* was no place to go. And TV's belonged to families, so they were quite naturally in the family room. Ergo, the first place the boys went when they got to Sam's house was the family room to watch TV. Dan wasn't supposed to do much, so going outside wasn't much of an option. Besides, they both liked to watch sports on TV, even though Dan didn't like to play any of them.

As they sat on the couch watching some diving competition, one kept turning his head to look at the other. You know, *that* look. The look that says, *I can't believe you're mine, can I keep you?* At first the one being gazed upon would try to pretend that he didn't notice. But after each of them found himself trying to play that game for about the third time, they simultaneously broke into a giggle fit.

As they giggled and shoved each other, they kept teasing one another about staring. They tried to whisper but weren't very effective at it, especially considering the fact that Sam's mom and dad were standing behind them in the doorway to the kitchen, silently watching what was going on.

"What're you staring at me for?"

"I wasn't staring, you were staring."

"No I wasn't, you were. And what was that funny look you were giving me?"

"I wasn't giving you a funny look. You look funny!"

"I'll show you who looks funny!"

And the scuffle began. The Russell's didn't quite know how to react, laugh or cry. It was pretty obvious that Sam's and Dan's feelings for each other had advanced to a new plane, and they

acknowledged this fact with mixed emotions. They were really happy that the boys seemed so happy themselves, but they were admittedly disturbed by thoughts of where this new-found joy might lead them.

Before too long, Dan seemed to tire. It was obvious, too, that his head had started to hurt again. The Russell's watched quietly from their vantage point as Dan laid his head in Sam's lap, facing outward. While they couldn't see that his hand was between his head and Sam's groin, they *could* see Sam's hand. It was gently stroking Dan's hair and cheek just as he had the night before at the Whittington's.

Dan had slipped his hand under his head with the thought of groping his boyfriend. But Sam's soft stroking of his hair and cheeks was so soothing, he soon removed his hand to rest on Sam's leg just above the knee and fell asleep. Sam's dad moved quietly into the room and sat in his favorite chair. From this position, he could watch TV or Sam without having to move his head much at all. Soon he realized that he needn't be concerned about where he looked. Sam seemed oblivious to his presence in the room, his gaze fastened unwaveringly upon the small head in his lap.

Mr. Russell felt his own emotions coming to the surface as he watched. The way his son was looking at Dan was so moving, he couldn't help but love them both. He seldom saw that look in anyone other than Sam's mother, and it was a look to be cherished. He felt tears spring to his eyes as he realized his son was crying gently. Sam always seemed to be able to control his emotions so well, that even now the only evidence was in the tears that from time to time dropped from his chin to the face he was stroking. Once in awhile he would reach up with his free hand and wipe his eyes, but even then, he didn't seem concerned that someone might be watching.

After several minutes of this, Sam's dad got up from his chair and knelt at his son's feet. As Sam looked at him without shame, fear or embarrassment, he made his decision. There was no way he couldn't love this boy and his friend, regardless of where their love for each other might take them.

"You OK, Sam?" he whispered. His own tears prevented more than that.

"Yeah, dad. He's so cute, isn't he?"

"Yes, son, he is."

"And he's so gentle, and kind, and funny. He'd never hurt anyone. Why do the bullies have to pick on him?"

"That's what bullies do, son. They pick on those who can't or won't fight back. That way they can't get hurt themselves."

"I told his mom and dad I was really scared yesterday. After I stomped on that guy, I just felt drained. I felt like I was going to collapse. Why is that?"

"Well, son, when you saw what had happened to Dan, the adrenalin shot through you like a wildfire. But while that sudden rush can give you courage and strength you might not normally have, it

generally leaves just as fast as it comes. And when that happens, you're left feeling weaker than normal. It's an emotional high that doesn't often last very long."

"I guess we were lucky Big Bad John was there. And it was so neat the way the football team backed him up. Hank said some really nice things about Danny and me."

"Yes, I heard all about that from Dan's dad. It sounds like you boys have a pretty good reputation at school. I hope you don't ever do anything that might cause you to lose that."

Sam's tears had dried up as soon as he had started talking with his dad, but suddenly they sprang to life again.

"I told the Whittington's that I love him, dad."

"I know, Sam. They told me."

"We never used that word til yesterday. I'm not sure I even know what it means, outside of family, I mean. But he said it and I said it, and we meant what we said. Am I making any sense?"

"Well, actually, yes and no," his dad answered with a short chuckle.

"Your words themselves don't seem to make much sense, but I do get a clear understanding of what you're trying to say. Let's talk some more later when Dan's awake, OK?"

"Yeah, I'll ask Danny when he wakes up."

"Sam?"

"Yeah, dad?"

"You know, your mom and I have noticed for some time now that you only refer to him as Danny occasionally."

"Yeah?"

"Yep. And he only refers to you as Samuel at special times, too, huh?"

"Yeah."

"Well, I guess I know what those special times are, now, don't I, son."

"Yeah, dad. Thanks for being so understanding. Is mom OK with this?"

"Yes, Sam, your mom and I love you dearly, and we're both Ok with this. I think Dan's mom and dad will be, too. But his dad may take a little longer to show it."

"I love you, dad."

"I love you, too, son."

Part III - Are we queer?

As Mr. Russell stood up to leave, Dan rolled to his other side, his nose rubbing against the zipper of Sam's pants. When Sam looked down, he saw tears flowing from his boyfriend's eyes.

"What's the matter, Danny? Have you been awake long?" he whispered.

"Yeah, I guess I woke up when your dad came over."

"So why are *you* crying?"

"Because you are."

"But I'm not, any more."

"But you *were*. And you said some pretty special things. I didn't realize how scared you were yesterday, and yet you protected me anyway."

"Well, like I told dad, I love you, Danny. I'm not going to let *anybody* hurt you and get away with it."

The boys were silent for awhile as Danny gained control of his emotions. This love business was hard to deal with at this age.

"Samuel?"

"Yeah, Danny?"

"Could we go to your room for awhile, so we don't have to whisper?"

"Sure. You go ahead, I'll get us a coke."

"Get me some aspirin, too, OK?"

