



RAUN

by Walt Kauffmann

When Walter found out about his diabetes, he also found he had to shop more frequently for fresh foods, like vegetables and skim milk. Not because he used so much, but quite the opposite, he used so little at a time of things he had previously done without. Although this was annoying in the winter months, Walter had come to enjoy these shopping trips in the warmer days of spring, and summer, especially summer. For it was in summer that the boys were often about, and one fine day, Walter found himself in the soda pop aisle, choosing something without sugar, when behind him he heard the catpaw pounce of sneakered youth. He turned to see a brown haired boy of about twelve leap again, tee-shirt rising to reveal the subtle undulations of warm looking boyish belly, but missing the desired top shelf bag of corn chips. Even his belly-button was uncovered momentarily, miraculously, as the

horizon reveals the sun at daybreak. Immediately Walter interceded.

“Let me reach those for you,” he said, smiling as best he could at this boy who overwhelmed him with his beauty. It wasn’t anything Walter could quite describe in words, like the wonderful exuding of positive health that radiated from the boy, or the narrowness of his hips that yet could never be described as skinny, or the length of his slender legs and their perfect proportion to the trunk, arms, square set shoulders, and oval head crowned with Norman Rockwell crew-cut hair gone haywire. It was not even the boy’s pretty face, with puckish nose set beneath fancy blue eyes, over an Irish spray of freckles on alizarin tinted cheeks. Not one aspect, or several, or all, could encompass the totality of this boy’s sweet loveliness, which went far beyond the sum of all his physical parts.

“Thanks, Mister,” the boy grinningly responded, and curiously paused, such a holy and devilish grin that shone from his eyes as well as smiling lips. The moment completely took Walter’s breath away, although he continued, at least, to smile; as the boy smiled back, corn chips in hand, before turning finally, and trotting down the aisle. These days, often boys of twelve will regard men like Walter so suspiciously, as though he had already done something wrong, just by existing. For this reason alone, such a moment of openness and friendliness was rare, and due completely, Walter knew, to some wonderful circumstance by which this boy rejected, or was unaware of the society’s overwhelming disapproval of his friendliness to Walter, a complete stranger. But weren’t Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed for their inhospitality toward strangers, and not for sexual sins, as bible thumpers would have it? This wonderful boy had therefore become more sacred in Walter’s eyes, and he worshiped and was gladdened by the sweet spirit of the boy, as well as being enchanted and, yes, aroused by his physical loveliness. The encounter cheered Walter for the whole day, as similar encounters often had; but he certainly did not think he would ever see this same boy again, let alone speak to him, and lo, befriend him.

Walter had once had a boyfriend, who had been just days under fourteen when they first met, and they had been friends and even sometime lovers, or sex experimenters anyway, for some three years. It was during that time period, and because of that boy, that Walter had re-awakened in himself an interest in scale model car building. Although that boy had moved on to other friends, and girls, Walter kept up his interest in the hobby, and continued to build models, and shop for paints, cars, putty, decals, and magazines about the hobby.

One fine warm summer day, at a strip mall not far from his house in the suburbs outside New York City, Walter entered the local hobby shop to see what was

new. Amongst the shelves piled high with one twenty-fifth scale model car kits, Walter turned a '28 Ford kit over in his hands, and then a '58 Chevy kit. As he was about to bring the Ford to the cashier, he turned to see a boy standing next to him. How had he snuck up without Walter noticing? More than that, who was he? Walter recognized the boy, but couldn't place him at first.

"You like model cars?" the boy asked, and Walter was so surprised that a boy would even speak to him. That was it, the boy from the supermarket.

"Oh, yes... you too?" Walter replied. Yes, it was the same boy who couldn't reach the corn chips. The hair was a bit longer now, but the hips were as slender as ever, the shoulders square, so masculine, and yet fragile, too. "Which do you think is better, the '28 Ford, or the '58 Chevy?"

"The Ford, definitely," the boy said confidently.

"I like Fords, too," Walter said.

"I like it because it's old, I like old cars!"

"Oh, yes, that's true, it sure is older," Walter replied, "well, which one are you getting?"

"I don't know, I was gonna get the Jo-Han '31 Cadillac Sport Phaeton, but I might get something else, I guess," the boy said, with a sudden sadness apparent in his tone, that Walter quite felt it in his own heart.

"Why not get the Cadillac?" Walter asked.

"I only have five bucks," the boy said, holding the box end up then, toward Walter, so he could see the price tag, which read \$5.49. "Plus tax," the boy added.

"Well, I could help you out," Walter offered.

