

Danny Bird

by Pennywise

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Innocence.....	2
Chapter 2: The favor.....	5
Chapter 3: A childlike mind.....	9
Chapter 4: The Second Sleepover.....	12
Chapter 5: The First Kiss.....	17
Chapter 6: The Party.....	20
Chapter 7: The Understanding.....	24
Chapter 8: An Unexpected Guest.....	29
Chapter 9: Ploratio multus plus plurimum.....	35

Authors Note

I've enjoyed writing this story. I don't want to preempt anything by telling you what it's about, who all the characters are and how it's going to end, but I would like to urge you to read it from front to end. I'm sure by now you should know my style of writing, and that my stories are not a "quick fix", so if that is all you're here for, you may as well just click the X at the top right hand corner - this story is was not written for you.

All others - please read on...

Pennywise

Chapter 1: Innocence

There I was once again, sitting on my hired beach chair with my notepad, portable tape recorder and sunglasses. It was another lovely day at Boynton Public Beach and the weather was just perfect. Another thought popped into my head and I wrote it down.

"Freddy the bunny rabbit meets Richard the squirrel and they go for a picnic in the park. No, that's rubbish" I said, muttering to myself.

"Who are you talking to mister?" asked the boy who had appeared in front of me almost from nowhere. I looked up to see a boy, about 7 years old standing in front of me, wearing a Speedo and a towel wrapped around his neck. I didn't recognise him, but then again I didn't come to the beach to look at people - I came for inspiration.

"Oh just myself" I said.

"Are you Santa Clause?" he asked.

"Huh? What makes you think I'm Santa Clause?"

"Because of your beard" he said, pointing at my Charles Manson type beard.

"Oh, no, you see Santa Clause has a white beard, mine is all brown. I'm also not as fat as him."

"Do you want to play with me?"

"Excuse me?" I asked, taken aback by his question.

"I've got nobody to play with, and I've got a neat Frisbee."

"Oh, I see" I said. "Well partner, where's your mum and dad?"

"My Dad's over there" he said, turning and pointing. "And my mum's gone to heaven."

"Oh, I'm really sorry about that." The boy giggled a bit.

"You say 'oh' a lot, but that's not my name. It's Jeremy. What's your name?"

"My name is Danny. Danny Bird."

"Jeremy, come here" came a rather annoyed voice. I looked up and a well built man was walking over. I assumed that this was the father. "I've told you before not to talk to strangers."

"But Dad, I just wanted to have somebody to play with" protested Jeremy.

"Go and sit by the chair" said his father, and Jeremy pouted. "I'm really sorry; I hope my boy didn't disturb you."

"It's not a problem at all." With that, the father turned around, and I saw the word "Lifeguard" written on the back of his shirt. "Goodbye Jeremy." Jeremy turned around and waved goodbye - his father continued to walk.

I was so bored. I hated having to sit at the foot of his high chair all the time, every weekend. Because I had no mommy and my daddy wouldn't hire a babysitter because he called it a waste of money, I had to follow him wherever he went - which meant going to the beach every weekend, for the whole day. My dad let me walk around the beach but just as long as he could see me all the time. My dad bought me a Frisbee yesterday, but I haven't found anybody to play it with. I think today I will try to find that same man again. I walked around and found him again sitting exactly where he sat yesterday.

"Hello" I said. He jerked his head to face me and he smiled.

"Hello" said Danny. "It's Jeremy, right?"

"Yup, you remembered."

"Is your dad going to come and shout at you again?"

"No, I think he's got his eyes on some of the girls who are playing volleyball."

"Aha."

"Do you want to play Frisbee with me?" He looked around as if to see if somebody was watching.

"Listen Jeremy, I don't want to sound rude, but I'm trying hard to concentrate."

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"I'm thinking of a new story."

"Well if we play with the Frisbee maybe it will help you think. Oh please, I'm so bored."

I finally gave up on concentrating - I had been sitting there for two hours and not a single thought of inspiration came to me. This would have been my fourth book and I decided to write something different than cute animals. Damn that J.K. Rowling woman - why couldn't I have thought of writing Harry Potter, I would have been a multi millionaire by now.

"Sure, Jeremy, let's play Frisbee." I got up out of my chair, putting my notepad and voice recorder under my towel which I never used, and then faced Jeremy. He ran away from me and then threw the Frisbee. You could see he had never done this before, because it went so skew, it almost hit somebody else on the beach. "OK Jeremy, come here, let me show you how to throw it." He came over and I showed him how to hold the Frisbee and how to throw it. I stood behind him and he looked up at my hand which curved around the edge of the Frisbee and he saw how I threw it. I got him to throw it a few times, just lightly so that it didn't go too far.

"Hello boys" sounded a voice from behind. I turned around, and there stood the stud of a father. I had watched Baywatch when I was younger, and although he did not look like Chip Buchannan, it was quite clear that he did his utmost to come across as him.

"Daddy, look Uncle Danny showed me how to throw my Frisbee!"

"Yes, that's nice sweetheart. Why don't you buy all three of us some ice cream, I want to talk to Uncle Danny for a few minutes, some big boy stuff, OK?" Dad gave Jeremy five dollars and he ran off to the ice cream vendor who was parked up on the road. "He's pretty cute, isn't he? How much do you want for him, for one night?"

"Excuse me?"

"You can have him for one night, just tell me how much."

"I'm sorry, I think you've got the wrong impression of me, I have no interest in your son. He just wanted to have somebody to play with so I obliged, and quite frankly I'm offended that you even made the suggestion."

"What are your intentions?"

"What intentions? He came up to me, it's not like I called him over or anything. Look, I understand your concerns but please believe me, I have no ill intentions for your son or for any other children for that matter." I was getting quite annoyed with this conversation.

"Yeah, I know, I'm sorry I had to just make sure - he is my son after all, I need to look after his welfare. Please excuse the accusation. If he's bothering you just tell him to go away, but if you don't mind spending time with him, I'd appreciate it. I can't look after all these people on the beach and him at the same time. My name is Steve by the way; I'm pleased to meet you." He held out his hand and I accepted his handshake. "My son hasn't read any of your books but we'll go out and buy them sometime."

"You know I write children's books?"

"Yeah, I've seen you here for two months now, every day just sitting there with your Jim Morrison beard with a notepad and a tape recorder, and three weeks ago some woman came up to you with her son and you signed something for them. I asked them who you were and they told me."

"Oh yes, I remember them." Jeremy was running back towards us now with 3 choc pops in his hands.

"Thank you sweetheart. Uncle Danny has said he will play Frisbee with you but only for a short while because he has some important work he has to do."

"Yay!" exclaimed Jeremy who jumped up and down for joy. He handed us each a Popsicle and started to suck on his own.

"My change?" enquired Steve.

"Oh I forgot" said Jeremy, and he used his hand which was holding the Popsicle, pulled down the front of his Speedos so that his dick was in plain view, and with his free hand he fished down and picked out the two bits he had folded and placed there for safekeeping.

"I'll tell you what Jeremy, you keep the change so that you and Uncle Danny can have more ice pops later" said Steve.

"Thanks dad!" shouted Jeremy.

"I've got to get back to my chair before somebody complains that I'm not doing my job again. You be good now sweetheart, and remember, Uncle Danny needs to work so don't spend too much time with him."

Jeremy and I played Frisbee for three hours before his father came to pick him up for them to go home. It was 5 pm and I was completely exhausted. Jeremy still had lots of pep in him and I think he could have gone on for several more hours before he got tired. My aim was quite good, but his was still very beginner, so I had lots of walking to do in order to retrieve the Frisbee, which tired me out even more. After they said goodbye and left (Jeremy kept turning around and waving until he couldn't see me anymore), I returned my chair to the rental van and walked back home. I was content - no - I was much more than content. I was jubilant. Today had been one of the most enjoyable days of recent times, and I owed it all to a very pleasant boy.

Chapter 2: The favor

"Can I go and visit him? Huh, can I please dad?" We hadn't even arrived at the beach yet and I was already jumping up and down like a kangaroo eager to see my new friend. It was Saturday on the following weekend, and I was longing to see him all week.

"Maybe a bit later my darling" said my father. I had my Frisbee in hand and I also bought my big inflatable ball which was still deflated. Dad did the usual rounds, checking his tide schedule, changing the public notice board, and stood on his high chair looking out with his binoculars.

"Why don't you have a beard like Uncle Danny?"

"I like to look clean shaven."

"Can I grow a beard?"

"My son, you have my permission to grow your beard."

"When will that happen?"

"Not for a very long time" he said, putting down his binoculars and then sitting on his chair.

"Will I get hair on my bum?"

"Probably" he said, looking down at me.

"Why don't you shave your bum?" I asked.

"Well you see, people don't see my bum, so it doesn't matter if I shave it or not."

"Why don't you shave your head?" I asked.

"Well, you got me, there, I don't know. Just stay here for a while, OK? I need to go and talk to those women over there."

I folded open my chair at my usual spot, and turned around to sit down when something jumped on me making me topple over onto the beach.

"Uncle Danny!" shouted the overexcited boy.

"Jesus Christ!" I exclaimed, still recovering from the fright.

"No silly, my name is Jeremy!" He was sitting on top of me now, and grinning like a Cheshire cat.

"No jumping on the beach" said Steve through his megaphone which was directed at us. "I hope he didn't hurt you."

"I'm fine thanks" I shouted back. "Can you let me up please?"

"What's the magic word?"

"I said please" I said, smiling.

"The magic word is abracadabra!"

"Oh yes, of course it is. Can I please get up, abracadabra?" Jeremy finally got off me.

"I'll go and get my Frisbee" he said, and then dashed off in the direction of his father. I sat down in my chair, knowing that it won't be for very long, and sure enough both Jeremy and his father came over."

"Jeremy my love, how about you get us three ice creams?"

"OK!" Steve gave him 3 bits and Jeremy was off like it was a marathon.

"Good afternoon" said Steve.

"Hello" I said.

"You remember that conversation we had yesterday, you know, about how much for the boy?"

"Yes?"

"Well. How much for him?"

"Pardon?"

"How much to have Jeremy for the night?"

"I thought we discussed this yesterday, I'm not interested in hiring your child."

"Hiring? I wasn't talking about hiring."

"Oh?"

"Well, you see, there is this foxy lady I met earlier, and I've asked if I can take her to dinner tonight. My plans are to bring her back to the home to bang her brains out, and I can't do that when the kid is there."

"So you're asking me to baby-sit Jeremy?"

"Yeah, what did you think I was asking?" He said, grinning at me.

"Well, I'm not sure I should. After all you've only known me since last week."

"Yeah, but it's not like you're a complete stranger - you're a famous author - I doubt you're going to run away with my Jeremy. I've done background checks on you, you check out fine."

"You've done background checks?"

"Yeah. I work for the coast guard as my normal job, we've got access to the central criminal bureau, and you check out fine. You don't even have an unpaid parking fine."

"I see" I said, slightly annoyed that this guy was checking up on me.