"Sure."

Just as Dan was starting to sit up, Sam leaned down and kissed his cheek. As he moved away, their lips met only for an instant, yet they each felt that electrical charge that left the skin around the mouths and cheeks tingling.

When the boys got to Sam's room, they dug out Sam's baseball card collection and began going

through it. They were both avid collectors and enjoyed reviewing their inventories and sharing comments about how they felt about the different players. As close as the boys were, they didn't always agree when it came to which cards were the most valuable and which players were the best. It was a friendly rivalry, however, that usually ended up in some form of wrestling match. Today, however, with Dan's near concussion the day before and his headache today, they avoided the wrestling.

Lying on the floor as they were, side by side, touching from shoulder to ankle, their affection for one another seemed to flow back and forth between them. Once in awhile, Dan would lean down and kiss Sam's arm, leaving little wet trails from wrist to elbow. Then Sam would turn his head and nibble on Dan's ear, running his tongue around all the ridges and valleys.

When this had gone on for 30 minutes or so, Dan moved around to where he was facing Sam, both of them breathing heavily. As Dan ground his hardon into the carpet beneath him, he noticed Sam doing the same thing. Neither of them spoke for several minutes. They just looked at each other, their eyes moving slowly over the other's face as if trying to memorize it's details. Dan's look was one of almost adoration; Sam's was one of loving affection.

"Why do you think you love me, Samuel?"

"I don't think it, I know it."

"So, why?"

"I don't really know, for sure. I mean it isn't like I suddenly decided to love you. I think I've probably loved you all my life, it's just different now than it used to be. I mean, you're cute, and funny, and you're always doing nice things for people, especially for me. And you're smaller than me even if you are five months older, and I like being able to protect you. I mean, it's not like you're weak, 'cause you aren't. You're strong in lots of ways. But I'm stronger than you physically, so that lets me do something for you that you can't always do for yourself. You know what I mean?"

"Yeah, I think so. Sounds kinda deep to me," Dan answered with a giggle.

"So why do you think you love me, Danny?"

"I don't think it, I know it."

"Alright, copy cat. So, why?"

"Because you're strong where I'm weak. You've always been there for me when I needed support. You never make fun of me when I cry. You never make fun of my skinny body or my little dick. You're kind and always stick up for the smaller kids. And I guess I've always loved you, too. I just didn't want to say that word 'cause it's scary."

"What do you mean, scary?"

"Well, we're both guys. And guys aren't supposed to love each other that way."

At that point, Dan's tears started to flow again.

Sam stood up and helped Dan up also. Then they hugged each other ... for a long, long time. Dan rested his head on Sam's chest, with Sam's chin resting against the back of his head, their hands moving softly, gently up and down the other's back. After several minutes, Sam suggested they lay down. Glancing at the clock, he noticed it was about 3:30 in the afternoon, plenty of time for cuddling before dinner.

They lay there facing each other, their arms still wrapped around the other's body, breathing in each other's boyhood aroma, each apparently lost in his own thoughts. Just when Sam thought Dan had fallen asleep again, his boyfriend spoke. This time he didn't need to whisper.

"Samuel?"

"Yeah, Danny?"

"Are we queers?"

"Does it matter?"

"I don't know. Maybe not to me, but it must matter to mom and dad. Doesn't it matter to you?"

"Danny, I love you. If loving you means I'm queer, then I guess I am. I can't help that, and I'm not going to stop loving you or even try to just so I can say I'm not queer. That doesn't mean either of us needs to go out and tell anybody else. It's just between us."

"I don't think so. I think you're dad already knows."

"What do you mean?" Sam had forgotten that Danny had heard his conversation with his dad.

"Well, when you told him you loved me, you asked if he was OK with that. And he said yes. Doesn't that say something?"

"Maybe, maybe not. What else?"

"Well, he said something about us not doing anything to ruin our reputation at school. Do you think he was thinking about us being queer?"

"Maybe, but even if he was thinking that, he said he and mom were OK with it. And he said *your* mom and dad were OK with it, too. So the only people that really matter are all OK with it, right?"

"Yeah, I guess. But I didn't want to be a queer."

"Well, maybe we are and maybe we aren't. I mean we haven't done any sex stuff except beat each other off, and lots of guys do that together. I've heard 'em talk about it at school."

Dan was quiet for a few minutes and then spoke again.

"Samuel?"

"Yeah, Danny?"

"What do you think about when you beat off at home?"

"Where did *that* question come from?" Sam asked with a startled expression.

"Outta nowhere," Dan answered with a giggle. "Now answer the question."

"Well... uhh.. I don't know. Nothin' in particular, I guess. What do *you* think about?"

"Come on, Samuel. I know you think about something. You don't just play with it. Do you think about a girl's boobs, or touching her pussy, or what?"

For some reason, Sam was embarrassed. He had never thought he would have to tell anybody what he thought about when he masturbated, especially not Dan. He remained silent.

"Come on, Samuel. If you tell me, I'll tell you."

"Tell me first."

"No fair, I asked first."

"But that's a really personal question. You asked first, so you gotta tell first."

"What's so personal, for cryin' out loud. You know about the chicken pox scar on my dick! What's more personal than that!?"

Sam giggled at what Dan had said and the tone of his voice.

"Yeah, and a pretty dick it is, too!"

"Yuck! You said pretty was for girls."

"Ok, cute, then. But you still gotta tell me first."

Dan hadn't planned on Sam being so bashful about this and certainly hadn't planned on being the first to disclose his secret. But he realized Sam wasn't going to budge on this topic, so he finally spoke.

"I think about you, Samuel. I think about the way you're holding me now. I think about your face, about how you're all the time rubbing my hair or stroking my cheeks. I think about your penis and balls and how *cute* they are. I think about playing with you and you playing with me. That's usually when I climax, when I'm thinking about bringing you off with my hand."

Sam was silent for a few minutes.

"Wow, me too."

Being the age they were, this brief conversation was all it took to bring their boyhoods to bold erections. As his desires began to build down below, Dan leaned back and tilted his head up to look at his boyfriend.