"Nah, I'm not allowed to take from strangers, and my mother knows I only have five dollars."

"First, I'm not a stranger, I'm Walter, and let's see..." Walter said, thinking for a second, then he looked at his '28 Ford model, "this is \$4.29, so you buy this, I'll buy that, and then we'll switch."

"But my mother checks the receipt, and puts my change back in my bank."

"We're just switching models, not the receipts," Walter smiled, and winked at the boy.

"Walter, did you reach the corn chips for me at the supermarket?" the boy asked, surprising Walter, who now was concerned about what this question might mean, and whether the boy would now be afraid of him.

"Yes, that was me," he said, tentatively.

The boy thereupon smiled so sweetly, that Walter was immediately relieved

before the boy even spoke. "I thought I remembered you, I'm Raun," he said, and stuck out his hand to shake.

"Ron?" Walter asked, thinking he had mis-heard, or the boy had an accent, maybe.

"No, Raun, like Shawn but with a... 'R'... Raun." As he said this last part, he threw his shoulders back, and stuck out his almost flat chest. Walter was touched by Raun's pride.

"Raun." Walter pronounced it correctly this time, and shook the little charmer's hand. "Well, Raun, here then, you pay for this, and I'll get the Cadillac." They proceeded to pay, and stepped outside into the warm summer breezes, where they made their clever exchange.

"Thanks, Walter," Raun said, pausing, and then adding, "I guess I'll see you around."

"Yeah, okay, sure," Walter clumsily spoke out, "say, which way are you going... maybe I could give you a ride?"

"I live over in Barnburg, but I got my bike," Raun pointed to his BMX bike as he walked toward it.

"Well, I live in Barnburg, too, and I got my pick-up truck, if you want to throw your bike in back," Walter offered.

"Nah..." was the reply, so Walter walked to his truck, saying, "see ya then," as cheerily as he could manage, when he heard Raun's shout.

"Hey! Okay, I don't mind if I do." So Walter lifted Raun's bike into the back of the truck, and they both got in.

As Walter drove toward the Barnburg section of town, he asked Raun, "where should I drop you off?"

"Oh, just drive to your house, and I'll ride home from there - I ride all over town, I know every street." Walter thought of putting the radio on, but then decided against it, since he didn't know what Raun's musical tastes were. "Are you married?" Raun asked.

"No," Walter replied.

"You live alone then?"

"Yes."

"I thought so," Raun said, which so surprised Walter, that he looked away from his driving, and looked right at Raun. But Raun was smiling so sweetly, that Walter couldn't imagine he meant anything hurtful or suspicious by what he said. Walter smiled back at Raun, and it was easy. When a sweet boy like Raun smiles, that

makes Walter's smile come naturally. It was the only smile that Walter knew to be authentic, that is to say, he didn't feel phony with Raun. Inside, Walter felt he was sweet, too, just like Raun, and it felt good to be sweet.

Walter turned into his driveway, and stopped his truck next to his little house. They both hopped out and Walter said, "Let's make sure we've got the right models." They both looked in their bags, and things checked out, so Walter lifted the BMX bike out from the pick-up's bed, and set it on the ground. The slight strain of the lifting made just the wrong internal pressure in Walter's belly, so that he couldn't help but fart.

"Ha ha, I heard that, ha ha ha," Raun's laughs escalated into treble toned boyish giggles that were infectious, and Walter laughed, too, even though he was rather embarrassed about the whole thing. When things calmed down a bit, Raun's eyes opened wide noticing something on Walter's porch. "Oh, is that a fishing pole on your porch?" he asked excitedly.

"Yes, it's just an old home made one," Walter answered.

"Neat, can I look at it?" Raun ran up on the porch and didn't wait for an answer.

"Sure," was Walter's answer anyway.

"Did you make this?" Raun asked, turning the old wood pole in his hands reverently.

"My father made it, a long time ago."

"I wish I knew how to fish, I'd like to go fishing," Raun seemed to be hunting up an invitation, and Walter was glad to extend one.

"I'll show you how I fish with that thing, if you want to come fishing with me sometime."

"Really? When you going? What day?" Raun was more anxious than Walter could even have hoped for.

"Well, I don't have anything planned right now, but I usually go pretty early on Saturdays, around seven A.M." Walter was conjecturing, really, but Raun listened intently.

"Can I come?" he asked.

"Sure," said Walter, "any Saturday you get here around seven or so, we'll go fishing. If your mom lets you go. Don't just go sneaking off."