"Please Danny, I haven't had good sex for a very long time, and I don't have anybody else I can ask at this notice. I'll pay you forty dollars - no, fifty."

"I can't take your money" I said.

"Jeremy loves you to bits. All week it was 'Uncle Danny' this and 'Uncle Danny' that. He even drew a picture of you with your beard and notepad. I've never seen him take to somebody like he's taken to you before."

"He drew a picture of me?"

"Yeah, he forgot to bring it today. Please?"

"Oh OK, but I don't want your money. I'm happy to do it for free." I knew that the coast guard was a government organization and therefore did not pay extremely well, so I didn't want to accept his very generous offer. After all, I had enough money from my first three books that I didn't need the extra cash.

"Oh bless you, thank you very much, oh man I'm so looking forward to tonight now."

"So, I'll just bring him back here tomorrow?"

"No, I'll come and pick him up from your house if that's OK. There's a hurricane warning so the beach will be closed tomorrow. I know where you live, but do you mind giving me your telephone numbers?"

"Sure." We exchanged telephone numbers and when Jeremy came back and heard the news he jumped up so high that he lost control of one of the choc ices which flew up into the air and onto the beach.

"Oopsydaisy" he said, handed us the two choc ice's he had and then rushed to the closest tap to wash his off.

"Now, I don't have any pyjamas with me because this is a off the cuff arrangement, so just let him sleep in his underpants and his tee shirt."

"OK."

"I'll take the boy away from you now so that you can get some thinking time in."

"Thanks" I said.

"No fair" I said, pouting.

"Look, Uncle Danny needs to write his book so you'll have to wait until tonight to play with him again. Now if you continue to misbehave, we'll call it off altogether!" That's all I needed to shut me up. I sat at the foot of the high chair where he perched himself and did a tour of the beach with his binoculars. After a

few hours of wondering around, walking at the water's edge, sitting patiently, my father finally gave me word. "OK go and take Uncle Danny to the car and get changed. I'll pack up here and meet you there" said my dad. My face lit up once again, and I picked up my towel, Frisbee and deflated ball and ran across to Uncle Danny. He was relaxing in his chair sleeping so I walked around him and covered his eyes with my hands.

"Guess Who!" I said.

"Is it President Bush?"

"No" I said, giggling.

"Is it the tooth fairy?"

"No" I said, still giggling.

"Is it Rambo?"

"No silly, it's me, Jeremy." I undid my hands and he looked around, looking really surprised. "Who's Rambo?"

"Oh, just somebody I know." He said.

"We have to go now" I said, and grabbed him by the hand.

"I have to take my chair back" he said, so I let him do that, then I grabbed him by the hand and lead him back to the car.

I guessed which car it was by noticing the emblem and the writing 'Florida Lifeguard Association' on the side, and sure enough, Jeremy stopped behind it and opened it up, grabbing a bag out and put it on the ground. He then pulled his Speedos off completely, and then used his towel to wipe whatever sand he had on him off. I felt uncomfortable with this young boy in front of me, completely naked, and I looked around to see if anybody was watching us.

"Is my bum hairy?" he asked, and I looked back to see him pointing his butt at me.

"No" I said.

"You can't see from there, look closer."

"I have very good vision. I think you should get dressed now."

"Oh yes" he said, and then took out his clothing from the bag and got dressed.

"OK are you ready to go?"

"Where is your car?"

"I didn't drive; I live close-by so I walk to the beach."

"Okay let's go!" he exclaimed, and he grabbed my hand with a firm grip and looked up at me, smiling.

I led Jeremy back to my home which was only about ten minutes away. I found out that he was eight years old and that his favourite color was blue, just like the ocean. He didn't have any brothers or sisters it was just him and his father. He stayed behind after school in a day care until his father came to pick him up in the evening after work, and every weekend his father would take him down to the beach while he did voluntary life guarding. He had no pets and he also had no friends outside of school.

"What are we going to have to eat tonight?" he asked as we entered my house.

"Do you want pizza?"

"No thank you" he said. "Pizzas make you fat. How about some McDonalds?"

"Uh, McDonalds makes you fat too, doesn't it?" I asked.

"Don't be silly of course not" he replied in an exasperated tone.

"Well why don't I make something here for us to eat? I can do hamburgers and chips if you like?"

"Yes please" he said.

We had dinner and then we watched the Cartoon Network until 9 pm when he got up and said "It's my bedtime now, but I don't have any pyjamas."

"Your dad said you can sleep in your underwear and t-shirt. Come on, let me take you to the guest bedroom." I led him upstairs, which he jumped up two stairs at a time, and then into the guest bedroom. I always had a spare bed made just in case my sister came to visit me out of the blue like she did occasionally.

"Which room is yours?"

"I'm at the end of the hall. The bathroom is over here, and the light switch is just here." I said, switching on the light.

"Thank you" he said, and then he entered the bathroom and closed the door behind him. Two minutes later, the toilet flushed, and he came out wearing his underpants and t-shirt, and carrying the rest of his clothes.

"Goodnight Jeremy" I said, as I watched him climb into bed.

"Goodnight Uncle Danny. I love you." I switched off the light and half closed the door on my way out. "I love you" echoed through my mind again, it was an unfamiliar sound. "I love you." I think the last person who said that to me was my mother at Christmastime. I stayed up a while longer and went to bed at about 11 pm, after deciding that the increasing wind outside was drowning out the movie which I daren't put louder in case I woke up Jeremy. I was just dozing off when I heard a rumble of thunder. It started raining on my window now and it sounded like the hurricane warning was well justified. I got up and walked around the house just to make sure all my windows were closed. I got back to my room when another bright flash of lightning lit it up.

"Eeyaaah!" I screamed as a body appeared in front of me during the illumination. Jeremy ran towards me and wrapped his arms around me.

"I'm scared" he said, and at that moment another rumble of thunder boomed through the house, which made him clench me even tighter. "Can I sleep with you please?"

"It's only thunder" I said. "It can't hurt you."

"I'm afraid" he re-iterated.

"OK you can sleep with me" I said. It didn't seem right though, and I was reluctant, but then I thought back on a Simpsons episode where both Lisa and Bart jumped into their parents bed because they were scared. Bart was apparently ten years old then, so it probably seemed OK. He climbed into my bed and when I got in, he wrapped his arm around me snuggling up real close.

"Goodnight Uncle Danny."

"Goodnight Jeremy" I said. I still didn't feel comfortable with this boy who I had only met one week ago lying next to me and holding me so tight, and I knew that if his father found out he probably wouldn't be impressed. I got more comfortable after a few minutes though because this kid was generating so much heat, it was like having your own water bottle in the bed. Another flash of lightning and sure enough, the thunder followed several seconds later. Little Jeremy did not stir this time; he was fast asleep, holding onto his massive teddy bear. That's what I was, just his teddy bear and nothing more.

Chapter 3: A childlike mind

I woke up the next morning to find myself staring at a bearded face which was turned skywards and snoring faintly. I didn't know anybody else who had a beard and I didn't know what it felt like. I moved my hand up and out of the duvet, and lightly stroked his beard. It felt funny, like I was holding a toilet brush. My fingers wondered through the beard as if I was searching for a hidden treasure, and I ended off by running my finger down his nose. Danny twitched his nose and mumbled before resuming his sleeping. Again, I ran my finger down his nose and back up, and then circled on his forehead, at which point he opened his eyes.

"Good morning?" he asked.

"Good morning" I replied. "What's for breakfast?"

I made French toast for breakfast, something that Jeremy had never had before, which he enjoyed thoroughly. I wasn't enjoying it that much because I was still worried that I was going to get killed for letting Steve's son sleep in the same bed as me.

"Is something wrong Uncle Danny?"

"Hm? Oh, no everything is fine."

"You seem quiet this morning."

"Oh, I'm just thinking about my next book."

"What is it about?"

"That's the problem, I haven't thought about anything."

"You can write about me and you!" I smiled at him.

"Do you want some more French toast?"

"No thank you do you want me to get fat?"

"Of course not" I said, smiling even more.

"You see how I make you happy?" he asked. He wasn't wrong about that. I reached over and ruffled his hair more than it already was. "My hair goes much longer when it's wet" he said, completely out of the blue. "So what games are we going to play today?"

"Games? I don't have games here."

"Why don't you have any children?" I looked into his deep blue inquisitive eyes for a few minutes before answering.

"I honestly don't know."

I did manage to find a game of Monopoly in one of the cupboards that my sister and I played when we were younger. Even the houses and hotels were made out of wood the game was that old. Of course, I let him win by strategically only buying cheap property, and letting him buy the most expensive property. He was very kind though, and every time I landed on the green or blues which he had houses on, he said "because you let me stay here last night, I'll let you stay there for free." I think he just wanted to play for even longer, and I wasn't complaining about that. At 11 am though, the doorbell rang and to my disappointment, it was his father coming to pick him up.

"Hey there champ" said Steve as Jeremy rushed up and jumped into his arms and kissed him.

"Good morning" I said. "Do you want to come in for some coffee or a beer?"

"Coffee sounds good" he said as he made his way into the house. I went into the kitchen and he followed me, looking around as if he was a potential house buyer. "You've got a very beautiful home" he said, nodding approvingly.

"Uh, Jeremy, can you please pack away the monopoly game?" I asked.

"OK Uncle Danny" he said, and he rushed off to the other room.

"Look, Steve, I don't know how to tell you this, but it's probably better that you hear this from me rather than from Jeremy."

"Oh?"

"Well, it was lightning and thunder last night, and he was scared so he asked me if he could sleep with me in my bed." Steve picked up his coffee and took a sip, and all the while staring at me.

"Did you let him?"

"Yes."

"Well that's good, it's nice to see that you care for my boy."

"Oh, I thought you'd be mad at me."

"Why, for taking my son's best interests at heart? Don't be silly. He's only eight years old - if he was double that age then it would be a different story, and I would probably be concerned. He used to sleep with me very often until I got him Rupert."

"Rupert?"

"Rupert, as in Rupert the Bear."

"I didn't think they still made them." I said.

"Well, don't tell him" said Steve in a quiet tone, "but this bear isn't really a Rupert bear."

"Ta Da!" exclaimed Jeremy as he bounded through the kitchen doorway holding a clipboard in his one hand and a ruler in the other. "I am Sir Galahad, the dragon slayer, and I've come to slay your dragons!" He rushed out again, probably to look for a dragon, and Steve continued to drink his coffee as if there was nothing wrong.

"Say, you know how you were asking me how much for your son and all that?"

"Yeah?"

"Well, I've changed my mind, I do want to hire your son" I said. Steve almost choked on his coffee as he tried to say "What?" while drinking. "Purely for a consultation role" I continued, as if what I said was perfectly normal. "You see, your boy has a very vivid imagination, and that might be just what I need to help me get over this writers block I've had for two months now."

"You want him to help you write a book?"

"Just ideas for a story" I said. He thought about it for a bit, sipping some more coffee and then finally agreed.

"I can't ask for money though, especially since you looked after him for free last night, and believe me I am very grateful."

