

Chapter Eight

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

And just as the newspaper nonsense was cooling down they reached the month of February and Valentine's Day loomed. Brian wasn't sure which had come first, the holiday for lovers or the massacre. He was betting the first probably had caused the second. This was the beginning of the social season for Bay area teenagers, led by the girls, of course.

Brian received several dozen valentines and Sean got about twice that, proving blondes do have more fun. They sat in Brian's room and compared notes. The girls were trying to engage them socially, although no one would call it dating. At their age, going with someone often meant little more than sitting at the same lunch table in school.

But throwing afternoon parties on the weekends was acceptable, even encouraged by most parents. And of course there were chaperones, from strict mothers to scary grandmothers, both keeping an eye on their little girls. Boys were expected to circle like starving sharks and then go home unfed.

But Sean wanted to attend these parties and Brian was almost afraid to let him go alone. It was this source of anxiety that made him call John. But the snow was heavy out on the city's streets and John could only promise that he would try and get there.

Brian sat at the Hardee's for almost an hour and was about to give up when John came in followed by a gust of wind. He stomped his boots on the floor out in the vestibule and the lady behind the counter automatically poured him a cup of coffee.

"Sorry, Brian, madness out there you know."

"I'm just glad you came, John."

He raised an eyebrow as he shucked his parka. Brian wore his clothes in layers during the winter but John wore only one coat over his button down shirt. It gave Brian a chill just looking at him dressed this way.

John sucked at the lip of the paper coffee cup. "What's going on?"

"Women...girls I mean. They're like vultures circling overhead."

"Is this a concern of yours or are you worried about someone else," John asked.

"Both of us, but Sean in particular. We both got so many party invitations that we'll have to go to at least some of them. Sean wants to go, I really don't."

"But you will...I'm sure. If you absolutely trusted him then he would be free to go alone, but obviously you don't. He will develop his own social life away from you at some point. You have to expect that challenge, Brian."

"But we do everything together now, in bed I mean. Is he not satisfied with that?"

"Ah, a question that remains unanswered for all time. Why do men wander so? Is it the challenge, the conquest or the act of cheating that excites them so much? Something about experiencing the strange and unfamiliar calls us to act out beyond our committed relationships. It's an act of stupidity sure, we destroy lives with our lust...but this sounds too complicated in your situation. If you were both adults I would be venturing onto firmer ground, but relationships at your age are still a huge gap in our body of knowledge."

"So you don't have an answer to what I can do?"

"No, I didn't say that. But let me ask you something first. What will Sean do when a girl comes on to him? Will he will be flattered or frustrated? I would imagine there isn't

any way for him to explore these new feelings in private with a girl. As boys, no one challenges the private time you two spend together, but the situation changes when a young girl is involved. What will Sean do when he gets frustrated?"

"Beats me," Brian said.

"Maybe that's closer than you think. He will be frustrated everywhere, like the boxing ring for instance. He might become more aggressive during your intimate moments too. You are not the cause of his frustration, but he will see it as such. Sexual behavior is not always coupled with rational thought."

"I was thinking that if I go to the same parties he will feel like I am spying on him...which is what I would be doing anyway."

"Your attitude will give you away if you are trying to stop him from socializing with girls. There is only so much joking about girls hanging on to him that will pass as humor before he begins to see it as criticism."

"It's the ones that slide their hands in his pants that I worry about, John. I imagine it might happen in front of me, I've seen it happen to other boys before."

"We used to call girls like that...well, never mind. The point is that using the promise of sex without delivering the goods is all a tease and they know it. Momma is probably just hovering out of sight and they are scared. Secretly teasing a boy is sexually stimulating. And besides Sean, what if it happens to you?"

"I won't allow them to get that close," Brian said.

"You can't punch them in the nose, you know."

"I'll figure something out, John. I had better resign myself to some bad parties."