"No, I won't," Raun promised, "she'll let me go." He carefully placed the old pole back down, hopped off the porch, and straddled his bike. "I gotta go home now." He held his brown paper sack, with the receipt stapled to it, in his left hand as he

rode away, shouting back, "Bye! Thanks!"

"Bye, Raun!" Walter yelled back, with a newly acquired joy in his heart, a joy that would be replaced that evening with a curiously hopeful loneliness.

Walter's loneliness became more ordinary that week, as he went to and from work, and about his daily, and evening routines, so that by Friday evening, as he went to bed, he only thought about Raun momentarily before falling asleep, because surely, he would not see Raun again soon, for ever was it that way with him and boys. Even so, Saturday morning, at seven-ten in the A.M., Walter's heart did leap with joy at the first sound of a knocking at his front porch door. Their smiles and their secret desire to hug one another got circumvented into simple hello's, but the adventure of two boys was about to begin, for now were both of a mind, and Walter, even at age thirty-eight was like a twelve year old in enthusiasm.

"You ready?" Raun asked.

"I didn't think you'd come today, but I'm ready, just let me put my dishes in the sink." Walter went into the kitchen, and Raun followed. Walter asked, "Can you stay all day, I can bring a lunch?"

"Sure, whatta ya got?" Raun asked, flopping on a kitchen chair by the table.

"Bologna okay?"

"Sure."

"Mustard or mayonnaise?"

"Both."

"Both?" Walter asked, amused.

"Yeah, one on each side," Raun explained. Walter quickly made two sandwiches, packing both in a small cooler he had brought down from over the refrigerator, and also placing a couple of ice packs inside, and two soda cans.

"I only have diet ginger ale, but we can get whatever you like at the bait shop on the way."

"Cool," Raun responded.

Walter put a small box on top of the cooler. "We're ready to go!" he said.

"What's that?"

Walter grinned, and said, "That's for worms."

"Eeeooo," Raun grimaced, "you gonna put them on the hook?"

"No, you are," Walter laughingly teased.

"Eeeooo," Raun repeated.

"Let's go!" Walter urged, and they brought the cooler and the box, and the fishing pole out, loaded the truck, and drove off toward the reservoir, where Walter

liked to fish. Raun knew they were going to the reservoir, too, because that is where a lot of people fished and even swam in the summer, although they really weren't supposed to. Nobody ever came to chase people away.

"Where do you fish, the south shore?" Raun asked.

"No, you know the waterfall, up the north end by the woods?" Raun nodded. Walter continued, "Well, I go up river from there, into the woods. There's a spot where the river gets narrow, like a stream, but deep. I've never seen anybody else there. That's where I go, you'll see, it's beautiful." He looked at Raun, and the boy was listening intently, and smiling. Like holding a ladder for someone, you can feel their ascent, step by step; so Walter could feel his words connecting with Raun, feel him absorb each new word, and climb to a place he had never been.

They stopped for worms at the bait shop, and Raun picked out two drinks in cans; a Yoo-Hoo for lunch, and a Pepsi for after. They drove off the main road, onto a dirt one that went up into the woods, and at a clear open spot, Walter parked the truck. "It's all on foot from here," he said, and Walter carried the cooler with everything else in it, except the old wooden fishing pole. Raun wanted to carry that, and Walter let him. They walked toward the sound of the waterfall, until coming to the river, and then they turned upstream, and followed it into the trees. The river got narrower, like Walter had said it would, and they came to a place where there were a few less trees, and the river looked as if the water hardly moved, and the water was black in the shade of several tall white ash trees. Unlike the rest of the woods, this spot had grass under the trees, and the grass went right to the water's edge. They set things down by a big tree, and Walter threaded a worm onto a hook, while Raun rubbed shoulders with him, learning the technique that kept the worm on the hook, but left enough hanging free to wiggle around in the water, to attract a fish. Walter showed Raun how to cast the line into the water a couple of times, but then they sat down and Raun held the old pole, because with this kind of fish, you wait.

"Did your father make this pole just for you?" Raun asked.

"My father made poles for a lot of people, but when he made this one, he said it was the best one he ever made, and he gave it to me," Walter said.

"Where's your father now?"

"He died a few years ago."

"Oh, sorry."

"That's okay, Raun. What about your father, you never mention him?"

"I never met him, I don't know where he is."

"Really? That's too bad," Walter commiserated.

“My stepfather’s in Texas, though. My mom and him had a big fight and he went down there, ‘cause he’s got family there. I don’t care if he never comes back,” Raun speculated.

“Don’t you get along with him?”