"Were you successful last night?"

"Oh yeah" said Steve with a big smile on his face. We arranged that he would drop Jeremy off on Saturday so that we could work on the story together.

Saturday finally arrived, and to my surprise I was looking forward to seeing Jeremy again. Steve was dressed in his Speedos and Lifeguard tee shirt, and when he appeared at the front door with Jeremy, I looked around to see if any of the neighbours could see him. It was apparent that Jeremy got his lack of shyness from his father, who had no problems walking around in his Speedos.

"OK then, you boys have fun" he said, while adjusting his sunglasses. "I'll be back at just after 6 pm to pick him up."

"Sure Steve."

"Okay daddy, I promise I'll be good" said Jeremy. His father went back to his jeep and drove off, the two of us watching and waving goodbye. The moment that he was out of sight, Jeremy turned around and looked at me with a lovely smile.

"It's lovely to see you again Uncle Danny" I said, as I hugged him. I wasn't very tall, so my arms wrapped around his waist and my head rested on Uncle Danny's stomach. He didn't hold me back like

my dad would. I squeezed him a bit harder to try to give him a hint, but he wasn't biting. "My dad told me you need my help?"

"Yes please Jeremy. I've been thinking of an idea for a new story for some time now and I've got something called writers block. I can't think of anything good to write."

"What do you want me to do?" I asked, now letting go of him.

"I just want your ideas. Tell me what you would like to do if you could do anything in the whole world."

"Does it have to be real?"

"No, it can be make-believe too."

"How about a story where a boy gets invited to a chocolate factory and ends up owning it because he won a competition?" I suggested.

"Uh. Yes - that story already exists? I suspect you have recently been to watch *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*?"

"Oh yes, now I remember - it was a movie and not a dream." I thought for a bit and then said "how about a story where a boy's father is taken away by gangsters and the boy goes to rescue him?"

"That's a very good idea. It's been done before, but we can do it again provided it's not like the other story."

"The boy's name is Jeremy, and he has a very special friend who helps him named Danny. Danny has magical powers though, but the only time Jeremy can call Danny is when he's naked, and then Danny appears but he's naked too."

I put my pen down and looked up at Danny.

"Do you want to see me naked?" I asked, knowing full well this wasn't going to happen, but I just wanted to know Jeremy's intentions.

"No, of course not!" he exclaimed with a shocked look on his face. "Why would I want to see you naked?"

"Well, I was just asking because of your suggested story."

"You're very strange Uncle Danny" said Jeremy. I started to wonder if this boy was in fact schizophrenic. We spoke of a few more suggestions and I wrote down a simple plot of an idea for a book which seemed more plausible than his naked suggestion. I put away my writing pad, and we started playing monopoly again now that the consultation work was completed. At about 6 PM, Steve came to pick Jeremy up just like he had planned.

Chapter 4: The Second Sleepover

From the time that Jeremy left and for three weeks I stayed at home, working on the new story. I was proofreading it one night when I got a phone call from Steve.

"Hey there, how are things?"

"Good thank you. I've finished my story and it's almost ready to publish, thanks to your son's idea."

"My son is very upset at the moment" said Steve.

"Oh?"

"He hasn't seen you for three weeks now and he's been crying about it."

"Really?"

"Yeah. I don't know if you had noticed, but Jeremy gets very affectionate and emotional. He's really hurt that you haven't called or anything. I tried to explain that you can't call and that you're too old to be a friend but he just won't accept that."

"I'm sorry" I said.

"I think he'd like to stay over again one weekend, is that okay?"

"Sure, that won't be a problem. I've finished writing the story now so I'm going to take a break so I'll have lots of free time."

"Oh, then maybe we can make it two nights - Friday and Saturday?"

"Yeah, that's OK" I said.

"OK thanks, he'll be so happy about this, but I won't tell him now otherwise he won't be able to sleep tonight. I'll drop him off after school on Friday."

"Alright then, see you on Friday" I said, and we ended the call.

Friday soon arrived, and Steve was on time with the delivery of his son. I opened the door and was attacked by the boy who jumped up at me shouting "Hands up" as he wielded a toy gun. Behind him, was his father, this time wearing his Coast Guard uniform, and holding a small suitcase.

"I rented an old western video last weekend" said Steve. "I'm sorry."

"Nah, that's no problem" I said, watching Jeremy run past me and inside shooting his gun at anything he could see.

"I've packed a few things, some underwear, pyjamas and clothes for the next two days. Do you have a shower?"

"Yes, it's part of the bath."

"Jeremy doesn't like to bath, but he likes to shower. Please get him to shower every night before putting on his pyjamas, and you need to watch him while he baths."

"You want me to make sure he cleans himself?" I asked.

"Well that, and more importantly, he is not used to standing in a bath under a shower so I'd like it if you just made sure he doesn't fall over or something."

"Oh, okay."

"Jeremy!" called Steve. Jeremy arrived behind me again, poking his gun into my back. I put my hands up, but he shot me anyway, so I fell down to the ground and pretended to die. Jeremy giggled with delight but was interrupted by his father who continued to talk. "Be a good boy, and don't drive Uncle Danny potty."

"OK dad" he said, and closed the door after his father turned away to walk back to his jeep. I was still on the ground but looking up at him.

"You're supposed to be dead" he said.

"Oh yes, of course" I said. "You know, you don't usually shoot people who have surrendered."

"I shot you because I'm cross with you" said Jeremy.

"Why?"

"Three weeks and you didn't even call! I thought you liked me."

"I do like you Jeremy."

"But why didn't you call?"

"I've been busy with my book. Our book."

"I really missed you" said Danny, as he sat down next to me. He looked very unhappy now.

"Look Jeremy, I'm really sorry, but you have to understand something. Big boys like me don't have little boys as friends; it's just not the right thing to do."

"Why not?" he asked.

"Well, we're not family."

"Don't you want to be my friend?"

"No, I'm not saying that."

"Is there something wrong with me?"

"No, there's nothing wrong with you, you're perfect" I said. Jeremy looked up at me with his teary puppy dog eyes, and now I really felt bad. I don't know what made me do it but my hand went up to his head, and I combed his hair with my fingers. It just seemed to be the right thing to do at the time. "Will you forgive me?"

"I'll forgive you if you make me a pizza!" he said, enthusiastically.

After the Dominos pizza we sat down on the sofa to watch Monsters Inc. Both of us enjoyed it thoroughly and were laughing all the way through. Although we started on separate sides of the sofa, he ended up on my lap and I had my arms wrapped around him. He seemed to enjoy being held, and admittedly, it was a comfortable thing for me too. He felt like my very own teddy bear.

"OK champ, it's time for you to shower" I said.

"OK Uncle Danny" he said. "Do you have to watch me?"

"Your father asked me to watch you. Er, to watch over you rather."

"OK where is it?" I led him upstairs to the guest bedroom, and took out his pyjamas, and then followed him into the bathroom. He took off all his clothes and stepped into the shower. It was so amusing to see this white butt in front of me, when the rest of his body was tanned, and then he turned around. His hands covered his private area, and he was grinning like a fool.

"You don't have to be shy" I said. "We're both boys, I've seen it all before"

"I'm not shy" he said, and then removed his hands. I realised then why he was covering up, because he had a boner. I looked at his dick as it stood at attention and then back up at Jeremy who had gone a bright red in the face. "Why does that happen?" he asked.

"It means you're ready for sex" I said. "Is this the first time?"

"No, it's happened before. It stays like that for ages" he said. "I try to make it go down but it won't stay down." With that, he started pushing it back down, and letting go and it sprang back up. He did this a few times and then giggled. "It feels nice when I do that" he said. "Does yours get hard like that too?"

"Sometimes" I said, as I gulped and realised that mine was actually getting that way right now.

"Can I see?"

"No. Here's some shampoo, wash your hair" I said, hoping to change the subject. Luckily, it worked. After the shower, Jeremy got into his pyjamas, and I saw him off to bed.

I went back downstairs to put CNN on, but no matter how terrible or boring the news was, I could not get my mind off that hard little dick that Jeremy had. I couldn't remember if I had the same problem when I was his age, but it did make me remember the experience I had with my best friend when I was thirteen. He told me that he could shoot sperm and I didn't believe him, and like a fool I told him to prove it. We were alone at his house at the time so he took me up on my dare and jerked off in front of me, and after about five minutes he came. It didn't so much shoot out as dribble out, but it was all the proof I needed to accept his claims.

"Do you want to try" he asked me, as he wiped his dick with the same tissue he used to wipe his nose.

"Nah, it's OK" I said.

"Don't be chicken, its fun - you'll like it." You know what it's like when you're that age, you don't want to appear to be chicken, and that is all the goading I needed to pull down my pants and try. I was jerking off while he was looking at my dick, and then he asked "Can I suck it?" I don't know what possessed me to agree, because I didn't consider myself gay but nevertheless a few seconds later my best friend was sucking my hard cock, and it felt good. It felt *really* good. A few minutes later, I had my very first orgasm while my friend was sucking me - I can't remember if it was a wet or dry one, but I do remember asking him to stop sucking. That was the first homo-erotic experience I had ever had in my life and thinking back on it now made me so horny, I knew I had to do something about it. I went to my bedroom, undressed, got on my bed, closed my eyes and masturbated. Within in a few minutes I ejaculated real hard, I could feel it shoot up onto my chest twice before the force subsided and the rest went onto my stomach and pubis. I reached over for my underpants, and wiped myself clean before turning over and going to sleep.

I woke up the next morning, and did my usual thing of farting, but I had no idea I had an audience. Jeremy burst out laughing, but he kept his mouth closed to try to muffle it, making him snort out the laughter. I opened my eyes, and immediately realised that I was completely naked. I was facing away from the door, and I was cuddling my duvet, which meant my bare ass was facing the door.

"Jeremy!" I exclaimed as I rearranged the duvet so that it covered me completely, and I turned to face him. He was standing in my doorway with a massive grin on his face.

"You've got a hairy bum" he said.

"Oh, you saw" I said, a bit disgruntled. I obviously wasn't used to having other people in the house.

"Why do you sleep naked?"

"Sometimes it's more comfortable" I said.

"Come on sleepyhead get out of bed." I looked at my clock, and it was only 8 am. I was also not used to getting up that early. After breakfast we went to the beach to say hello to his father, and then we went to the mall, watched a movie, had lunch, went to the park to throw his Frisbee, and arrived back home early afternoon. We then played some Monopoly, had dinner (Dominos again due to popular demand) and watched another movie. This time, the movie was The Incredibles which I had purchased earlier. We enjoyed it thoroughly and throughout Jeremy's shower, we talked about our favourite parts. Jeremy did not have an erection that evening when he showered, and he

also showed no signs of embarrassment on getting undressed and into the shower.