"Maybe you'll meet some new people, it wouldn't hurt to expand your list of friends," John said. He was right on that point. The conversation went on along that line for a while until snow flakes began falling again and Brian knew John needed to get back on the road to home.

And so Brian responded to the invitations after consulting with Sean about which parties to attend. He would go to three while Sean would attend twice that number. At least these were parties with all of their school friends. But Sean was ready to miss at least two practices just to attend these affairs while Brian couldn't see himself doing that. It was the best excuse for not going that he had.

But even as the weekend of the first party arrived, Sean spent the Friday night before at Brian's house. They laid out Sean's sleeping bag on the cot Brian's mother provided. It was never slept on but it was a necessary part of the deception. At least Brian had a twin sized bed.

At first Mrs. Mahoney had offered to let Sean sleep in the spare bedroom downstairs the first night he came over. But Brian's father put the kibosh on that right away.

"It's a sleep over, Alice, for goodness sake. Boys always stay up half the night and talk anyway, leave them be."

"I just thought he would be more comfortable," she replied.

"It's not about comfort, it's about companionship. They would sleep under a tent covered in snow just to be together. You don't know boys like I do, let it go."

Brian hoped his father would remember that encouragement if he ever caught them in the act, but the bedroom door was locked just to be safe.

"Jennifer will have such a girlie party, all pink balloons and cake," Sean said. "Last year Tommy Goins said he and two other boys went outside to smoke and Mrs. Tompkins caught them. At least they have a big color television."

"Won't she get mad if all we do is watch their TV?" Brian asked.

"Naw, she will just brag that we came to her party first. I'm looking forward to Diane Mossback's party next weekend. Her mother is cool and leaves us alone. But she likes to play dance music and that sucks."

"We have to dance, I guess."

"No way. Now don't you embarrass me, Brian. My friends don't dance, we only listen to music."

"I guess that means you don't know how to dance," Brian laughed, "You want me to teach you?"

"Too late, I'll get by for now. What we need is to work on our social skills."

"We weren't popular until this boxing thing. I've never been invited to anything but a birthday party before," Brian admitted.

"Pretty much the same here. What a couple of social retards we are. But then some of these girls are in love with your voice too."

Brian hadn't heard about this. He certainly wasn't about to sing at any parties.

"I will not sing," he said.

"Uh...yeah, no singing is a good thing. You horny?"

Brian laughed, "Why is it I don't ever have to ask you that question?"

So even if he had girls in the back of his mind, Sean's conscious thought was in bed with his boyfriend. It made Brian realize how easygoing their relationship had become.

Brian came home from practice at noon the following day and showered carefully to remove the stink. He dressed in his party clothes and carefully combed his hair. Did guys really worry about clothes and hair before a party, or was it a gay thing?

Walking over to Sean's house, Brian thought about what the other kids at the party might be like. He probably knew them all but that was with their school face on, this was a different world altogether.

Mrs. Williams let him in and he took the stairs two at a time. Sean's bedroom was at the back of their row house, but as he passed the bathroom Brian could hear that the shower was still running. Maybe Sean was in there pulling one off. At least it would slow his sex drive down a bit.

He didn't think that Jennifer's party would be a real challenge for either of them, or at least there wouldn't be any risky girls there. No, it was tomorrow afternoon's event with Mary Bonner that concerned Brian the most. Mary was one of "those" girls whose reputation for having a revolving bedroom door was a direct threat. For a sixteen year old girl to be known for something like that made her nothing better than a whore.

Brian wondered what Mary told Father in the confessional? It was probably far from the truth in any case. Come to think of it, he didn't recall her taking communion any time recently. The guilty ones didn't go to confession and because of that they didn't take the communion wafer at mass. The host would probably burst into flames in her mouth if she sinned that much.

Communion wasn't a sacrament that Brian felt needed much attention in his own life. He had gotten past the worry that confession didn't include certain pertinent facts about his activities or thoughts. He took communion because his parents would have

noticed if he didn't. Pretty much the whole choir felt the same way since they were on such display in front of the whole church.