"Kiss me Samuel?" he asked quietly, a look of absolute love in his eyes.

For once, it was Sam who teared up. The look of love in Dan's eyes and the way he asked to be kissed overwhelmed his emotions. Without verbal response, he leaned forward and began kissing Dan all over his face. Starting at his hairline, he moved across Dan's forehead, then paused at each eye, then moved down the side of his nose, stopping to gently rest his lips against Danny's.

Who knew which tongue started dancing first. Neither was keeping track. With their breathing rapidly turning into panting, their arms tightened around each other and their hips began to move against each other, grinding their hardons one against the other. They hugged, they cried gently, they traded spit, each tongue dancing against the other, trading places in each other's mouth, washing teeth, licking gums and palate and inside cheeks. Soon their moans were escaping into the room unbidden and unheard by themselves.

As their arousal grew, their hands began to move. Dan's moved first. He wanted Sam so much. His love for his boyfriend seemed about to burst from his chest, threatening to overload his heart like too much air in a balloon. His free hand, the one Sam *wasn't* lying on, moved down Sam's side, across his butt, down his thigh and back up to his crotch. There, it grabbed the object of his desire, gently squeezing the prize which was throbbing so hard Dan could feel it.

Even as Dan was working to get Sam's pants unzipped and unbuttoned, Sam's hand made its way down to Dan's crotch, following the same pattern his friend had used. His was the easier task, though, since Dan was wearing shorts with just an elastic waistband. Before Dan had Sam's zipper pulled down all the way, Sam had slipped his hand under the waistband of Dan's shorts and grabbed his erection through his undershorts.

Immediately, Dan's hand found its way onto Sam's cotton covered penis and balls. The mutual moment of touching and being touched almost brought them both to a climax, and their groan of excitement was louder than they would have wanted. They hadn't worried about Nancy, because she was spending the weekend with one of her friends. But Sam's dad had, at that precise moment, been walking past Sam's room and heard them. Guessing what was going on, he still couldn't help himself. He stopped to listen, telling himself he wasn't spying, just checking on the boys, confirming

his suspicions. And confirm them, he did.

"Oh, God, Samuel. That feels so good!"

"Danny, your penis feels so hot in my hand, but you're going to make me cum too fast. Let's get out of these clothes."

"What about your folks?"

"I think they went out, but we need to be quiet, just in case."

The boys tore at each other's clothing until they were down to their shorts. Then Sam made Dan get up and stand in front of him.

"Why do I have to stand here? I'm about to lose it here."

"That's quite a tent you're making in your shorts, bud," Sam said with a grin. And he leaned forward and placed a kiss right on the head of Dan's cotton clad dick.

At that point, Mr. Russell had heard enough and moved on down the hall. He hoped he would still have an opportunity to talk to the boys before the weekend was over.

As Sam's dad walked away, Dan almost collapsed from the sexual rush that accompanied the visual pleasure of seeing Sam kiss him in that most private of places. The only thing which kept him standing was Sam's hands grabbing the backs of his thighs. The sudden buckling of Dan's knees caused Sam to grab his thighs quickly, resulting in a pull towards him as well as upward. Suddenly Sam found his face buried in Dan's crotch, not just lightly kissing his penis.

The aroma which filled his nostrils was more powerful than Sam had ever encountered, most likely from the combined affect of the physical and the emotional. Here he was, not even accustomed to kissing his boyfriend on the lips, and suddenly he was practically smothered by a part of Dan's body he had only looked at and fingered. The emotional impact of the moment was truly overwhelming, and he himself almost swooned.

Neither of the boys seemed able to react to the sensations that washed over them. Dan just stayed as he was, barely standing, leaning against Sam and the bed, his hands on Sam's head for support. Sam just sat there intoxicated by Dan's musky youthful aroma, yet barely breathing, his hands moving slowly up to cup Dan's little bubble butt and pull his groin more tightly against his face.

When they had finally regained some control of their senses, Dan pushed back gently on Sam's head and looked down, even as Sam looked up. Their facial expressions mirrored one another. Any onlooker would have envied the rapturous look of love that made each face seem to shine.

"Oh my god, Samuel. What was that all about? I could hardly stand, I felt so weak."

"I don't know, Danny. I wasn't really thinking of what I was doing, just wanted to give you a little peck on your pecker. Then I just lost it. It felt like you were going to fall, so I grabbed you. Then everything just went haywire. I may be having a heart attack here."

"Did I cum?"

"I don't think so. Let me look."

And with that, Sam finished what he started out to do. Slipping his fingers into the waistband of Dan's J C Penney briefs, he eased them down off his butt and over that gorgeous tool of his, the one that was sticking straight out at Sam's face. Sam was tempted to kiss it again but let it pass.

"As hard as you still are, Danny, I don't think you came yet."

"Yeah, I guess you're right, Samuel. But boy it sure felt good. Now it's my turn."

Dan sat down and made Sam get up and stand in front of him. With Sam's hands resting on his shoulders, Dan reached out and softly stroked the length of his friend's erection through his underpants. The palm of his hand rubbed over Sam's ballsac as his fingers traced the ridge on the bottom of Sam's dick. For a moment, they each thought Dan was going to copy Sam's action from just moments before. But a sudden inspiration caused Dan to move his head back a little and slide his hands up Sam's thighs, across his privates to grasp the waistband of his Hanes briefs.

When he had removed Sam's undershorts and let them fall to the floor, Dan moved his hands back up to grasp his friend's hard instrument with one and his soft hairless scrotum with the other. As he played, he studied his friend's pubic area lovingly. All of a sudden, he looked up at Sam with a startled expression.

"What?" Sam said, looking down.

"You've got some hairs coming in down here!" Dan said with a mixture of respect and envy.

He moved his head closer as if to get a better look and surprised Sam with a kiss right on the head of his penis.

"Omigod, Danny!"

"What?"

"You just kissed my dick!"

"You want to keep your voice down a little, or shall we just call your mom and dad in here so you don't have to yell?"

Sam turned beet red when he realized how loud he had spoken.

"Besides, you kissed mine!" Dan said in a whisper.

"Yeah, but you still had your shorts on."