“It’s him that doesn’t get along,” Raun objected, “not me. He never did anything with me. He just drinks and fights with my mom,” then Raun added, in a lower voice, “except when he has sex with her. They’re always doing it, all over the house. I have to go to my room.” Just then, the first fish bit, and the two fishers had great fun in getting the net under it, and removing the hook carefully, because Walter said it was small and they should throw it back. As the morning wore on, they threw many back, even a bit bigger than Raun thought they should.

“If we caught a really big one,” Walter asked, “would you want to take it home to your mother to cook and eat?”

Raun had to think about that for a minute. “Nah, I guess I don’t really like eating fish,” he finally admitted.

“I don’t either,” Walter admitted, too. Raun laughed. They both laughed. “I just like fishing,” Walter finally said.

“Yeah, me too.”

Soon Raun laid the old pole on the grass, for they both were hungry, and it was time for lunch. Walter washed the fish smell off his hands in the river water, and Raun did, too. In fact, Raun did everything exactly as his older friend did, next unwrapping a sandwich, and popping the soft drink cans’ top, and swallowing big gulps of the drink, belching loudly, and chomping on the sandwich. Walter had made the sandwiches the same, and found he liked the mayonnaise with mustard mixture. “Mmm, it is good this way,” he told Raun. The twelve year old beamed with pride. After eating, the two friends sat under the big leaning white ash tree, for it provided plenty of shade from the hot August sun. Wisps of intended sideburns clotted with perspiration on Raun’s cheekbone, and Walter watched as Raun fearlessly waved a lazy bumble bee away. Raun stood up and took his tee shirt off, revealing all of what Walter had only glimpsed in the supermarket.

“It’s hot today!” he said. So Walter jumped up, too, and took off his tee shirt.

“Wanna jump in the river?” Walter asked.

“With our jeans on?”

“With our jeans off!” Walter answered. Raun grinned and popped his button, unzipped his fly, and was out of his jeans in two seconds. Walter followed his lead, and Raun pulled the elastic of his BVD’s out from his front, looked at himself, and

back at Walter, still grinning.

"These, too?" Raun asked.

Walter hooked his thumbs under the elastic of his own BVD's, and replied, "Up to you."

Raun made his decision, and slipped off the BVD's, dropping them on his jeans. He turned and stepped to the river's edge, and Walter watched his little fanny jiggle ever so slightly as he walked. Walter joined him in nudity, and met him at the water's edge.

"How deep is it?" Raun wondered aloud.

"About up to my chest," Walter offered.

"My whole head is only up to your chest!" Raun exclaimed. He put his toe in. "It's cold!" he added.

"C'mon," Walter chided, jumping in. But Raun sat down again, by the tree, and watched as Walter clambered out the opposite bank.

"Hey, I think the grass is greener over here!" Walter yelled over.

"How do you know you're not gonna step on a fish?" Raun asked, standing up again, by the river bank.

"It's their world in there, they can move pretty fast, and they don't want to be stepped on," Walter explained. He watched Raun standing there, and realized that he hadn't even thought about how easily they had become friends. Now, when he did think about it, it seemed incredible that he was naked with a naked boy, and it seemed so natural to both of them. It had to, or else one of them would be uncomfortable, or embarrassed, and covering up. Raun leaned forward, and with a little hop, toes pointing down balletically, slipped into the water with hardly a splash at all. His head went under for just a second, and reappeared with a shout.

"Yuck, the bottom's all gooey!" he cried out, splashing and treading water. Walter slid in again and swam over to Raun.

"It's just mud," he laughed. They swam away from each other, toward each other, around each other, splashed each other. They were just two boys skinny dipping on a lazy summer day.

"Where'd all the fish go?" Raun asked at one point, but later, he shouted, "Something just touched my leg!" They both laughed about it.

"See, they're there, even if you can't see them," Walter said. When they tired, they climbed out of the black water. The steep muddy bank proved difficult for Raun, but Walter gladly hoisted him up. Having no towels, they found a spot where sunlight filtered through the trees, and lay upon the warm long grasses. Raun among the

yellow and green drew his forearm across his eyes and rested it there, for shade. Walter watched the lad's loveliness and soft smoothness, a visual contrast to the pattern of the grasses.

"I'm gonna get a tan on my dick," Raun flatly said, and then lifted his forearm to look at Walter. When Walter smiled at this remark, Raun smiled, too, pleased he had humoured his friend. After a little while, when they seemed dry enough, both stood, in no hurry to dress.

"Should we fish some more?" Raun wanted to know.

"Up to you," Walter replied.