It had been a topic Brian had brought up with John some time ago. Catholicism was always good debate material. Brian's belief in God was strong but he chose to be picky about which tenants of the faith he adhered to.

"When you are concealing a major issue in your life the small things don't matter," John had said. Brian certainly agreed with that.

Sean walked in his room with a towel around his waist just as Brian was looking at the poster hung on the wall above the dresser. It was a kitten hanging by its paws from a clothesline and the words across the bottom said, "Hang in there Baby." Brian felt a real kinship with that little cat as they both were doing their best to hang on.

"You look smart," Sean said.

"And you look naked," Brian laughed.

Sean shut the door and whipped off the towel. He posed, hands on his butt cheeks and his crotch thrust forward.

"Like anything you see?" he asked.

"I like it all, even your shortcomings."

Sean's body had blossomed under the heavy training. Gone was every ounce of fat and to Brian he looked like a boyish version of Pat.

"You're still wet," Brian said. Taking up the towel he began to dry Sean's hair, watching as the boy popped a boner.

"Something needs to be done about this horrible swelling, Doctor," Brian said. It was an old joke between them. "Maybe a put-a-dick-to-me is in order."

Sean laughed under the towel and put his hands on Brian's shoulders, pushing until Brian went to his knees. And as Sean thrust into his mouth, Brian felt his head bang against the wooden drawers of the dresser. Deeper and deeper, Sean pushed as Brian clasped the boy's buttocks, pulling the boy's length into the heat of his mouth. But then a brief knock on the door startled them both.

"Sean, Honey," his mother called. Her next move would be to open the door. She always did it this way.

Sean grabbed the towel off his head and Brian slid to the floor as Mrs. Williams opened the door. "Sorry, dear, what time do you want to leave?"

Brian was on his hands and knees looking under the dresser as Sean secured the towel around his waist. His stiffness was prodding the cloth but it was sinking fast and he turned away from his mother. Brian didn't dare stand up as his own crotch was bulging with an erection.

"Did you lose something, Brian?" she asked.

"Sean dropped a push pin down here and I was afraid he might step on it later." That excuse was pulled out of thin air but it seemed sound.

"Thank you, dear," she said. "Hope there isn't a dust bunny under there."

"Nope," Brian replied as he stood up, "Just a few left over carrots."

Mrs. Williams looked at him, and then she got the joke and laughed.

"That's a good one. So when do you boys need to leave?"

"One-thirty, Mom," Sean said and he reached in the dresser for his boxers.

Brian continued to sit on the floor as she closed the door. Sean looked at him and shrugged. It was the closest they'd ever come to being caught and he had just shrugged it

off. The spontaneous nature of what they had been doing was thrilling and then it was yanked away. Brian realized they needed more than those regular Friday night sessions.

"Next time we better use the bathroom, less traffic in there," Brian said.

Sean made a sour face. "No sex in bathrooms, that's gross," he said.

Ok, Sean was over the testosterone rush but Brian was disappointed. The playfulness that was displayed a few minutes ago was gone. How could Sean just turn it off like that? He was still feeling the rush. That heart pounding, dresser smacking excitement was still in his head.

The biggest thrill always came when Sean was dominant. Lying on top, being the man to Brian's feminine side. It was the most secure moment in their relationship. Being taken in the heat of desire was every boy's dream, wasn't it? He liked being the bitch, the receptacle to Sean's manhood.

When Brian expressed these feelings to John, he seemed pleased.

"It means you really are gay and satisfied with your place in the relationship. You don't have to figure out the why. Just that it satisfies what you need to feel whole." Brian was sometimes shocked at how directly John spoke to his needs. But he had allowed himself the freedom to speak openly. And in return John didn't hold back either.

"We could call this therapy if you like, but it is more like two friends talking about real life situations." Brian had no other friends who could be that honest, and felt he probably never would.