"So? Your penis doesn't scare me. I mean, we've already traded spit, and *that* sure wasn't bad."

"Well, I'm not complaining, ya know? I was just shocked. Actually, it was kinda neat."

Dan stood up and pressed the head of his throbbing tool against Sam's erect penis. Then the boys grabbed each other in a tight hug and soon were humping their hips together, the shafts of their penises rubbing each other, the mushroom heads pressing into that little mound of meat and flesh that would soon be covered with hair.

"Let's get under the covers, Samuel. This will be more fun lying down."

The boys let go of each other just long enough to get into bed, then Sam grabbed Dan in another hug and began lavishing kisses all over his face. When he paused for breath, Dan returned the favors, leaving little wet trails across his boyfriend's cheeks, nose and forehead. As he ended up at Sam's lips, they once again began the *dance of the oral manipulators* that they had so recently learned about.

As their hormones kicked in, responding to the messages sent out by the sensory receptors in their lips and tongues, their hardons began to throb and ache. Soon, their hands were upon each other's equipment, squeezing, stroking, pulling, rubbing. Before long, Sam had pulled Dan on top of him, toes to toes (well, almost) and nose to nose. They began to lunge against each other, their dicks reveling in new sensations. Without actually thinking about the position they were in and its similarity to a couple making love, their instincts told them that they were now engaged in another act of love.

As their bodies reacted to the thrusting of their hips, the rubbing of stomach on stomach, chest against chest, stiff little nipples against the other's and tongues dancing wildly over each other's lips and faces, they lost control of their emotions, voices and bodies.

"Oh, Samuel, I love you so much. Is this what love feels like? Oh, God, I'm going to cum!" Dan almost shouted, fighting to keep his voice down.

"Oh, God, Danny, I never knew we could do this. Your penis feels so good rubbing against mine. I love you so much! Don't cry, Danny, don't cry! Here I cum, cum with me!"

And with one last simultaneous cry, the boys came together, sweat making their bodies shine and slide against one another more easily, more sensuously. Their hugs became almost desperate, their breathing more like the gasps of fish out of water. The bed springs threatened to wake the neighborhood (which, of course wasn't asleep at 4:00 on a Saturday afternoon).

Finally, they each bit their lips to keep from saying anything more as their bodies began to relax.

Dan laid his head on Sam's chest where he listened to the rapid, almost erratic beating of his love's heart. In utter relaxation, Sam's arms released his boyfriend and fell to the bed as though they had no muscles at all. Fortunately, Dan was light enough that his weight wasn't causing Sam any breathing problems.

Eventually Dan slid off and lay at Sam's side, his one arm lying across Sam's chest, his fingers slowly moving up and down his side, moving over to play with his nipples occasionally. Sam lifted the arm on which Dan was lying and pulled him closer to himself, resting his hand on his best friend's shoulder.

"Wow!" whispered one.

"Yeah, me too." Whispered the other.

"Do you suppose anybody heard us?" Dan asked.

"I hope not," Sam answered. "I wouldn't want to embarrass anybody."

The boys giggled at that and then dropped into that peaceful sleep that follows a mind-blowing orgasm, the top sheet coming up just far enough to cover their privates, but not as far as their underwear would have been had they been wearing any.

Chapter Four

Part I - Can we talk?

When supper was ready, Mr. Russell volunteered to tell the boys. Prior to today, he might have sent Nancy. But things were changing, and he wasn't at all sure what would be found behind Sam's bedroom door. The bedrooms all had locks on the doors, but the Russell's had always stressed that they never be used. A door was for privacy, and locks weren't necessary.

The temptation to open the door while he knocked was great indeed, but he forced himself to abide by his own rules. He needn't have worried, though. As the boys had slept, one had evidently gotten cold and pulled the sheet up so that it came to rest just under their arm pits. A couple of knocks were answered by a sleepy "Come in..."

Sam's dad stuck his head in the door and told the boys dinner was ready.

"OK, dad. We'll be right there," Sam answered sleepily.

The guys got up and slipped into their briefs and joined the rest of the family at the table. The Russell's and Whittington's weren't naturists, but the kids of both families had always been allowed to wear nothing more than their underwear. Even Nancy frequently dressed down to bra and panties. At her age, she was just starting to develop, but Mrs. Russell knew it wouldn't be long before she would have to encourage her daughter to start being careful when Dan was around. He was *almost* family, but not close enough to be ignored.

After dinner, Mr. Russell pulled Sam aside while Dan helped Nancy and her mother clear the table.

"Did you have a chance to speak to Dan about the three of us having a talk?"

"Oh, geez, dad. I forgot. We fell asleep not too long after we went to my room. Let me tell him tonight and we can talk tomorrow after lunch while mom and Nancy are napping."

The Russell's had a fairly consistent practice of coming home from church, eating lunch and then each finding a comfortable chair, couch or bed to take an afternoon nap.

"Ok, Sam. But make sure you don't forget again. This is important, you know."

"Sure, dad, I know. I won't forget. Are we gonna play Monopoly® tonight?"

"I 'spect so. It's Saturday night!"

Another tradition.

By the time Mr. Russell and Nancy had teamed up to bankrupt the other three, it was quite late.

Everyone hurried to get their showers and get to bed. Sam and Dan were tired enough they didn't even fool around. Sitting on the bed in their undershorts, Sam told Dan about the talk they needed to have with his dad the next day.

"What's he want to talk about?" Dan asked.

"Well, I'm not sure. But I suspect it has something to do with how you and I feel about each other. He mentioned it this afternoon right after I told him I loved you."

"Geez! I'm scared, Samuel. What if he tells us we can't see each other any more?"

"Danny! You get that thought right out of your head! If he was gonna do somethin' like that, he'd never have said he and mom were OK with it - my loving you, I mean. Remember he said that?"

Sam had gotten a bit upset at Dan's comment. Partly from his own fear that something like that could still happen. He and Dan had never been separated by anything more than a vacation. They had only expressed their feelings for each other in terms of love a few hours ago, but he knew that's what it was. He knew it was real. And he knew he'd never be able to survive being separated from his boyfriend. *God, can I call him that? Boyfriend? I wonder how Danny would feel about it if I called him my boyfriend?* Sam thought to himself.