"I guess I'll put my jeans on," Raun said, bending to reach his BVD's.

"You've got grass on your ass."

"Where?" Raun twisted, but couldn't see it. "Brush it off, okay?" Walter happily obliged him.

"There," he said.

"Did you get the backs of my legs..." Raun suggested, as Walter lightly passed his fingertips over the tender silky skin, "and both cheeks?"

"Yes," Walter answered, and Raun turned to face him.

"That tickled," he said, grinning conspiratorially, "I got a boner."

Since some comment seemed to be called for, Walter decided to be very honest. "It's a nice one," he said. And he was honest, too, for he did think it a very nice one, all white with a pink tip, and no hair yet to hide it at all.

"Really?" Raun asked.

"Oh yes."

"Do you do sex with ladies?"

"No, not anymore... not much ever," Walter admitted.

"Do you like me?" Raun asked, adding, "that way?"

"Yes," Walter admitted this too, and, appealing to the sweetness behind Raun's eyes, asked, "do you mind?"

"No, I don't mind," Raun declared, matter-of-factly, "do you want to do it now?"

"Yes, okay," Walter responded, for this really seemed an offering, "you really don't mind?"

"You do it... you go first... you do it to me."

Walter put his hands on Raun's shoulders, and slid his warmth over the boy's chest and down his sides, over his hip-bones to his thighs, dropping upon his knees before the boy, and grazed his hands up the inner thighs to the little puckered sack,

brushing fingertips around the tumescent penis, and Raun lowered his knees to the grass again as well, and they both reclined upon the yellow and green mat nature provided.

After his moment of ecstasy, Raun and his servant both basked in the boy's afterglow, and then, shortly the boy began the digital manipulations upon Walter, which had just been done upon him.

"You don't have to..." Walter offered.

"Yes... I want to... it wouldn't be fair..." the boy whispered as he worked. He was surprised, however, at what had not ejaculated from himself, but which did from Walter, squirting over his own little chest and tummy. He touched it with his fingertips, and smeared it over his skin. He grinned, looking into Walter's eyes. "It does wash off?"

"Yes," Walter smiled. They hugged, and lay there for a while.

They didn't fish again, but they did swim again, and it did wash off. When they were dry again, they finally got dressed, and packed up their things, for the shadows were getting long. In the truck, Raun played the radio, and changed the stations, and found the songs he liked, and Walter liked them, too. Back at Walter's house, Raun hopped on his bike and was home in plenty of time for dinner.

Twice more that August, Raun arrived at seven-ten A.M. on Saturday, the first of these, they repeated their fishing and swimming expedition almost precisely, and still without a towel. On the second of the two visits, it was beginning to rain, so they stayed at Walter's house and worked on the '28 Ford model car together. For their other activity, Walter's bed substituted for the yellow and green grasses, and Raun wanted to be entered from behind. He said he had heard of this. It worked out better than either of them expected.

Over the Labor Day weekend, Walter had to work overtime both Saturday and Sunday, and when he arrived at home on Sunday evening, he found a note on his porch, held in place with the Cadillac model car Raun had built. It seemed that Raun's dreaded stepfather had found work in Texas, and Raun and his mother went to join up with him, and live there. Although Raun promised in his note, no letter ever came from Texas. In the Cadillac car model, Raun had made two figures out of wire and wax. They were a man and a boy, with a toothpick between them, as an old wooden fishing pole.



About the author:

Walt Kauffmann had recently graduated from Parsons School of Design when he wrote RAUN. It was first published by editor Bill Andriette in the NAMBLA BULLETIN in April 1994. As an artist and illustrator, Kauffmann had recently been studying the typefaces, sculpture and woodcuts of Eric Gill with interest and particular attention to the unorthodox sexual lifestyle Gill entertained. During these studies, Kauffmann came across the woodcuts of Gwen Raverat, who along with Gill had been a founding member of the Society of Wood Engravers (U.K. 1920). It was her illustration in a book of children's poetry that inspired the story RAUN. It is the author's wish that his story not be separated from her illustration. He feels that Mrs. Raverat would not object, as she was a true free spirit born into the constraints of Victorian England.

Walt Kauffmann is the author of three Christian Howard stories (which most closely parallel his own life), many other stories published in the NAMBLA BULLETIN and GAYME, several poems which he characterizes as songs without music, and two unfinished novels. An excerpt from one novel, A LOMBARDI, has also been published. He is currently writing fiction for THAMYRIS, a new magazine available from Ariel's Pages, PO Box 2487, New York, NY 10185-2487.