Sean put on his best shirt, the striped one with the lion crest on the pocket. Brian liked the satiny feel of the polyester fabric and the way it accentuated Sean's slender waist when he tucked it in. Neither of them was a baggy pants kind of kid so the tight jeans they wore did little to hide the package of goodies inside.

Sean started to run a brush through his hair and stopped, looking over at Brian. "Wanna do it for me?" he asked.

Brian took the brush and ran it through the blonde mane. It was darker this time of year by the lack of sunlight and the strands had thickened since he'd last performed this task. Sometimes the brushing was part of foreplay, but it had been a while. The fruity smell of conditioner filled Brian's senses and aroused him. Damn, it would have to wait.

"Coach still wants me to cut it," Sean said, dipping his head forward so Brian could run the brush through its length and down his back.

"But you won't, I know." Sean only tied it back when he was in the ring for practice.

Suddenly Sean turned his head and they kissed. He pulled back and smiled. "You kiss better than any girl," he said. "But then I haven't kissed any girls yet, so what do I know?"

"So find out," Brian said, "I'll put myself up against them any day."

Sean laughed. "Do you know what you just said? Put yourself against them?"

"In competition, butt head."

"Like I could be the judge of that contest? No way. You'd have to come out of the closet and think of what that would do to me."

Oh God, there it was. Their conversation had never come to this point of discussing their commitment before and now Sean had done just that.

"I can't come out and you know it," Brian said.

"Yeah, but you're not the one with the gay boyfriend, I am."

Sean immediately knew he had said the wrong thing. His statement had separated them, one gay and one not choosing to identify himself.

"I'm not the one who is afraid to be gay," Brian said, and immediately regretted it.

Sean groaned. "I can't be gay, don't you see that yet? All the stuff you put yourself through is just too much shit for me to handle. We have sex, ok, but that is between us."

"I love you, Sean."

Sean smiled. "I know you do, and it makes you the most special friend I have. Do we have to get into this now?"

"No we don't," Brian said and tears suddenly rolled down his cheeks. He felt like such an ass, why did he have to cry now? It was so weak and emotional.

"Please, Brian. I don't want you to cry about this, I'm not going anywhere. This isn't about you, it's me. I don't want to be gay...I don't know what I want."

"But you don't mind having gay sex?" Brian's face was burning and the tears had formed rivulets down his cheeks.

"You can count on that. I can understand the need for having sex, look at us. I'm a horn dog twenty-four hours a day, I can't stop myself. Sex with you is the best. I just know it is better than anything else out there. I'm so lucky to have you...you know that."

The tears dried up and Brian wiped his cheeks with the sleeve of his shirt. This hurt would be with him for a long, long time.

"Don't worry, Sean, I'll still have sex with you."

Sean seemed relieved that the moment had passed but Brian was just acting like everything was all right. Inside he was torn apart. Maybe it was the realization that John had been right all along. But then he was always right and Brian had just refused to see it. At least he finally knew the truth.

There would be no worry about Sean going to parties any more. He couldn't be controlled; Brian could only be true to himself. Either he accepted a place in Sean's life or faced losing him with all the bitterness and resentment of a failed relationship. Brian felt like he had been deluding himself and Sean had never been anything but his best friend.

Nothing could have been more boring than Jennifer's party. There were six boys and eight girls in attendance. But rather than take advantage of the odds, the girls chatted with one another while the boys watched cartoons on television.

Brian found himself cornered at one point by the O'Brien sisters, who gushed out their feelings about the wonderful singing at mass. He thanked them for the support and they moved right on to the boxing article in the paper. He thanked them for that too and suggested they tell Sean since he had made all the quotable comments.

It wasn't that Brian disliked girls all that much, he felt threatened by them. But not Sean, he took the O'Brien girls through a whole conversation about the sport of boxing. Brian sat on his corner of the couch and ate pink frosted cake that was so sweet it almost made him gag.