Dan was worried about much the same things Sam was. He wasn't sure he could explain his feelings for Sam to himself, much less to Dad Russell. But explain them or not, he knew his attachment to Samuel had reached new ground in the last two days, and he would fight to prevent anything from keeping them apart.

The boys stripped off their shorts and slid under the covers. Sam snuggled up against Dan's back, his penis resting against his friend's butt and his hand lightly holding onto Dan's penis. Lost in their own thoughts, neither of them even got hard.

After lunch the next day, Mom Russell and Nancy curled up in their favorite chairs in the TV room and quickly fell asleep. Dan and Sam wandered back to Sam's bedroom and were soon joined by Mr. Russell.

"Hey, guys."

"Hey, dad."

"We need to talk."

"Oooo...kay."

The boys had been sitting somewhat apprehensively on the bed. Mr. Russell shut the door quietly behind him and turned to face them.

"Do you mind if we just lay down like we used to when I'd tell you stories?" he asked.

The boys scooted apart and laid down, leaving a spot in the middle of the bed for Sam's dad. Mr. Russell climbed up from the foot of the bed, turned and laid down on his back, forcing one arm under each of the boys and drawing them close to his sides.

"First of all, let me tell you that Sam's mom and I are OK with your relationship. And, Dan, we've talked with your mom and dad, and they agreed with this little talk we're about to have. So we adults are all on the same wave length and I'm speaking for them as well. OK?"

He could feel Sam and Dan both relax against him as they released a collective sigh of relief. In unison, almost as if they could communicate with each other telepathically, they turned to snuggle up against Sam's dad, laying one arm across his chest and touching each other.

"OK, cool," Sam said.

"So what's to talk about?" asked Dan.

"Well, we just need to see if you guys are sure of yourselves. You know, understand your feelings and what they might mean to you and to the rest of us. Maybe a little of the ol' birds and bees stuff."

"Oh, dad, not that!" both boys moaned. They weren't too sure where that last subject might take them.

"Well, let's talk about your relationship first. That ought to be easy enough, it's been building long enough. How do you really feel about each other? Sam told me he loves you, Dan. I presume you feel the same way about Sam. Right?"

"Yep, that's right."

"So. What is love, anyway? Describe this love you feel for each other."

"Well...uhm... well....."

"That's a deep subject," dad Russell said jokingly, trying to ease the tension a bit.

"From such a shallow mind," Sam added quickly, and they all laughed.

Dan tried again.

"Well, it's not like we're really experienced at this stuff, ya know? I mean I don't love Sam like I do mom and dad and Bob and you and mom Russell. I love him like I always thought I'd love a girl."

"But try to describe that, Dan. What did you think loving a girl would be like?"

"Well, I always figured I'd just know it when it happened. You know, like a lightning bolt or something."

"Yeah? So?"

"Well, with Samuel it wasn't quite like that. It wasn't like a lightning bolt kind of thing. But Samuel's all I ever think about any more. I mean, I like the way he smells, even when he hasn't had a bath. I like the way he looks at me when he thinks I don't know he's looking. I like the way he smiles when he sees me in class or in the hall or coming across the alley. And I especially like the way he looks at me when we first wake up in the morning. I like the way he touches me. Sometimes he's not even aware of it, he just reaches out and touches my arm sometimes, and I get these goosebumps all over. And when he thinks I'm asleep and rubs my face or runs his fingers through my hair."

For once, Dan wasn't crying. But his comments had brought a tear to dad Russell's eye and to Sam's, too. After a brief pause, Dan went on.

"It's different, loving Sam. It's not anything like loving Bob or mom and dad. It's like ... well, if love were a hug, Sam's arms would cover me all over like a blanket while mom's and dad's just go around my upper body, ya know? And... uh...uhm... well, I love him because I can tell he loves me. I don't know! I never felt like this before. I don't know the right words to use. I mean all the words are in my head, and all the love's in my heart, and I can't put 'em together!"

By this time, all three of them were weeping quietly. Sam from love, Dan from frustration, dad Russell from the happiness he felt that his son had someone, anyone, who loved him at this tender age the way Dan was trying to describe.

"Sam?" he said when he had regained control of his emotions.

"Well, geez, dad. What can I say? Ditto?"

"No, you have to do better than that. You owe it to Dan and to me. More importantly, you owe it to yourself to try and express your feelings. Don't compare what you're going to say to what Dan just said. Just speak for yourself."

They were silent for several minutes as Sam tried to collect his thoughts. He loved Danny so much, right now. He hadn't thought about having to explain his feelings for Danny, and his boyfriend's words had really touched his heart.

"Well... it's like this.... Danny and I have always avoided using the word love until just recently. I don't know about him, but I was always afraid of it. I think I've loved him for a long time and didn't realize it. I mean, you said it dad, we're only 13. What do we know about love? I just know that he's always been my best friend. We hardly ever fight, and when we do we make up with

hugs. We've been hugging each other and holding hands and sleeping together for so long, I'm not even sure when all that became love."

Sam paused for a minute, and the others waited for him to continue.

"I just know that when I saw his head hit that step and heard the sound it made, I thought I'd lost him. I mean, it sounded just like the time he and I climbed up on the roof and dropped that watermelon onto the driveway. After I stomped on that bully and realized where I was, I just collapsed. I felt like there was this big sink hole being ripped into my heart and everything worth anything was being sucked away. Then when I realized he was breathing after all, there was just this overwhelming feeling that I'd gotten him back. That's when I realized that I loved him... more than anything else in the world."

At that point, Sam raised up a little and reached over to stroke his boyfriend's face and whisper "I love you, Danny."

Mr. Russell used this opportunity to use the hand that had been resting on Sam's shoulder to wipe the moisture that had been collecting in his eyes. *God, what I would have given to experience love at their age*, he thought to himself. *How could I deny them this?*

"I love you, too, Samuel," Danny answered, reaching out his hand to cup his boyfriend's face.