"Can I stay up late please?" asked Jeremy. It was only 9 pm and also a Saturday evening, I let him stay up late. I found something suitable to watch on TV (What Women Want), but it was far too mature for Jeremy to watch. It was a very funny film, but the only time Jeremy laughed was when Mel Gibson thrust his hips forward. At the end of the movie, I discovered that Jeremy had actually fallen asleep. I looked down at him and smiled. He really was a cute looking boy, and it was only now that I was realising this. I picked him up with my right arm supporting under his knees, and my left arm under his back. I carried Jeremy up the stairs and put him in his bed, after which I showered, put on my sleeping trunks, and went to bed myself. About an hour into my sleep, a figure was shaking me.

"Mmmmm?" I asked, still half asleep.

"Can I sleep with you?" asked Jeremy.

"Sure" I said, not concentrating. I wasn't going to have any kind of argument about it at that time of the night, and especially since according to his father it was a normal thing for him to do. Jeremy climbed into my bed with me.

"Good night" he whispered so loudly that he might as well not have whispered.

"Good night" I said, and went off back to sleep.

I woke up the next morning, and found myself facing towards Jeremy. He had his back towards me, and I had my arm wrapped around him. He was holding my hand. I got a warm fuzzy feeling when I realised all of this, it was so nice to have somebody you cared about in your arms.

"Hello" I said, giving his hand a little squeeze.

"Good morning" he said, squeezing my hand back. "I love you" he added. It was so strange to hear those words - I didn't hear them very often. In fact, this was the second time he had told me, which was more times than anybody had told me that entire year. Jeremy rolled over, and hugged me tightly. He was certainly very affectionate, and I rubbed my arm up and down his back in a comforting manner. It was then that I realised that he was not wearing his pyjama top. I moved my hand down further, and discovered that he wasn't wearing his pyjama bottom either. I flipped the duvet over, and saw that Jeremy was in fact completely naked.

"Where are your pyjamas?" I asked.

"They're in my room" he said.

"Why did you take them off?"

"I did it so that I could feel more comfortable." Here I was, with a naked 8 year old cute looking boy in my bed. Alarm bells were ringing in my head and I knew that the whole scenario was completely wrong. I also knew that this boy was completely innocent in all of this; he could not possibly know the implications of his actions. As this was the last night of the weekend, I decided not to say anything about it. I also decided that it was not a good idea to tell his father that his son got completely naked based on my suggestion, and climbed into bed with me, I just hoped that Jeremy would also not tell his father.

"Jeremy, we're friends, right?" I asked.

"Yes" he said.

"Well you know that friends have secrets with each other, right?"

"Yes" he said.

"Well, when we sleep together like this, you must keep it a secret OK? You can't tell any of your other friends or your father

or your teachers, because if they ever had to find out this secret, they will never let us be friends again." It wasn't untrue, but what I didn't tell him was that my life probably depended on him not saying anything. I didn't want to be the next Michael Jackson on trial.

"I won't tell anybody" said Jeremy.

"Promise?"

"Promise!"

"Cross your heart and hope to die?" He used his finger to make a cross on his chest. "OK then, why don't you get dressed and we can do breakfast together."

Chapter 5: The First Kiss

"Hey there partner" said Steve.

"Steve? Hi how are things?"

"I'm going to ask you something really serious now, and want you to think carefully before answering."

"Sure" I said. "Oh my God Jeremy has told him everything that has happened and he's going to think I'm a pedophile and the next person he's going to call is the cops" I thought.

"If I died, would you take care of Jeremy?" I thought through this question for a bit.

"You're not terminally ill are you?" I asked.

"No, it's just that I do a pretty dangerous job, and heaven forbid if anything had to happen to me, I would like to know that Jeremy has a good home to go to."

"Oh I see. Well it's not something I can answer just off the cuff like that; I would have to think about it."

"Well, perhaps if you had a bit more practice, you might be able to reach a decision."

"Practice?"

"Yeah - practice looking after Jeremy."

"You want me to look after him again." I said, finally catching on to where he was going with all this.

"Please, I know I've asked you to look after him a lot lately, but remember that chick I met on the beach whose brains I banged out?"

"Uh, I remember you saying something to that effect, yes."

"Well, she called me up, and she wants to see me again on Saturday night. If I score, I want to take her home and she can scream all she wants if Jeremy isn't there. Besides, I think he likes you very much, so it would be good for him too. Do you know, he's changed the name of his teddy bear to be Danny?"

"Really?"

"Yup, that's quite an honor too. Shall I come and drop him off on Saturday morning?"

"Sure." I said.

"Hello Danny" I said. "I like you a lot, do you like me?" Danny nodded. "Do you want to give me a hug? Yes, of course you do." I hugged Danny as tightly as I could. "Hmmm you like that, don't you?" Danny nodded again. "Can I give you a kiss?" Danny shook his head no. "Don't be shy, just a small kiss." Danny slowly nodded his head. I couldn't see him because it was very dark, but I knew he was nodding because my hand was on the back of his head. I moved my head forward and kissed him on the lips. "Mmmmmwa" I smacked with my lips as I completed the kiss. "You're my best friend, and I wish we could be together forever and ever. I love you very much. Do you love me?" Danny nodded vigorously. "One day we will get married and live happily ever after - do you want that?" Danny once again nodded vigorously. "Goodnight Danny." I said as I wrapped my arms around my furry companion and shut my eyes. I was soon fast asleep.

The week was on its last day, and I woke up at 6 am from mere anticipation. I walked around the house cleaning up here and there, although that wasn't necessary because I had a cleaner come in once a week anyway. I just wanted everything to be perfect for his visit. I sat down on the sofa and turned the television on. There was news on CNN, but it didn't matter what it was because I wasn't watching. I was staring at the television, thinking about what we would do that

day. I kept looking at the clock and the minute hand seemed to move much slower than it usually did. Finally, the doorbell rang. I went to the door, wiped the palms of my hands and opened it enthusiastically. A rather surprised postman was standing there.

"Err, special delivery for a Daniel Bird?"

"Yeah, that's me" I said, and I signed the docket that he handed over to me. I saw him off and scanned the street for a sign of the Jeep, but it wasn't there. I went back inside, and opened my package, knowing exactly what it was - a hardcover print of my latest book. I read through the first few pages, and smiled. At that moment, the doorbell rang. Still holding the book, I turned to the door and opened it - and there he was. Jeremy rushed towards me, dropped his overnight bag and embraced me. His head rested in my chest, and my arms spontaneously wrapped around him too.

"I missed you so much" he said, speaking into my chest.

"I missed you too" I replied. I looked up, and Steve was in the Jeep waving. I waved back, and he drove off. "Look, I've got a present for you" I said. I handed him my book. "This is the book we wrote together."

"Oh wow" he said, and he took the book from me and paged through it. "Can you sign it for me?"

"Oh sure" I said. I took the book back and took out my traditional pen, and wrote in the cover.

"To my special friend Jeremy, I hope you enjoy this book as much as I have enjoyed writing it with you. Danny Bird."

We spent the morning going to the mall, bowling, playing some arcade games and pretty much having fun. The afternoon was spent playing some Monopoly, and in the evening we made a cake together. Being a bachelor, I had to cook for myself, so I was handy with the kitchen. Jeremy on the other hand was not so handy and he managed to get himself so dirty. We put the cake in the oven and then I just looked at him and laughed.

"Well I think we might as well get you washed early tonight" I said. He agreed, and we went upstairs to get him showered. Once again he undressed and climbed into the shower, and he took the soap and started lathering himself up.

"Can you wash my hair?" he asked. I agreed, not thinking that there was anything at all wrong with doing that, and he turned to face me. I put some shampoo in my hand, and then gently washed his hair. While I was washing his hair, he put his hands on top of mine, and he caressed them. I continued to wash his hair, and he continued to massage my hands.

"OK, let's rinse your hair" I said, and he closed his eyes and I put his head under the shower head. He was now holding onto my wrists, and when I pulled him forward again, he was still holding onto them.

"Uncle Danny?"

"Yes Jeremy?"

"Can you give me a kiss?"

"I can't kiss you" I said.

"Can you give me a hug instead?" That seemed OK, so I said yes, and with that, Jeremy reached up and wrapped his arms around my neck, and raised his legs and wrapped them around my body. He was hugging me much more affectionately than this morning. I used my arms to carry his weight, but I was inadvertently touching his naked bum by doing that.

"Sorry" I said.

"It's OK" he said. Jeremy turned his head, and kissed me on the cheek. I looked at him, and he smiled. "This feels nice" he said. By chance, I looked down in-between his legs, and once again

he had a hard on. I looked back up into his face, and he started to blush again. I grabbed a towel and wrapped it around him, covering his head and back, and I dried his hair while he was still clinging onto me. I dabbed the rest of his body dry, before asking him to get down and wrapping the towel around him. He looked up at me, and then hugged me around the waist again. I put my hand on his head and ran my fingers through his hair.

"Am I bad?" he asked.

"No, Jeremy."

Jeremy put his pajamas on and after watching another hour of television, he announced that he was going to bed and asked if I could tuck him in. Thinking nothing of it, I ushered him up to bed and saw him into bed. I couldn't tuck him in because it was a duvet, but the reason he asked me to come up became apparent.

"Give me a goodnight kiss" demanded Jeremy. Against my better judgment, I leaned over and kissed him on the forehead. "Kiss me here" he said, and pointed his finger to his lips. Something told me that I shouldn't comply, but another part of me told me that I should. I leaned over, and kissed him lightly on the lips. When I raised my head again, he had a smile on his face. "I love you Uncle Danny" he said.

"I love you too" I said. With that, his smile became much wider, and closed his eyes ready for sleep. I returned to the lounge to continue watching television, but the actions of this evening kept swimming around in my head. At about 2 am, I had finally managed to lose consciousness. I woke up again at 6 am with the need to go to the toilet, and on my way there for no specific reason, I peered into the room where Jeremy was sleeping. He was lying on top of the duvet, and had his body curled around something. I stepped into the room and after getting used to the dark, I realized what it was. It was the new book.

Chapter 6: The Party

"Man, I have never cum so much in my life" said Steve as he thanked me privately in the kitchen. "I used up six condoms through the night."

"Uh, thank you for sharing that with me" I said. For some reason, hearing this disgusted me. I wasn't sure if it was the thought of him having sex, or the thought that he had something I'd never had in my life, but nevertheless it was disgusting. Jeremy came running down the stairs with his small bag, dropped it at his father's feet, and then jumped up at me, wrapping his arms around my neck and his legs around my waist. He was like a little monkey the way he did that. Before I could stop him, he kissed me on the lips, right in front of his father. His father picked up the bag and then ushered his son out the door, said thanks once more and then closed the door.

"Why did he come so early?" I asked myself as I got into the jeep. I wanted to spend more time with Uncle Danny.

"Did you have a good time?"

"Yes daddy" I said.

"What's that you've got in your bag?"

"Oh, Uncle Danny gave me the book that I helped him write. He signed it for me."

"Have you been behaving yourself?"

"Yes daddy" I said.

"You haven't been taking off your clothes over there have you?" I looked at him, shocked. I thought it was our little secret, how could Uncle Danny tell him? "Don't you remember? When you were very little, I had to get a babysitter to look after you, and she kept complaining that you ran around the house naked."