Three hours later he was ready to leave and Sean caught the feeling because he called his mother to come pick them up. They stood on the front porch awaiting her arrival.

"Lord but those girls can talk," he said. "I think Catherine likes you, Brian."

"What a waste of her precious time," Brian replied.

"Come on, she's nice, pretty even. And for sure she isn't the sexual type."

"So she would be safe for me, is that it?"

"You wouldn't have to prove anything, that's all I mean, just be her friend. Females are more than half the population my father says, you can't go on ignoring them just because you won't sleep with them."

Sean was right. Maybe he had better find a girl as a friend, not a girlfriend, but buddies. It made sense, who would think he was gay if there was a girl around. But who?

The thought was still in his head the next day when Sean arrived at the door to take them to Mary's party. He walked past and Brian smelled cologne.

"What is that you have on?" Brian asked.

"Old Spice. My father says the girls love it, at least my mom does. You like it?"

"Manly, Sean, real manly."

Sean stuck out his tongue and Brian laughed. He wasn't going to let anything spoil this day. He had stopped feeling sorry for himself. Sean would be what he would be. At the moment they were both inexperienced kids, but Brian was prepared to let Sean try his best to win a girl.

Mary herself always looked a little slutty in her tight clothes and way too much makeup. Why her mother allowed it was soon answered when the door opened. Mother and daughter looked so much alike it was astounding.

There was a larger crowd here. Many more than had attended Jennifer's party, maybe twenty or thirty. The O'Brien girls said hello as Brian walked by and he nodded their way, heading quickly for the basement where all the music was playing.

Sean was left chatting with Mary and Brian hoped he wouldn't go for the likes of her, it would spoil things further. Easing past several boys sitting on the basement steps, he made his way into the dim light of the party room.

The former bullies Stan and Alan were there. No surprise since Mary was rumored to really like the senior boys. Neither of them had lasted a week in Hanson's training sessions, but they didn't seem to mind when they were cut from the team. They slapped hands and Brian raised an eyebrow when Stan handed him a beer can.

"Snagged a few brews from the refrigerator upstairs," he said.

"Ok, but where is the weed?" Brian asked.

Stan laughed, "You are all right, Mahoney." He looked around and showed off a cigarette pack with joints in it. "Maybe we can get a few girls involved before we fire these up, you with me?"

"Right on, where's the bitches?" Brian said.

This wasn't even good acting, just a bad part he was playing. Brian couldn't believe that he was standing here, beer in hand, while this ape wanted to find a couple of party girls. No, this was not him at all.

Sean came down the stairs, took one look around and went back upstairs. Hell, let him go, Brian was out to try something new. He watched as Alan began talking with Susan Morris and Elizabeth Kovacs. These girls were in several of Brian's classes and seemed way in over their heads at this party.

Liz had spoken to him a few times, although Susan had always seemed too shy, especially when speaking with boys. Liz was in the church teen club and part of the school math club. Brains and looks, yeah, she was at the wrong party.

Brian watched as Alan offered them a beer but they shook their heads. He laughed and walked away. The girls stood there embarrassed and awkward. Just like me, Brian thought. He decided to see if they needed company.

"Hey, Liz...Susan," He said.

"Oh, Brian...it's good to see you," Liz said. She seemed relieved to see him. "Are you drinking too?"

"Uh, no, Stan just gave it to me, I didn't ask for it."

"I didn't think you drank," Susan said. "I didn't think you could, what with the choir and all that."

"I can't, Coach Hanson would kill me," Brian said, setting the unopened can down on a table. "Enjoying the party?"

Liz looked around at the kids lurking in the dark corners. "No, not really."

"Sean dragged me over here," Brian said. "Maybe I should go watch his back."

"Oh, don't leave us down here," Liz said. "Can we come with you?"

"Sure, I'll watch your back too," he said.