Sam's dad was almost overcome again as he watched what was going on just below his chin. The fact that the boys could express their love for each other without fear, shame or embarrassment would be forever in his memory. But he knew he couldn't leave things as they were. There was ground still to be covered.

"Ahem, guys..."

"Yeah, dad?" they both responded.

"I hate to interrupt, but we need to deal with some difficult issues, here."

The boys looked at each other with worried expressions.

"What?"

"Well, they aren't difficult - serious; they're difficult - embarrassing."

As the boys gave each other questioning looks, raised-eyebrow kind of looks, Mr. Russell stumbled on.

"I... uh... well, Sam and I never... uh.... really talked about sex yet. So this is a bit difficult for me."

"Aw dad. We're not gonna talk about that now are we?" Sam interrupted.

"Yes, boys, we are. It's important because sex almost always ends up being part of any truly loving relationship, AND because I promised the Whittington's. Dan's dad was even more nervous about this than I am."

This entire conversation had produced another of Dan's most common characteristics, blushing. He blushed as easily as he cried, but at least he was able to laugh about turning red at the drop of a hat. The kids at school were always looking for fun ways to embarrass him because he was just so cute when he blushed. His ears would turn the reddest, even redder than his cheeks. Today was no exception. By this time, his whole head was red as a beet and he was trying to hide his face in dad Russell's armpit.

"Come on guys, you gotta work with me on this. It isn't easy for me either, ya know. Now we know you guys have been fooling around with each other for years, playing doctor, and all that."

The boys both gasped and stared at each other with mouths gaping.

Looking down on them, Mr. Russell continued.

"Come on guys, you haven't really been all that careful you know. Did you think Mrs. Russell and I couldn't hear you and figure out what you were doing here in Sam's room or down in the basement? I mean, take yesterday afternoon, for instance. I don't know exactly what you were doing, but I could hear you all the way down the hall. Fortunately Nancy wasn't home and Sam's mother was in the kitchen."

He paused to let that sink in and thought he could see the boys smiling at each other. Then he saw Dan lift his hand to cover his face and knew he had hit the nail on the head.

"So, I know you know what a climax, or orgasm, is, and I know you know the slang word for it, 'cause I heard you both using it. My question is this. Uh... Uhm... Well, uh... Oh shoot! Have you guys started ejaculating yet?"

"Oh, geez, dad. Isn't that a little personal?" yelped Sam.

"Gee, whillakers, dad. You wanta give me a heart attack?" Dan added.

"Now guys, I'm serious. I know that doesn't happen right at first, but it's important we talk about this stuff. There's a lot at stake here."

Dan was really embarrassed because he hadn't produced even a wet spot. At least Samuel had produced that little bit of slick at the slit just before he came yesterday. Sam, on the other hand, was embarrassed because he *had* produced that stuff.

Sam spoke for the two of them.

"No, dad. Neither of us does that yet."

"Well, it probably won't be long before you do, and let me tell you, it can get pretty messy if you aren't careful. Now listen to me. It's one thing for your mothers to know you might be messing around, but they shouldn't have to put up with the physical evidence of it. So in the future, I want you guys always to have an old towel handy when you're going to masturbate - alone or together."

"Oh, geez, dad!"

"Guys, get serious about this. We can't talk about this stuff without using certain words. Now I need to know, just how far have you gone and where do you think you're going as far as sex is concerned. This is important!"

Dan had really been suffering as this conversation developed. Suddenly he threw himself into the discussion.

"We play with each other, dad Russell, OK? Usually we masturbate til we orgasm, but sometimes we don't go all the way. Sometimes it's just enough to be able to play with each other's equipment till we fall asleep. You remember a minute ago when I was trying to explain how I love Sam. Well, I can look at other guys in the showers after phys ed and I like to see what they look like down there. But it's just curiosity. With Samuel, it's different. I get this warm, gushy feeling when I touch his pe... uh, you know."

"Uhm, me too." Sam added, temporarily lost for words.

"So, is that what you were doing yesterday?"

At the startled expression on the boys' faces and the way their arms naturally tightened on his chest, Mr. Russell hurried to continue.

"Boys, please, don't think I'm going to pry into your privacy every time we get together. This is just for today, but bear with me on this. It's important."

"No, dad," Sam spoke up.

"We were kissing and things started heating up and then Dan was laying on top of me and we were rubbing our, uh... well, you know... our, uh.... well, we were rubbing against each other, you know, stomachs, chests and stuff, and all of a sudden we came."

Now it was Sam's turn to blush - from his neck to his hairline.

"So, that's as far as you've gone?"

"Yeah. What else is there?"

Oops! Mr. Russell thought to himself. I wasn't expecting that. Here I was trying to find out if they were into oral or anal sex yet, and they don't even know about it. Now what?

After a pause of several minutes, Mr. Russell reached a decision.

"Well, boys, you're bound to find out sooner or later, and I'd rather it be later. But since I already brought it up and I don't want you doing certain things with each other, I guess now's the time. Without going into graphic details, let me just say that oral sex is usually the next step - whether it's between a guy and a girl or two guys."

"You mean..." Dan started, then stopped, unable to say it out loud.

"You mean putting a guy's uh... di... I mean, peck... er, uh... you mean kissing a guy's uh... penis?" Sam finally managed to say.

By now, Mr. Russell was about as red as the boys. Three cherry tomatoes lying there on the bed.

"Well, yeah. Kissing, sucking, that kind of thing."

Dan surprised himself and everyone else with his next comment.

"Wow! What else! Tell us more!"

"Now wait a minute, Dan. I'm not here to encourage you guys to try anything more than what you're already doing. After all, you're just barely 13, you haven't even started to produce semen when you climax. You don't need to rush into anything else. Now listen to what I'm about to say. This is really important, boys."

He paused for a minute to make sure the boys were listening closely. When he didn't speak, they each turned their heads to look at him.