"Oh" I said. We drove on for a bit longer, before I spoke again. "Daddy?"

"Yes my little angel?"

"Is it wrong to run around naked?"

"Well, I don't think there is anything wrong with it. There used to be places where you could go and you could be completely naked and run around free. I think places like that still exist in Europe." I thought for a minute of a whole lot of people running around completely naked, and I pictured seeing my father and school friends all naked, and I also pictured Uncle Danny standing in front of me naked. I felt something stirring in my underwear, and so I moved my hand down, and touched it. My thing was semi-hard, and when I squeezed it, it felt nice. It became a little bit harder, so I squeezed it again, it felt good. I had to stop there because we pulled up in our driveway, but I decided that I needed to do a bit more experimentation...

"Hello?" I answered.

"Hi Danny" said Steve, in a half whisper.

"Steve?" I asked.

"Yeah" he said. "Look, Jeremy is crying at the moment because you haven't phoned him, he's up in his room bawling his eyes out right now."

"Oh" I said.

"Jeremy really likes you, I'm sure it's a phase he's going through but it is affecting him being so much out of contact with you. Don't you want to give him a call?"

"Well, sure, I'll give him a call." I said. "I just didn't want to because I didn't want you to think I'm weird or anything."

"No, I wouldn't think that" he said. "Give it about an hour, that way he won't think that I asked you. I'll go and try to play some games with him."

"OK, bye for now."

"Bye." It was the longest hour I have ever had to wait. Well, except when I was younger and had to do studying with my sister when we were studying for exams. I kept looking up at the clock every few minutes to see if it was time yet. After what seemed to be four hours, the time was right.

"Hello?" answered the other person.

"Hello, is Jeremy there please?" I asked, knowing full well who answered the phone.

"Uncle Danny" he said, enthusiastically. "Daddy, its Uncle Danny" he said. "I've missed you."

"I've missed you too" I said, and when I said it, my heart gave a bit of a lurch. I really did miss him.

"I wish you were here right now so that I can give you a biiig hug! Would you like to give me a hug?"

"Oh yeah I would love to give you a hug."

"Would you like to give me a kiss?" he asked, in a much quieter tone, which I assumed was because he didn't want his father to hear. Until that point I must confess I had never considered that, so I had to think for a little bit.

"I don't know" I said. We spent about another 30 minutes talking, with Jeremy doing most of the talking, telling me about school and everything. Apparently one of his teachers would love to meet me sometime, and she'd like to get a signed book just like I gave Jeremy. The more he spoke, the more I realized how much I wanted to be with him again. Finally, we ended the conversation, and Steve had asked his son if he could talk with me.

"Hey there champ, looks like you've made somebody's day there."

"Yeah, and to be honest, talking to him made my day too."

"Oh?"

"It's so strange, I'm thirty years old, and ever since I left school I kept telling myself that I wanted to live alone - I wanted to be a bachelor. Your kid has made me realize that there is something much more to life, and I am so grateful to have had the time I have had with him."

"Yeah, Jeremy is a real angel. I do anything for him; he is the light of my life. He has a lot of his mother in him, God do I miss her." I felt the urge to ask what happened to her, but I didn't.

"So, Jeremy said you wanted to speak with me?"

"Oh yeah, I almost forgot. In three weeks time, there is an opportunity for me to do an advanced divers course, which is what I need to take if I want to get a promotion, and it's for three weeks. The course is in Southport, and I can't take Jeremy with me - against regulations. We have no family down here so I was wondering if you could look after him for two weeks."

"Two weeks?" I asked in utter amazement.

"I can understand if you've got commitments, I'm sorry to ask you at such short notice, but I don't know anybody else I would prefer to have look after Jeremy for this length of time."

"I'll do it" I said.

"You'd have to take him to school and the whole lot."

"Sure that won't be a problem" I said.

"Thanks bud, you're a lifesaver. I've missed out on this course for the last two years already. Oh, and by the way you've been invited to Jeremy's 9th birthday party, which is next Saturday."

I bought Jeremy a remote controlled car for his birthday - all boys of all ages seemed to like them so I couldn't go wrong. On the day, I walked to his house to find that I was the first guest to arrive, and I handed Jeremy his present. He tore it open and did the usual "WOW, this is the bestest present ever!" that most kids his age say with each present they open. "Dad can I show Uncle Jeremy my room?"

"Sure sugar, but if the doorbell rings, you have to come back down" he shouted from the kitchen. Jeremy pulled me upstairs into his bedroom, and showed me everything. He even showed me his teddy bear, who's name was Danny, and I had to give Danny a hug.

"Aw man" he said, despondently as he was looking out the window.

"What?"

"It's one of my friends. Quick, give me a kiss" he said, as he turned around to face me. He had that evil, mischievous look on his face and he was grinning from ear to ear. I leaned down to kiss him, and he suddenly grabbed me around the neck, and forced his lips to mine. It was no ordinary kiss - that was for sure. While there was no tongue involved, there was a certain wetness that was there, which is often found in passionate kisses, and it lasted several seconds. In fact, the kiss lasted until the doorbell rang, when Jeremy released his grip from my neck, and then scuttled out the door as quickly as he could. I sat down on the bed to contemplate exactly what just transpired, and I found myself shaking and a tad dizzy. Being the lexicologist that I was, I came to the conclusion that I was in fact swooning as a result of the kiss. There was no longer any doubt about it in my mind - I was in fact falling in love with Jeremy. I calmed my nerves, and then went back downstairs. Jeremy looked up at me, smiled, and then looked away again. I sensed that he was a bit embarrassed about what just happened, so I just let him be.

The party continued though the day, with Jeremy getting presents from pretty much everybody, and reacting pretty much the same way with each one. I was introduced to everybody as "Uncle Danny" so they immediately thought that I was a true relative, including the teacher that he had invited. She spent a lot of time idolizing me and telling me how jealous she was because she never had the writing ability that I evidently had.

"There is a novel in everybody, you just need to find yours sometime" I said.

"Where do you get your ideas from?"

"Well, my first three books came pretty much from my own childhood experiences, and my latest one which should be on sale soon was inspired by young Jeremy." She kept yakking on and on and she just wouldn't shut up. I think she was trying to hit onto me, but I had absolutely no interest whatsoever. All I could think about was Jeremy and that kiss. It reminded me of an incident that happened between my best friend and me, about a year after the blowjob. We were listening to "(Everything I Do) I Do It for You" by Bryan Adams on his ghetto blaster, and he just straight out asked me if he could try out an experiment.

"What kind of an experiment?" I asked.

"I want to see if you're gay?"

"What? I'm not gay" I said.

"Prove it."

"How?"

"Let me kiss you, and then afterwards you tell me if you liked it or not." I thought about this for a little bit, obviously thinking he was completely mad, but nevertheless I agreed. Had it been anybody else, I would have said no. He lay me down on the bed,

and then laid on top of me completely, and we kissed. Tongue and all, we kissed just like Andy Garcia and Sofia Coppola did in the movie The Godfather: Part III. During the kiss, I put my arms on his back, and he pressed his pelvis into mine, where I distinctly felt his raging hard on. After a few more minutes of kissing, he stopped, and then he looked into my eyes and asked "did you like it?"

"No" I said, lying through my teeth. I had enjoyed it very much, but I was too afraid to admit it. I didn't want to be gay. I didn't want the ridicule and rejection that was associated to gay people. My best friend and I kind of drifted apart after that, and after he moved to Ohio, I never saw or heard from him again.

"So is Daniel Bird your real name or is it just a pen name?" Holy shit, she was still talking to me - did she ever shut up?

Chapter 7: The Understanding

Steve came to drop Jeremy off, and as per our earlier conversation in the week, I drove him to the airport in his own Jeep. I had never driven a jeep before, and I looked really cool in my Ray Bans and Hawaiian shirt. Because airport parking was so expensive, the Jeep would live at my house and we would pick him up again at the end of his course.

"You look just like Jim Morrison" said Steve as we drove along, and I just smiled back at him. We parked the Jeep and had a lunch at the Airport because we had plenty of time before Steve's flight. Jeremy spent every second with his dad; it was a really lovely sight. It was obvious that Jeremy loved his father very much, and vice versa. When it was time to see him off, he knelt down in front of Jeremy and said "Now, you are going to be good for Uncle Danny, aren't you?" Jeremy nodded vigorously. "Remember, while I'm away, he's in charge so you have to obey him, OK?"

"Yes dad" said Jeremy, wrapping his arms around his father's neck.

"Give me a kiss." Jeremy didn't hesitate for a second, and kissed his father full on, just like he had kissed me on his birthday. After the kiss, he hugged his father saying "I'll miss you."

"I'll miss you too, my sweetheart."

"I can't wait to get back" I thought to myself. "Kissing Uncle Danny last time felt so nice, I want to do it again. I wonder if he'll shave his beard off if I asked him nicely?"

"You're very quiet" he said.

"Oh, I'm just thinking" I said. "Thinking what fun we're going to have a bit later" I thought. "Uncle Danny?"

"Yes?"

"Can you call me sweetheart, like my daddy calls me?"

"You want me to call you sweetheart?"

"Uh-huh."

"Why?"

"Because I want us to be just like me and my daddy."

"Ah I see."

"Are we going to write another story?"

"Well, it is something we can do if you want."

"I liked doing that last time, this time we have to write a story about me."

"OK, we can do that."

"Can we get some pizza?" I asked, seeing Pizza hut in the distance.

"I thought it made you fat?"

"Don't be silly, only old people get fat." I said.

We arrived back home after our diversion via Pizza Hut, Blockbuster and the Mall, and packed away the food that we bought. To my surprise, Jeremy ate normal what I referred to as "big boy" food, and not children food. We got some Chicken Kiev, Lamb Cutlets and his absolute favorite - Lasagna, as well as some pop and various other sweets. After he helped me put them away, he went and fetched Rupert and brought it into the kitchen. He was grinning, so I knew he was about to be mischievous. He held up Rupert to his ear, and then nodded.

"Danny says that you must shave."

"Danny? I thought his name was Rupert."

"He changed his name."

"Oh. And why does Danny want me to shave?" I asked. Jeremy put the bear to his ear again, and then nodded again, as if the bear spoke to him.

"Because Danny wants to give you a hug but he doesn't like beards." I wasn't particularly fussed about the beard; I just never shaved because it seemed like a waste of time. It's not like I ever wanted to impress anybody, but for some bizarre reason I agreed to his request.

"How about I shave when I shower tonight, then Danny can give me a hug after then?"

"Danny agrees" he said, without consulting his bear. I just smiled.

We went out for the afternoon, back to the Mall where we took in a movie and ate out at Wendy's. I had to stop by the drugstore to get a shaving kit, since I hadn't shaved for about four years. The last time I shaved was when I met my publisher to ask them to publish my first book. We got home and then packed out his suitcase into his cupboard, and not before long, it was 8 pm.

"OK, let's go and shower"

"OK" I said. I followed him to the bathroom, picking up his clothes as he stripped them off on the way there.