So chivalry wasn't dead, just lying dormant in his head until this very moment. The three of them climbed the stairs and walked around the first floor. Sean was still talking with Mary and several boys were playing cards on the dining room table. Liz and Susan followed around behind him like two puppies at his heels.

Mrs. Bonner was in the kitchen making pizza and they stopped to thank her for the party. There was an open bottle of bourbon on the counter next to her glass and a cigarette burning in the ash tray. Brian gave Liz a tug and they went down the back hall, leaving Mrs. Bonner alone.

They came to a quiet little sitting room at the back of the house. It was empty at the moment so they claimed it. There was a wall of books in here and Susan immediately headed for the shelves to read titles. Liz and Brian sat on the couch, not close but at least on the same piece of furniture. He stared at the walls, not sure what he should be saying.

"You made my mother cry," Liz blurted out.

"I'm sorry...what did I do?" Brian asked.

"Christmas mass, your singing made my mother cry...it was wonderful. You have such a beautiful voice, Brian."

He blushed at least three shades of red, it was so unexpected. But it was a safe topic of conversation anyway.

"Uh, thank you. My mother liked it too."

"Your song made the whole mass so complete, I loved it. Was it hard to learn?"

"It's in Latin. I wish we would sing more songs in English," he said. "But Sister Mary was so old fashioned and Father isn't much better, we probably won't."

"Can I see your hands?" she asked.

"Yeah, what's up?" Brian moved closer, showing her his hands.

She took the left hand and turned it over palms up. "My mother taught me to read palms and I thought it would be nice to look into your future. Do you mind?"

"Ok, but I don't know how that works."

"Your hands are so strong," she said, manipulating his fingers.

"It's the boxing practice. I spend a lot of time punching leather bags."

Her fingers traced the creases of his hand. "You have a strong curving life line."

"Is that good?"

"Yes, you will live to an old age, that's always good to hear, isn't it?"

"I suppose...what else do you see?"

"There is only one intersecting line. You will have one partner for life, a strong marriage, I suppose. And this line says you will prosper, that means you'll get rich, Brian."

"I think you're making this up," he laughed. "How can you see all those things in some lines on my hand?"

She held the hand and smiled. "My family is Hungarian. I have some gypsy blood in me, I'm sure."

"I don't know what that means, tell me," he said.

For an hour they sat together as she explained the wandering tribe of people that were her ancestors. They traveled the eastern European lands and called themselves gypsies. Some of the women were thought to be witches and had been stoned to death in past centuries.

Her own family had been persecuted during the Second World War and the survivors fled the country, finally settling here in Baltimore. Brian was fascinated by the story her parents had told her, probably because he had never heard anything like it before.

"My father works at the spice plant," she said in conclusion.

"Really? Mine too," he said.

They had something else in common...she was still holding his hand. It wasn't uncomfortable, he liked it. Her fingers felt warm and strong and he noticed that she had on clear nail polish like his mother used.

"You're a good person, Brian. Why haven't we talked before?"

"We never had the chance, did we? The teen club is just so lame; I always ducked out after it started."

"Yes, it was pretty bad. But Father Dominic allows us to play some decent music."

They had been off in their own little world and had completely ignored Susan. In fact, Susan had left the room while they talked.

"Where did Susan go?" Brian asked.

"Maybe she thought we should be alone," Liz said. "We could go find her?"

"Ok," he said.

But as they stepped through the door Brian saw Susan in the kitchen talking with Mrs. Bonner and Liz pulled him back.

"Did you see what she was doing?"

"No, what?"

"She's in there smoking a cigarette with that woman."

"Susan smokes?"

"Yeah, she started a few months ago. She says it makes her look older. I think it's stupid. Have you ever smoked?"

He rolled his eyes and nodded. "Yeah, a few times, but not as a habit. I've smoked pot too, I'm afraid."

Liz giggled, "So you're a bad boy. You surprise me, Brian. But at least you're honest."