"Look. Your hormones are just starting to kick in. That's part of where your feelings of love for one another come from. From what little reading I've done on the subject, it's kind of a circular affect. Your hormones heighten your feelings for one another, and your feelings also drive your hormones. Sexual activity just adds to that. So far, it sounds like everything is happening the way it should. You realized you love each other before you've gotten very heavily into sexual relations. But as you move further into this thing called puberty, your bodies are going to start producing hair under your arms and around your sexual equipment. Your equipment's going to start getting bigger, and your desire to try new things is going to get stronger."

He paused for a moment and noticed that they boys continued to stare at him.

"Making each other cum by hand is one thing. But doing it orally or in other ways is something else entirely."

Suddenly Dan was reminded of the one thing he felt most uncomfortable about.

"But isn't that what queers do? If we do those things does that mean we're really queer. I don't want to be queer! I thought we could love each other and not be queer."

As Dan started crying, Sam teared up as well and reached out his hand to comfort him.

"That's where my concern is, Dan," Mr. Russell answered. "I'm not sure you boys really understand your feelings for each other."

That got a rise out of both boys.

"But you said you were OK with how we felt about each other, about the fact that we loved each other. What're you saying now? That we're too young to know what love is?"

"No, boys, that's NOT what I'm saying. Now listen! A lot of people would say that at 13 you're too young to understand what love is and therefore you can't be in love. But your parents all agree that you are in fact in love, that you love each other very deeply. We're not denying that, and we trust you to know what your feelings are. But the love you feel for each other still isn't the same mature love that you will feel when you're older, when you've come out on the other side of this stage of your lives that's called puberty. Right now, and for the next few years, you're going to be very susceptible to all sorts of influences. And some of those influences can be misleading."

"I don't understand," Dan said.

"Geez, how do I explain this," Mr. Russell said, pausing to think.

"Here, let me tell you a story. Now you *have* to promise me you'll both keep this to yourselves. Sam's mother doesn't know about this and doesn't need to. Back when Mrs. Russell and I were engaged to be married, I had a short affair with a lady friend of ours. I guess we got together for sex maybe six or seven times. I enjoyed sex with her - in some ways even more than with Sam's mother at the time. It got to the point that I thought I was in love with her and wanted to marry her instead. But she broke off our relationship. Before too long I realized what a disaster it would have been had I broken off the engagement with Sam's mom and married this other lady. The act of intercourse had so stirred up my hormones that I couldn't really think about things clearly. The mere act of making love had a powerful influence on my emotions - the ones I thought were love. Turned out they were just lust, physical but not true; temporary, not permanent."

Again, he paused to let the boys think about what he had said.

"Right now you love each other. I accept that. Does it mean you're homosexuals? I don't really know. I don't know what causes homosexuality. I've never read anything that explained it. If it were hereditary, I'd have to say neither of you could be. There's no history of it in either family.

If it were purely environmental, I'd have to say you couldn't be. You've never been exposed to it at home or anywhere else that I know of. So are you queer? Homosexual? I don't know. Are you curious about your bodies and the feelings you can give yourselves and each other? Definitely. Are your parents going to love you regardless? *Absolutely!!* Just take things slowly and see what develops. You have plenty of time to find out what your life-long sexual orientation is going to be."

He could feel the boys begin to relax against him. Their arms loosened their grips on his chest and he could feel their hearts beating against his sides. He could even hear their breathing now that they weren't holding their breath.

"Look, boys, you want your parents to be open minded about your sexuality and your relationship. All I'm saying is, you should be too. Take things easy. Don't rush into new sexual experiences just to see what they're like. They might mislead you just as mine did me, with almost devastating results. As you continue to grow and mature, emotionally and sexually, you'll either confirm that you are, in fact homosexual, or you'll find that you aren't and this is just a part of your growing up. But let me tell you this. Sex between two boys your age isn't any different than between a boy and a girl your age. Your parents do not condone sexual activity at this age."

"But why not, dad," Sam exclaimed. "I mean, it's not like one of us is going to get pregnant or something."

Sam hadn't seen the look his father now gave him in a long, long time. Fortunately Mr. Russell hesitated long enough to control his anger.

"Now look here, Sam. Since when has getting pregnant been the reason not to have sex at your age. You think we're going to go out and buy an assortment of rubbers on your sister's 13th birthday just so she can start screwing around and not get pregnant?"

"No, dad, of course not. But Danny and I aren't *screwing around* with everybody or *anybody* for that matter."

"And I'm not saying Nancy would either, Sam. But let's say she falls in love with some guy at 13 just as you two have. Do you think your mother and I are going to tell her it's OK to have sex with him as long as she doesn't get pregnant? Is that what we've taught you about the relationship between a man and a woman?"

"No, but that's different."

"Oh? How so?"

"Well, sex between a man and a woman isn't right until after their married."

"Right on. So, how is that any different from sex between you and Dan? Haven't we always taught you guys, and this includes you and your parents, Dan, that sex is an important part of a

loving relationship and there's a right time and place for it? The same applies to your relationship or to one Nancy might have with a boy" *or a girl, heaven forbid* he thought to himself. He wasn't sure he could take both of his younger children turning out to prefer same sex partners.

The boys were silent for a long time. Finally dad Russell decided it was time to put closure to this conversation.

"Look, guys, I realize that you are going to want to try things. And your parents aren't going to be able to stop you if you're really serious about it. We can't put you in chains. Just be careful, and for God's sake be discreet. We feel OK with your relationship right now, but that doesn't mean we want to see you kissing in public or fondling each other. And we don't want to hear what goes on behind closed doors. But we are going to ask for *one* promise, and I've talked about this with the Whittington's and Sam's mom."

He paused until the boys looked at him, serious expressions on their faces, their free hands clasped to each other, fingers interlaced.

"We want your promise that you won't try anal intercourse. That can be dangerous, physically and emotionally. You have to promise that you won't even think about it until after high school. If you're still convinced that you love each other when you get to that age, we'll talk about it again. But this is the same promise we would ask of Nancy. *No intercourse until after high school!* If you can't make that promise, all bets are off. You want our acceptance and support? You have it. But we want something from you, too."