"Where is your shaving kit?"

"You want me to shave now?"

"Yes."

"I have to cut my beard off first, I can't just shave."

"OK, if you get the scissors, I'll cut off your beard." I wasn't sure I liked the sound of a nine year old with a sharp pair of scissors right next to my neck.

"You need to be very careful, okay?"

"I'll be careful" he said. The only pair of scissors I had came as part of my knife set which was in the kitchen, and it was a very good sharp set. I brought it back and he was sitting patiently on the side of the bath.

"This pair of scissors is very sharp, and if you cut me, I will bleed a lot. It will hurt very much, so please be careful."

"If you sit on the edge of the bath, I can be closer to your face" he said. I sat down, and he moved closer to me, with pair of scissors in one hand, and a big grin on his face. He was very careful, and he was extremely gentle too. When he cut, it was slowly, and he looked very carefully to make sure that it wouldn't cut the skin. He held the hair he was cutting and with each snip, he threw what was cut off into the basin.

"OK, I think you should do the rest" he said. I looked up in the mirror, and saw that he managed to get about three quarters of it off. I used the scissors to do a much closer cut, and left it with stubble. All this time, he was watching me closely and smiling. I picked up the hair and was just about to chuck it down the toilet but was stopped at his request.

"What?"

"I want to use your hair."

"What for?"

"I want to be a big boy too. I want to use your hair to stick it onto my sausage so that I can look like you." I looked down at his completely naked body and tried to imagine his penis with my beard hair all around it.

"Well, the only glue I have is very strong glue, and it will hurt you if we use it."

"Make some glue" he said. "You know, from your pecker. If you make that sticky stuff then I can use it." I looked at him in utter bewilderment and concern.

"How do you know about that?"

"I saw my daddy do it once."

"He showed you?"

"No, I saw it by accident?"

"How?"

"I was going to the toilet late at night, and when I was walking back to my room I heard him making noises, so I opened his door to have a look. He was lying on his bed all naked and ready for sex. He was pulling it and I saw something happen, it was like a little fountain. I made a noise and he saw me and he was very angry."

"And he told you it was glue?"

"No."

"So how do you know that it's sticky?"

"Well, just before he saw me, I saw him use his underpants to wipe up his glue. The next day I looked in the laundry hamper and pulled out his underpants and some of it was stuck together. Just like what glue does to paper. I've tried making the glue myself but it doesn't seem to work for me. Can you make the glue?"

I just adored the naïveté of Jeremy, and found his story to be very heart touching. I didn't think he was at the right age to know the real truth about what he saw, so I didn't correct anything he said.

"Yes, I can make the glue" I said. "But I'm not going to do that, I think I have a Pritt glue stick downstairs." I went downstairs and found the Pritt and returned back to the bathroom with it. "Now, the hair isn't actually on your sausage, but it goes around the bottom of it." I said, handing him the Pritt.

"You do it."

"Me? Well, okay." I screwed a little bit of Pritt out and smeared some directly onto his completely bare mons pubis. Being the thick hard glue that Pritt was, I had to push quite hard in order to smear it on, and this caused a side effect which made Jeremy smile and blush. His penis became harder and stuck out, and I accidentally brushed against it, causing it to throb.

"That felt nice" he said.

"There, now you can put the hair on there." He took clumps of hair, and then pressed it against his body, and to my amazement, some of it actually stuck. "Look, I'm a man now" he said. It looked completely ridiculous of course, but I nevertheless looked at it carefully. In front of my very eyes stood this erect penis of a nine year old boy, with patches of hair around it.

"We can't tell anybody about this little game" I said, looking up at his smiling face. "Now, let me finish shaving." I shaved my remaining whiskers off completely and looked at my nicely clean shaven face in the mirror.

"You look much better" said Jeremy.

"OK time for your shower" I said, looking down at his hairy crotch and finding that his erection was still there. I was amazed for just how long he retained that hard-on. Did he play with it or something while I had shaved?

"Let's shower together" he said, eyes gleaming with excitement. I was unprepared for that suggestion. I carefully thought about the response I should give, both my morality and curiosity fighting in my brain as if their lives depended on it. I sat down on the side of the bath, and moved Jeremy in front of me.

"There is a certain line that should never be crossed between two friends, and especially between two friends whose age difference is as vast as ours. What you have just suggested will cross that line, and the consequences can be very bad for both of us, especially

me. If we do this, you must promise never ever to tell anybody, because if you do, you will lose me forever as a friend."

"I promise" he said.

"I'm being very serious here Jeremy, we can get hurt if our friendship goes too far. I don't want to get hurt, and I don't want you to get hurt either."

"I promise I won't tell anybody about this" he said. I knew that he was in serious mode now, because he had lost his erection and was no longer grinning like a Cheshire cat.

"Why do you want us to shower together?"

"Because then it will be easier for you to wash me" he replied.

"OK, you get into the shower, face the wall, and I will join you soon."

"OK" he said. He jumped into the shower, ran the water, and faced the wall as he was commanded. I undressed and threw my clothes into the hamper, and then stepped in behind him. "Can I turn around now?" he asked. I didn't answer; I was too speechless to utter a word. He turned around and looked up and down my body, examining it from tip to tail. He turned around again, picked up the soap, and turned back to me, offering the soap. "Will you wash me please?" I took the soap, lathered it in my hands (which was hard to do because they were trembling), knelt in front of him and took his right hand. I rubbed up and down his right arm, and after topping up on the lather, did his left.

"Turn around" I said. I turned the spray off, and then proceeded to do his back, and also his legs after asking him to spread them apart. I knew that his bum should also be cleaned, but I also knew that his bum is something I should not be touching.

"Are you going to clean my fanny?" he asked. I gulped. I lathered a bit more, and then put my hands on his bottom, and did circular motions, exposing his pucker. I then took a finger and ran it down his crack and over his sphincter, ensuring that I cleaned it.

"Do you want me to turn around so that you can do my front?"

"No" I barked. "I'll do your front from here." The reason I didn't want him to turn around was because while I was washing his bottom, I had developed a raging hard-on. It was so erect that it almost touched his bottom even though I was kneeling. I lathered some more, and then wrapped my arms around him, and washed his stomach and below his belly button, making sure that I got rid of the Pritt and hair. I lathered one more time, took a deep breath, and then went round again to wash his penis. His dick was rock hard too - it felt like my index finger it was so hard.

"Make sure you clean it properly, it gets very dirty" he said. I lathered up some more and then went back to his privates, paying close attention to his balls and shaft but almost had a heart attack when he closed his legs and trapped my hand on between them. There was no way he could not feel that there, yet he did not flinch. The soap dripping down from my hands was running down his legs, inadvertently lubricating the area between his legs and my raging hard on. I knew that we had by this stage crossed many more lines in our friendship, but my hormones were now in control of my actions and I was powerless to stop them. Jeremy's own hormones were also taking control over his body, and he started hip movements probably in response to my 'cleaning' him. These hip movements were also inadvertently causing his legs to massage my cock, giving me probably the best feeling I have ever had for a very long time. My right hand was stroking up and down while my left hand had found its way to holding and caressing his stomach, and his hips were slowly going back and forth. He was now leaning backwards, the small of his back resting on my head, and I was supporting him. His hip movements were slowly increasing in pace, giving my dick just the right kind of

massage it needed before it exploded. Of course, I couldn't see anything that was going on, but with the intense electrical surge which I felt throughout my entire body, I could only imagine that I had shattered the tiles at the top end of the bath. My sperm was something I was not prepared for him to see, so my right hand which was on Jeremy's dick shot up and covered his eyes. Both of his hands went up to my hand, and he tugged at it.

"Why did you stop?" he asked. I didn't respond, and from the tone of the voice I could hear he was annoyed. "I was almost there" he said.

"We have to stop" I said.

"Why?"

"What we're doing is wrong."

"But I almost had the feeling. Did you get the feeling?"

"No" I lied. By now my cock had gone limp and I stood up in the bath. I removed my hand, and then turned the water back on and proceeded to rinse him and myself off. As I was rinsing him off, I could feel his body shaking. I turned him around and I found that he was crying his eyes out.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"You must think I'm terrible" he said, through his sobs.

"I don't think you're terrible" I said.

"You must hate me" he said, still sobbing.

"Look Jeremy, I don't hate you, it's just that, well, I don't think you know what you're getting yourself in to. You're too young to understand what this is and what we are doing; it's not fair on you to allow you to continue like this. It's not fair on me either."

"Why is it not fair on you?" he asked.

"I'm getting feelings for you Jeremy, strong feelings, and one day you'll realize that these feelings are wrong and you'll want to change them or you'll want to have those feelings for a girl, and when you do, I'll get hurt."

"I won't ever hurt you" he said. "Never ever in a million years."

"We can't predict the future Jeremy, if we could, I would win the state lottery. Come now, it's time for bed."

Chapter 8: An Unexpected Guest

That Saturday night, I could not fall asleep. I kept playing the shower scene over and over in my mind, wondering how evil I had become or how badly I've damaged Jeremy's life. I got up at 1 am and put the television on because there was pretty much nothing else to do and I watched a movie during which I fell asleep. The morning came, and with it, a visitor to my makeshift bed. Jeremy was standing next to me in his pajamas. I reached out my arm, as in invitation for him to join me, which he did. He lay with his back towards me, and I wrapped my arm around him, and promptly fell back to sleep. An hour later, I opened my eyes and he was still there, like an obedient dog. I pressed my lips onto his head and I kissed him gingerly. I felt him hold my hand and squeeze it.

"How long have you known about the feeling?" I asked.

"Ever since my daddy made glue, I've been trying to do it and while I'm trying I get this feeling and then I have to stop."

"Does your daddy know you do it?"

"No, I think he would be mad at me."

"You won't be able to make glue for a few more years." I said.

"Why?"

"You have to start growing hair around your willy first."

"But I had hair there yesterday." This made me chuckle a little.

"You have to have your own hair there."

"When will that happen?"

"Listen Danny, all these questions are something your father has to answer for you, and he'll do it when the time is right. Also, we can't shower together anymore. We can't sleep together either." Danny turned around to look at me with an expression of utter disgust. He got up, and walked upstairs.

Things were never the same with Danny after that comment I made. We played games like Monopoly but his heart wasn't in it. We went to the beach just to walk around, but his enthusiasm wasn't there anymore. Later that evening when it was his time to shower, he even told me that his father said that he was old enough to shower alone. Of course I had no way of knowing whether or not that was true, and I wasn't going to phone his father and ask him. He went straight to bed after showering and he didn't even say goodnight. It was like this for the remainder of the week, and on at least two occasions I burst out crying to myself, mourning the lost opportunities of being so close and affectionate with somebody. Sure, I didn't want to do the sexual stuff in fear of corrupting him, but I didn't enjoy being ignored or put to one side. One day when he was carrying his teddy bear around, I asked him "How is Danny doing today?" and he responded

"His name is Rupert, and he's just fine." When he was watching television he would sit there, his arms wrapped around Rupert, and look at the boob tube. The expression "the lights are on but nobody is home" came into my mind as I looked at his blank, vacant space. One night, I could swear I saw a tear running down his cheek.