"Honesty could get me in trouble, please don't tell anyone."

"I never tell other people's secrets," Liz said.

He smiled. "Good, but I always thought that girls couldn't keep a secret."

"I don't know who told you that. You have a lot to learn about girls I guess."

"Does this mean you want to teach me?"

Liz frowned. "I've had a few bad experiences so I don't trust just any boy. But I like you, Brian."

"Friends?" He asked.

"Yes, we can be friends. I'm too young for anything else. My family is pretty strict when it comes to things like this. Like, if my mother knew what was going on at this party I would be in such big trouble."

"Me too. But we aren't them out there and that party isn't a part of what goes on in this room."

Liz looked at him. "Have you ever kissed a girl?"

"Uh...no, I never got the chance."

"You can kiss me if you want, but only once."

"Do friends kiss?" he asked.

"Sometimes, but it's not like sex or anything, just...affectionate."

She closed her eyes and her lips started to pucker. Brian leaned in and kissed her lightly, and then it was over.

"How was that?" he asked.

"Good, quite nice."

"So now we're just friends?"

"Yes, friends," Liz said.

It seemed like hours later when he found Sean sitting by himself on the basement stairs.

"There you are," he said, "I've had enough, how about you?"

"Yeah, we can leave if you want," Brian replied.

He didn't see Mary and wondered what had happened between them. He wanted to tell Sean about what had happened with Liz. But he sensed that the boy wasn't happy about something so he let it drop and they left.

"Mary wanted to jump on my bone," Sean finally said when they were a few blocks away. "One minute we were making out in her room and then suddenly she wanted to fuck. I don't know, Brian...I just couldn't do it."

"Did she have a rubber?"

"She has a whole drawer full of them, it wasn't about that. I just started thinking what a crappy way to start screwing girls. She has probably done it with dozens of guys, what can it mean to her? I want my first time with a girl to be special."

"You were right, it should be special," Brian said.

"Thank you, Brian."

"For what?"

"You stopped me from making a fool of myself. All I had to do was think of what we share and how special it makes me feel. I don't think doing it with Mary would be anything like what we have."

"You're just not ready yet," Brian suggested. Sean couldn't know how thrilled he was. Maybe the boy did love him in some ways. "I made friends with a girl," he said.

"Really...you mean Liz? I saw you two talking....that's great."

"You were right, I need a female friend. She's cool...I even kissed her, as a friend would."

Sean put his arm around Brian's shoulder. "Damn boy, there's hope for you yet. Wanna stop by my house? I don't think my parents are home yet."

"Sure," Brian said.

And as they lay naked on Sean's bed, Brian almost laughed out loud from happiness. Sean might be trying to understand his feelings about girls but his groans of pleasure said that wouldn't happen any time soon. He wondered what Liz would think if she knew, would it end what they had started?

Brian was too much of an honest creature, John had told him that right away. He would have to tell her once he figured out how to keep Sean out of the picture. Sharing his feelings would be in the nature of friendship but revealing Sean's big secret was off limits.

Brian felt Sean tremble with the effort of their lovemaking. And then he relaxed, feeling the boy go rigid as he orgasmed. This was always a time of great joy, knowing that he had satisfied Sean so completely. It was the moment when only the two of them mattered and it somehow defined their love.

But today would be different. Sean rolled on his side, still locked in the embrace and clinging to Brian's back.

"I want to do something for you, Brian. What do you want?"

"I got what I wanted," Brian said.

Sean's hand sought out a nipple and gave it a squeeze. "How about I buy you something? Would you wear it if I got you a chain?"

"Why would you waste your money...?"

"Because I care about you, dumbass. You're the closest friend I have and no one else even comes close. Please, would you wear it?"

"Yes...I'd do anything for you, Sean."

The hand slid up to Brian's face and turned his head, their lips meeting once again. Sean couldn't bring himself to say it but Brian knew that there was love in that kiss.