Sam and Dan just looked at each other. They were each thinking the same thing, *Anal intercourse? Yuck! That one's easy. I wonder, though, his penis isn't any bigger than a turd. And why would dad ask us not to do it if it weren't something people do? But if it means staying together, I can promise.*

It was another of those moments when the boys seemed to communicate telepathically. As they reached out to each other, each rubbing the other's cheek softly, they responded in unison.

"We promise, dad."

Then, Sam first, followed by Dan, they raised up on their hands and kissed Mr. Russell's cheeks.

Again in unison, the boys added in whispers, "Thanks dad, I love you."

After giving them each a hug, Mr. Russell worked his way off the bed.

"I'm going to join Sam's mom for a brief nap."

At the door, he turned to make one last comment.

"And boys, let's not bring Nancy or Dan's brother into this situation just yet. Like I said, be discreet for the time being, and we'll talk about what and when to tell the others in a week or so, OK?"

"OK, dad," the boys responded, still looking each other in the eye, soaking up what they saw there, one's love for the other.

Part II - A surprising turn of events

Life just seemed to get better following that weekend. Dan and Sam were careful to keep their feelings for each other bottled up when they were in public. After all, in the fifties the closets didn't even *have* doors. For the most part, they were even successful in keeping their love for each other a secret from Bob and Nancy. But when their siblings were out with friends, the parents were surprisingly tolerant, allowing the boys to let their guard down and display modest signs of their mutual affection. Ever mindful of their talk with Mr. Russell, they didn't kiss each other in front of their parents, nor did they grope each other when others were present. That didn't mean they didn't take a few chances, such as when parents were temporarily out of the room.

But at least at home they could hold each other, share hugs, hold hands, rub arms and faces affectionately. And their parents continued to allow them to sleep over at each other's house and to share the same bed. Interestingly enough, their sharing of hand jobs didn't really increase from what it had been before. Frequently they would fall asleep together on a couch and be too groggy to play around when they went to bed.

Life at school got even better than it had been before. Their run-in with the bully, Randy, and the involvement of Big Bad John and the football team spread around the school like wildfire. The bullies stayed pretty much to themselves and Dan and Sam always had more friends to eat lunch with than they had time to share.

About a month after the incident with the bully at school, there was another incident that amazed just about everyone, including teachers and other staff.

At the beginning of the year, Dan had signed up for the Junior Life Saving class offered by the YMCA at his school's indoor pool three days a week. For such a little guy, he was actually quite nimble and wiry with a kind of strength that didn't often show itself. Many thought of him as a coward because he always ran from fights or talked his way out of them. But those views changed one afternoon just before Christmas.

The pool had been opened for free swim following classes one Friday. Life saving classes had ended a month before. Dan and Sam and many of their friends were there for the swim since it was one of the few times they could get the pool at a decent hour. Usually the swim team had it in the afternoons and other kids and the public only had access to it early in the mornings before school started. Not too many kids could get there early enough to use it.

As a result, there were a lot of other kids there that day, including Randy and his two cronies. For all his boasting, bullying and brash talk, Randy couldn't swim a lick. In fact, he was afraid of water over his head. He spent all his time in water not above his chest, splashing and rough housing with his friends. On this day, however, as he was running around the deep end, preparing to cannonball some girls on the other side of the pool, he slipped and fell into the water.

Immediately, his cries for help could be heard throughout the pool area. As luck would have it, this was the very moment when the lifeguard had slipped out to take a leak and check the chlorine content. As all the other kids stood in shock and fear, including many of the football team, Dan climbed out of the shallow end, ran to the deep end and executed a letter-perfect life saver's dive.

He swam up to Randy and was trying to turn him so he could grab him in a life saver's hold when Randy did just what Dan had been taught many drowning victims do. He lunged forward and grabbed Dan around the head and shoulders, trying desperately to use the smaller boy as a means of keeping his head above water. Of course, all this did was push them both under. By this time, teachers had started to respond to the cries of the other kids. But being fully dressed and not knowing the true situation, no one jumped to assist Dan. They all stood at the side of the pool wondering when the boys were going to surface, wondering how little Dan was going to be able to help this bigger, heavier kid.

But they needn't have worried. Dan wasn't. He let himself sink, taking Randy down with him. As Randy started to suffer from the lack of oxygen, his frightened grip loosened. When Dan felt this, he stuck his thumbs into Randy's midriff, just below his lowest ribs and shoved with all his might. This forced Randy to release his grip and allowed Dan to swim around behind him. The boys surface with Randy floating on his back, Dan's arm over his chest in the standard life saver's carry. Dan swam quickly to the side closest to him, his surprisingly strong legs making short work of the trip.

As Dan got Randy to the side, Sam was there to help pull the bigger boy out onto the pool deck. In an instant, Sam had Randy rolled over onto his stomach and was applying artificial respiration, pushing down rhythmically on Randy's back, then lifting him slightly off of the floor. By the time Dan had climbed from the pool, Randy was coughing up water and breathing on his own. As a couple of teachers sat with Randy to make sure he was alright, Sam went over to where Dan was sitting quietly by himself at the edge of the pool, catching his breath.

"Are you OK, Danny?"

"Yeah, just a little shaky and out of breath. I thought I was a goner there for a minute. Then I remembered what they taught me in life saving class. Is Randy OK?"

"Yeah, bud, he's OK. I don't believe you did that, though, after the way he's treated you and almost gave you a concussion."

"Well what about you? I saw you giving him artificial respiration. He's been just as mean to you."

The boys had been staring into the pool water as they spoke softly to each other. Glancing around quickly to make sure no one was looking, Sam reached over and placed his fingertips on Dan's cheek and turned his head towards him. Then, in a whisper Dan barely heard, Sam said, "I love you, Danny, and I'm proud of you."

At that moment, the two boys sensed movement around them. They turned around and looked up to see Randy towering over them, surrounded by kids and teachers.

"Danny, I want to thank you for saving my life. And you, too, Sam. The way I've always treated you guys, I wouldn't have blamed you if you'd left me in there."

"That's OK, Randy. We couldn't ignore the trouble you were in. But if you call me Danny one more time, I'm gonna have to hurt ya. Only Samuel can call me that."

Hearing that, the entire room, including Randy and his cronies burst out laughing.

... 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).