Friday night came, and Jeremy had his shower, and then went to bed. I came in after him and sat down on the side of the bed.

"Hello Jeremy" I said.

"Hello" he said, meekly.

"Your teacher called me today, she was worried about you." I left a pause in case he responded, but there was nothing. "I told her that you weren't feeling well." Still nothing. "Look Jeremy, I'm sorry I said what I did on Sunday. I didn't mean to say it."

"Why did you say it?" he asked.

"I said it to protect you" I said. "I said it to protect us. It would only lead to a miserable end for one of us, and because I'm the adult, it will be me who gets his head chopped off." When I get out of jail ten years from now you will be coming out of school, holding your girlfriends hand and saying "That man did things to me". Well, I can't let that happen!" He was still lying there, but I could see his beady eyes in the darkness indicating that he was still awake. "You're a very sweet boy, and I don't want to ruin your chances in life by turning you into a gay. I love you too much to let you do that to yourself. On the other hand, I don't want to lose you as a friend altogether. You've given me reason to live - something to look forward to. You are so beautiful all I want to do is hold you tight and never let you go, and that is why I am so afraid. One day, I will have to let you go and that day will be a very sad day for me. A very wise person once said "Better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all". Well, I'm asking you now, if you will give me a second chance. I'll do anything to get back our friendship that we had." There was a brief pause as I assumed Jeremy took all of this on in.

"Will you let me sleep with you?"

"Yes" I said.

"Will you let me shower with you?"

"Yes."

"Will you give me hugs and kisses?"

"Of course."

"Will you write a book about me?"

"I'd love to."

"Will you cover me with syrup and lick me all over?" I looked down at him now and saw that he was smiling again. I assumed at this point he was joking, although the suggestion was slightly tempting.

"Can I use honey instead?"

"Yes" he said, and started giggling. This was my cue.

"You silly monkey" I said, and I leaned over and started tickling him. This was the first time I had tickled him - I had always avoided touching him unnecessarily. He shrieked and squealed with laughter as I tickled him all over. "Come on, it's Friday night, you don't have to go to bed so early. Let's watch a movie together.

"OK" he said. I picked him up and carried him to the television, and put him down on the couch. I picked out "A Bug's Life" from my DVD collection and showed it to him, after which I went to the kitchen and did some microwave popcorn. I returned to find him in my lazy boy and waiting with the remote control.

"Come sit with me" he said.

"OK." He scuttled over to one side, and I sat next to him - it was a bit of a tight squeeze, but not uncomfortable. During the course of the movie, we changed positions, and he ended up lying on top of me, with his head resting on my chest. My hands were resting at the side of my body, but he fished them out and rested them on his stomach, with his hands on top of mine. He started tickling my hands with his fingers.

"Uncle Danny?"

"Yes sweetheart?"

"Am I gay?" I paused for a bit before answering.

"That's an interesting question" I said. "Why do you ask?"

"I tried to hug my friend at school but he pushed me back and called me gay."

"There is nothing wrong with hugging" I said. "I guess your friend is not as nice a person as you are. I don't believe that people really know what their sexual preference is going to be until they have passed puberty."

"What is puberty?"

"Well, that's the time when you grown hair down there" I said, gesturing at his dick.

"The film is finally finished" I thought to myself as the end credits started scrolling up the page. I laughed at all the outtakes, even though I had something completely different on my mind. Uncle Danny's hands were still lying on my stomach, and I so much wanted him to go down further to play with my sausage. It felt nice when I did it to myself, but it felt so much nicer when he did it in the shower. I wonder if he will let me sleep with him tonight. I wonder if he'll let me kiss him again.

"OK champ it's time for bed" he said.

"Can I sleep with you tonight?"

"Sure, you go there and I'll join you after I shower" he said. I ran upstairs, and jumped into his bed, and he came into the bedroom a few minutes later.

"I'm just getting my towel" he said.

"Wait" I said, as he turned around to leave the bedroom. "Can you give me a kiss?" He smiled at me, and then he came closer, sat on the bed and leaned down. He kissed me on the forehead, and then on the nose, and then on the lips. It was beautiful. It felt so much nicer when he didn't have any hair on his lips. He kissed me for a few seconds and then stood up again.

"Wow" I said. After he left the room, I tried my hardest to stay awake, but it was getting harder and harder to keep my eyes open...

"Oh... my... God..." I slowly opened my eyes, and found that I had once again cocooned Jeremy in my arms. He was facing me, and still sleeping, faint snorts coming from his mouth. He was so beautiful and Angelic like that, I wished this moment would last forever. "What do you think you are doing?" I looked up at the door and standing right there was none other than my sister. I suddenly pushed Jeremy away from me, accidentally pushing him right off the bed causing him to go "Ow" as he landed on the floor, and my sisters face went from disgusted to utterly mortified when she realized that Jeremy was a naked young boy. She immediately turned around and walked to the lounge, and I knew her well enough to know she did irrational things without thinking. I jumped out of bed, leaping over the confused Jeremy who was picking himself up off the floor, and then dashed on behind her. She had the phone to her ear, presumably waiting for whomever she was phoning to answer, and I grabbed the phone away from her, looked at "911" on the display, and then hung up the call.

"Have you gone mad?" I shouted at her.

"I would ask you the very same question!" she shouted straight back. "You have a ten year old boy in your bed!"

"I'm nine" said Jeremy as he appeared in the lounge.

"Oh, how silly of me, he's only nine. Well that makes it perfectly acceptable" she said, sarcastically.

"Sweetheart, don't you want to get dressed" I said, in the hopes of getting rid of him.

"Sweetheart? Oh well I suppose this explains why you never got married." I pointed an angry finger at her.

"That is not fair" I said. "There is nothing sexual going on between me and Jeremy, its purely platonic."

"I saw the way you had your arms wrapped around him, that's not normal! Who is he anyway?"

"He's the son of a friend who works for the National Guard" I said.

"And he's here why?"

"I'm looking after him."

"That's a funny way to be looking after him" she said.

"Look, just sit down for a bit, OK?" To my surprise, she actually sat down.

"Jeremy is... a very special boy. Yes, I do sleep with him. Yes, I do hug him and kiss him. I love him - I love him as if he was my very own son." At this point, Jeremy returned, and I beckoned for him to come over. He came over, and I wrapped my arms around him, and we both looked at her. "I know our friendship is wrong, but if we're not hurting anybody else by it, does it really matter? I have done nothing to Jeremy that he has not instigated himself - he has been the dominant one. I love him too much to ever want to hurt him."

"Please don't send Uncle Danny away, I love him very much" said Jeremy. "He's the bestest friend I have ever had."

"Please, I'm asking you as a brother, a blood relative, don't turn me in to the cops. Not only will I get put in jail, they will take Jeremy and make him go to a head doctor. It's not fair on him to be punished like that. They kill people like me in jail. Mother will probably die of a heart attack. Please Christine, don't rat us out."

"Please Auntie Christine, don't tell on us" said Jeremy. At this moment, the doorbell rang.

"Now what the hell is going on?" I muttered to myself as I walked to the door. I opened, and there were two police officers there. The black one, who closely resembled Lou from The Simpsons, started talking first.

"Good morning Sir, did somebody from this address call 911?"

"911? No, I don't think so" I said, lying through my teeth.

"I see. Would you mind if we had a look around?" he asked.

"Uh - sure come on in, officers." I opened the door and they both entered. I noticed that the black one had a sergeant rank while the other had no rank.

"Are you here to take Uncle Danny away?" asked Jeremy in a very depressed tone.

"That's a very interesting question" said the black cop. "Do you think we should be taking him away?" Jeremy shook his head no.

"It was my fault" said Christine.

"What's that Ma'am?" asked the other cop, who had so far not said anything.

"I err - just recently arrived and I accidentally set off the silent alarm which dials 911 automatically."

"Is that a fact?" said the black one again. "Do you two have any ID?"

"Mine is in my bedroom" I said.

"That's fine sir, maybe you'd like to put on some pants while you're fetching it" said the first cop. I realized then that I was still in my boxer shorts. I went to the bedroom, fetched my driver's license and then went back to hand it to the policeman, who was already looking at Christine's. He looked at it, and then frowned. "What is your occupation?" he asked.

"I'm an author" I said. He looked at me, and back at the picture, back at my sister and then handed me both our ID's.

"Please be careful in future" he said. "Come on Jeff, let's go." They turned around and left the house, closing the door behind them. I sat down on the ground, put my head on my knees and started sobbing. That was way too close for my liking and my nerves were completely shattered.

"Don't worry Uncle Danny. They're gone now" said Jeremy, who came over, and hugged me as best he could. "Please don't cry" he added. I put up one of my hands, and he grabbed it for me, and rubbed it. I looked up at my sister who was just sitting there with her arms folded.

"Thank you" I said.

"I did that for mother's sake" she said.

The week was considerably less fun than it could have been without my sister. Jeremy and I agreed that it would be best if we didn't shower together and sleep together while she was here, so Jeremy slept in my bed while I used the Lazy Boy. On Thursday evening, I got another visitor who arrived just after we had dinner.

"Daniel Bird?"

"Yes?" I asked.

"I am Lieutenant Commander John Fiske of the Chaplain Corps. May I come in?"

"Sorry padre, I'm not interested" I said, closing the door.

"It's about your brother" he said, while the door was closing. I opened the door again.

"My brother?" I asked.

"I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but Steven Tate passed away this afternoon in a deep sea diving exercise accident." I froze. I opened my mouth to speak but nothing came out. I turned around to walk back inside, but my legs gave way and I fell to my knees.

"Uncle Danny are you alright?" asked Jeremy as he came rushing towards me. He lifted up my face and saw that I was just about to burst out in tears, and then he looked up at the visitor at the door. My sister appeared behind him with a "what the hell is going on" look on her face.

"No" said Jeremy. "No no no. No no no no no."

"Jeremy" I gasped. "I'm so sorry."

"No no no" he continued, shaking his head from side to side. I felt the hand of the soldier touch my shoulder as he tried to comfort me, but my attention was that on the inconsolable boy in front of me. "No no no" he said for the last time, his voice going into a higher pitch and then he cried - a long silent cry. Tears were flooding out of my eyes now, I could really feel the massive loss that Jeremy was experiencing. I pulled him in to me, and he naturally closed his arms around me. His whole body was shaking from the silent sobs, and I could feel him breathe back in before he let it out real loud. He stood there, crying for several more minutes before he spoke.

"Why did he have to die" he asked with great difficulty.

"I don't know" I said.

"It's not fair" is all he could manage, before doing the high pitched cry again. I picked him up, and carried him while he was still cradling me to the couch. My sister invited the uniformed man into the house and she made us all coffee, and she made a glass of sugar water for Jeremy. He explained that the accident happened during the final diving exercise where they went down to 55 meters. Apparently his tank failed, he panicked and then shot straight up to the surface. He was still breathing at the top, but suffered a severe case of the bends and died shortly afterwards, despite the efforts of putting him in the decompression chamber in sufficient time. Jeremy asked if he could please go to bed and I agreed, and took him to my room. He stripped down to his underwear and climbed in bed.

"Would you like your teddy?" I asked.

"Yes please" he said. I handed him his teddy bear and he cuddled it like he usually did.

"I hope I can take him with me" he said.

"Take him where?" I asked.

"To visit mummy and daddy" he said. "I will go to sleep now and never wake up and then I'll be with my mummy and daddy again." I went back to the lounge and told the two of them what he had said before I burst out crying again. My sister, who had spent the last week realizing that Jeremy and I had a special kind of bond and not a sexual one, was being very supportive. After the military priest left, she gave me a big hug, and made me some French toast, and then sent me to bed too.

"Jeremy needs you now more than ever" she said, as she pointed upstairs. I went upstairs and found Jeremy fast asleep in exactly the same position as I had left him, still holding his teddy bear. I climbed into the bed next to him, but decided not to wrap my arm around him. At about 2 am the following morning, I was awoken by him sobbing heavily, so I turned around and wrapped my arm around him and his bear. He stopped crying soon afterwards, and we both fell back to sleep.

Chapter 9: Ploratio multus plus plurimum

Zombified. That is what he was like for the remainder of the week. He wouldn't talk, he would barely eat. He would look at the television with a mesmerized expression on his face and you knew that he wasn't paying any attention to it. The only time he left the house was to go to the funeral and that was only because both Christine and I managed to convince him it was the right thing to do. It was an interesting service which was kindly arranged and paid for by the Coast Guard. The priest who came to deliver the news came down to perform the service and asked if either myself or Jeremy wanted to say a few words. I looked over to Jeremy and he shook his head no. He didn't cry throughout the entire service - he was not sad, he was angry. They folded the flag and presented it to Jeremy who turned his head away. The petty officer who was presenting it to him turned to me, and I accepted the flag. Jeremy turned and faced forward again and watched his father being lowered into the hole in the ground. He was clutching onto his teddy bear, so tight you would think it was going to choke. Many people came up to Christine and myself to pass on their condolences, including his boss, Master Chief Petty Officer Franklyn.

"Your brother was a fine man" he said, as he cocooned my hand with both of his and shook it sternly. "Chief Petty Officer Tate was one of my most valued members of staff, and it is with deep sorrow that he has been taken away from us."

"Thank you" I said. I didn't think then that it was appropriate to correct them all by saying that I wasn't actually the brother of the recently deceased. The last person to come and see us was the priest himself.

"Will you and Jeremy be at home tomorrow, Mr Bird?"

"Yes, why?"

"A Ms. Holloway from Social Services will be calling by."

That evening after Jeremy went to bed, I joined my sister in the living room.

"They're coming tomorrow" I said. "Social services are coming to take Jeremy away."

"What will happen to him?" she asked, looking up from her magazine.

"I don't know, he'll get put in a foster home or something I guess."

"Can you apply to be his foster parent?"

"I've already looked into that" I said. "But they only allow married couples to be foster parents. Hey, we have the same surname as each other, we can pretend we're married."

"Oh no, I'm not lying again" she said. "Besides, I'm off tomorrow."

"Why did you come down again?"

"Just to see you" she replied. "I had this feeling like I needed to see you, so I came down. I didn't think it would be such an experience for me though."

"You're not going to say anything to mom, are you?"

"About Jeremy? No. She doesn't need to know anything. Besides, it seems like this complication is resolving itself. So does this make you a pedophile then?" she asked. I smiled at her.

"I deliberately looked up in the dictionary for that word, and I can happily say that I'm not. A pedophile is somebody who desires to have sex with children. I don't desire to have sex with Jeremy. I've thought long and hard about my feelings for him, and I think it's safe for me to say that I have nothing more than a father's love

for his son. I think what it has shown me is that I'm ready to be a father, and now I must just make the necessary arrangements."

"Well that's good to know" she said. "Mom's always asking me if you're dating yet, I think she'd like some grandchildren."

"I know" I said. A tear rolled down my cheek. And another. And another now, in quicker succession. My sister leaned forward to confirm that she saw precipitation from my eyes.

"Are you okay?" she asked.

"No" I said, shaking my head. She came over and sat next to me, holding me close to her bosom. "I'll never see Jeremy again" I said, and I burst out crying, and buried my face deep into her shoulder.

I was sitting on some stairs, my head resting on my knees, and I watched the boys play tag like they did every Saturday morning. There was a man chanting in the background to some really weird music, like the kind I heard once on a Simpsons episode. I got up, and walked out of the alcove onto the pavement, and there he was, sitting on his haunches, arms stretched out the ground. He couldn't see me because his eyes were closed. A very fat woman with blond hair came riding by on a monocycle and said good morning as she rode by. I turned to the beach, and continued to watch the boys as they played tag. The one who was it came running up to me, and tapped me.

"You're it" he said, and he smiled and looked at me, giggling. Then he disappeared - everybody disappeared and I found myself alone on the beach. I could see the sea, the beach and the sea again on the other side, as if it were a small peninsula. Somebody was approaching me, and I stood still, as if riveted to the spot. He took his time strolling towards me, zigzagging, feet sometimes in the water, and sometimes not. I could feel the sun beating down on my chest and legs, and looked down to find myself wearing my swimming trunks I always wore a few weeks before. I looked back up and the man was right there in front of me. It was my father. He was looking down at me and smiling.

"Hello Jeremiah" he said, resting his hand on my head. "You are looking well." I looked up at his smiling face. The sun was behind him, making him glow eerily. He was wearing a white long sleeved shirt, one that I had never seen before, long white trousers and sandals. He dropped his hand past my face and onto my chin, lifting my eyes back to his.

"Why did you leave?" I asked.

"It was my time to go, my precious. I have another purpose to fill, a special job that I must do."

"Who will look after me?" I asked.

"Everything has been taken care of" he said. "Somebody will come visit you today to sort everything out. Everything has been planned since you were born, it has all been written."

"I'm going to miss you" I said. Dad reached behind his back and gave me my teddy bear.

"When you hold Steven, you will be holding me" he said. "I will always be looking after you, even though you will not see me." I held my bear which was now called Steven and looked back up at my father.

"I must go now, sweetheart."

"Will I ever see you again?"

"I cannot answer that question" he said, smiling broadly. "Goodbye my son" he said, and he bent his head down and kissed me on my forehead. He turned around and walked away, leaving me basking

in the sun holding my teddy bear. I looked down at the bear and back up to find that I was once again all alone on the beach.

I woke up with a start the next morning. The sun was shining straight into my eyes as I had accidentally fallen asleep on the sofa while feeling sorry for myself the previous night. I turned to my right and almost jumped out of my skin when I saw Jeremy standing right next to me. He was wearing only his underpants and clutching his teddy bear close to his chest.

"Jeremy" I said, now sitting up and turning to face him. "Is everything OK?" Without saying anything, he came closer and then hugged me, draping his teddy bear on my back. "Don't worry" I said, reassuringly. "Everything is going to be OK."

"I know" said Jeremy, with a silent voice.

"Are you hungry?"

"Very" he said. He went to go and get dressed, and Christine assisted with the breakfast, which we made in abundance. After breakfast she said her goodbyes, hugging both myself and Jeremy and then left to go back home. After I saw her off, I noticed another car pull up, and a lady stepped out. She had a clipboard in her hand and made a few notes before walking up to the front door where I was still standing. This was the only time I had wished that she was a Jehova's Witness.

"Mr Bird?" she asked.

"Yes" I said. I knew already that she knew my last name was different to Steve Tate so there was probably no doubt in her mind that I was not the brother.

"I am Ms. Holloway from the Department of Social Services, here is my identification" she said, holding up her official identification. "May I come in please?"

"Sure, Ms. Holloway" I said, and she stepped into the house.

"Hello Jeremy" she said, looking down at him. "I'm very sorry to hear about your daddy" she said.

"Have you come to take me away?" he asked. He never was one to beat around the bush.

"Well because you have no mommy and daddy, and you also have no other relatives, I have to find you a nice foster home. Do you know what that is?"

"No."

"Well, a foster home is a home where you will live and it will be just like your real home."

"Can't I just stay here?"

"Well, that all depends on Mr. Bird." She now looked back at me. "Jeremy wants to know if he can stay here. Can he?"

"Excuse me?" I asked, now confused.

"Jeremy would like to know if he can stay here. Would you be willing to be his foster father?"

"Seriously?" I asked.

"Mr Bird, if you do not wish to be Jeremy's foster father, I would have to take him from here and place him in a temporary institution, and then look for capable and willing foster parents. This could take weeks, possibly even months. Jeremy has indicated he'd like to stay here, and his father, the late Steven Franklyn made it clear in his request that his son be left in your care."

"Oh" I said.

"Of course, if you can think of any reasons why you would be unsuitable to be his guardian, or if you just simply don't have the time and resources, I can understand."

"No" I said. "Wait, yes" She smiled at me now.

"Are you willing to become Jeremy's foster parent?" she asked, slowly and calmly.

"Yes, I am" I said. "But I thought I had to be married?"

"Marriage only required for adoption, Mr Bird. Please sign these foster application papers plus this government grant application and we will send you your certificate of legal guardianship in four to six weeks."

"What happens to Jeremy during that time?" I asked.

"Well, if you don't say anything, I won't" she said. I handed her back the signed papers.

"Are you serious?" I asked.

"You forgot to sign one more thing" she said, and dipped into her bag and hauled out a copy of my latest book. "For my daughter, Emily" she said, beaming.

"So I'm staying here with Uncle Danny?" asked Jeremy.

"Yes" she said, smiling. Jeremy ran to her and hugged her around the waist.

"Thank you so much nice lady" he said.

"He is so cute" she said, and mussed up his hair. "I have to go and inspect the house now if that's OK with you" she said.

"No problem." I led her to the guest bedroom which my sister had just previously vacated and suggested that's where Jeremy sleeps. She seemed to be fine with that. She looked at the rest of the house, continuously making notes, and then accepted a cup of coffee before leaving. We found out that I couldn't apply for adoption of Jeremy because I was single, but she said that I shouldn't really worry because with fostering they hardly ever challenge the foster parents unless there is a specific complaint. She then said her goodbyes and left. I came walking back into the lounge and Jeremy jumped on me, knocking me over completely, like a tiger jumping onto his prey, and while he had my pinned down he kissed me, again and again.

"I'm the happiest boy in the world" he said. He smiled down at me, and then a single tear dripped from his eye and fell into mine. He repositioned himself and laid on top of me, resting his head on my chest.

"I love you Uncle Danny" he said.

"I love you too" I said, and I wrapped my arms around him. We just lay there, on my carpet, holding each other. I had no idea what the future held for us, or whether or not we would get sexually involved with each other, but one thing I knew for sure was, at this precise moment in my life I was feeling the happiest I had ever felt.

And it was wonderful.

The ♥ End