

Chapter Fifteen

A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE

For Brian it felt as if the weight of the world had been lifted from his shoulders. The acceptance of his family meant he didn't have to watch his back. Not that he and Adam changed their public image in any way. A show of affection in front of the parents might mean a wink or a nod, but they didn't kiss or hold hands.

But just knowing that they didn't have to lock the bedroom door meant everything. It was sure sign of validation. What they did in private was respected and those times were theirs alone.

Bill and Alice trusted their son, and they had new respect for Adam's ability to watch after their interests. Yes, they were concerned, as any parents of a gay child might be. Make that two gay children. If the neighborhood ever found out there would be hell to pay, but then God was on their side. The Good Lord had proven that time and time again these past few years.

But Brian's grades were up, the sales from the albums was slowing down to a reasonable trickle and the boys were back in boxing. It was almost as if God had decided to give them a break this spring. Normal was a good thing, and because of that it had to bring them some new challenges.

Adam had been cleared by the doctor to resume training, but he was going to miss out on the first match up of the year. As usual, he stood by in Brian's corner as the boy took on several opponents and easily won the fights on points.

But if the doctor thought his orders would ease Adam back into the ring he was wrong. The second match up was against a tough team from Philadelphia and Adam was determined to be in top condition for his first fight in the ring.

Alice Mahoney respected the dedication and fed them according to their proscribed diet, even though that sometimes got expensive and a little tiresome. Adam made it up to her by doing the evenings dishes while Brian started his homework. Both boys had the same objective. They were going to bring home a boatload of trophies this year.

The first kid that taunted Brian about being a "little choir boy" got his socks knocked off in the ring. After that the word spread that this kid was no joke. Only Adam had something to prove and in his mind Philadelphia was just the starting point.

There was standing room only at the CBBL arena that Saturday. The word had spread that both Brian and Adam were up on the board to fight that day. Brian was scheduled for the second bout, while Adam drew the fifth slot.

Brian drew a heavy set black opponent who made him mindful of Jamaal when the boy showed off his gold tooth. Brian grinned before the fight. At least this kid knew what it was like to take a punch; he didn't want to fight any rookies.

The boy hit him hard right off the bell and Brian fought back with unusual ferocity just to keep up on points. But by the end of the round, Brian knew there would only be one more. The kid was tired already, probably from eating too many Twinkies on the bus.

Low on energy in the second round, the boy succumbed to a flash combination of blows aimed at his mid-section. The kid thought Brian was going to batter his stomach all day long and so he dropped his high guard. The blow that caught him square on the chin was a surprise and the boy went down, not out, but definitely down. He wisely chose not to get up.

Brian had his arm raised and the crowd went crazy with adulation. Brian saw his father cheering in the stands and bowed in his direction. Adam threw him a big hug when he climbed down out of the ring.

"Ok Brian, you got yours...now where is mine?" Adam laughed.

Sean was up next and they both sat down to watch their friend's match. The opponent was a slick customer, faking left and then hitting with a right. He clocked Sean a few times too many with that trick and got back more than he could handle. Sean battered the kid against the ropes and the boy went down. It was Sean's first technical knockout and he stood there stunned at what he had done.

With both his friends having taken their matches, Adam was psyched up for his chance and Brian did his best to keep the boy's feet on the ground. And when Adam's opponent climbed up into the ring Brian took one look and knew it was going to be a battle.

The young Puerto-Rican boy was lean and hard with some tough battle scars of his own. Adam still showed the unmistakable scars of his bullet wound and Brian saw the kid check it out. Maybe the boy was more bluster than brass, but it was Adam's turn to find out.

The round started off with the two boys circling one another cautiously. Adam used the time to judge his opponents style and footwork. The first blows the kid threw were ineffectual and Adam simply pounded him back. But then the kid decided to go for Adam's face and his blows were pushed aside no matter where he threw them. Brian watched the boy get frustrated and swing wild.

Adam let the kid take his shots, saving his own skills for the second round. The bell finally sounded and the kid took a last swing. Adam slapped it away and the referee blew his whistle to call the foul. Adam took the round; the boy losing all his points for that cheap shot after the bell.

As Adam sat back in his corner, Brian saw the opposing coach giving the kid hell for his stupidity. Mr. Wayne just shook his head in disgust. "Guess they only got a bunch rookies to send against us," he told Adam.

Mr. Wayne climbed down out of the ring as the bell sounded for round two. Brian grabbed his arm and pulled him close, shouting in his ear above the crowd noise.

"The kid is better then he acts, and Adam doesn't know it," Brian said.

"I thought so too, but Adam is one smart boy. If it's what you say, he'll figure it out."

Adam took a couple of hits in the stomach and then the kid tried to unload an uppercut, but Adam's chin wasn't there anymore. Dodging the blow had been instinctual but he learned something from it. The kid was wild but he had some steady moves too. The boy made another move that would set up his uppercut but Adam let him think it could happen and then parried the blow with a backhand. He followed through with a right over the top of his opponent's defense and Brian could almost hear the kid's nose splatter.

The boy backed off, trying to shake off the pain, but when he hit the ropes he bounced back right in Adam's face. His moves were all wrong and the boy ended up tangled with Adam's gloves, so he spread his arms a bit and wrapped when around Adam's midsection.

Adam pushed the boy off before the referee could pull them apart and Brian saw the kid bring his head up into Adam's chin. Head butting was illegal but the referee didn't catch it. Adam shook his head and Brian could see murder in his eyes.

It looked like a massacre after that. Adam kept batting the kid's gloves down and punching his face. The kid retreated against the ropes and Adam kept slamming his right against the boy's face. The kid could only pound Adam's stomach ineffectually and soon there was blood running from several cuts on the boy's face and his nose was a shambles.

The referee stopped the fight only seconds before the bell. The kid's eyes were almost swollen shut and it was judged that he couldn't continue. Brian had no sympathy for the boy. You cheat and you get what you deserve. The referee raised Adam's arm and the fight was over.

Adam had brutalized the kid for his cheap shots, a lesson that wasn't lost on the other boys watching from the sidelines. They were glad Adam had won the fight, but better, he now had the respect of his teammates.

Adam crawled down through the ropes and Mr. Wayne grasped his head by the padded headgear. Looking the boy straight in the eye, he said. "One of these days you gonna kill somebody if you ain't careful. That boy had it come' in, no doubt, but you punished him mighty hard. Now you go and think about that."

Brian was the only other person to hear those words and he understood why Mr. Wayne had reacted like that. This was only supposed to be a sport, not a street brawl. Adam gave him a sheepish grin and Brian unlaced his gloves. They walked back to the locker room as the next fight was about to start.

"I don't know what got into me," Adam said as they stood under the showers. "I did want to kill him, he pissed me off."

"But you didn't," Brian said. "He won't forget you for it. Look, I get mad too but I throw it off. It doesn't make me a good boxer; it gets in the way of what I'm trying to do up there. This isn't the street, Adam. You could have taken him on points alone."

"I couldn't let him keep messing with me. I just wanted it over, that's all."

Brian didn't know what to say to that. He'd never been beaten up by a brother; it had to affect the way Adam reacted. But if he couldn't find the patience and use the skills he had been taught...maybe he shouldn't be a boxer.

Sunday afternoon, Brian called John with a lot of things on his mind. His mentor was glad to hear that Brian had come out to his parents.

"Didn't I tell you it might be easier than you thought? Your folks are smart people, Brian, and they are very proud of you. How did Adam take it?"

"He'd already confided in my mother...and he didn't tell me."

"Does that upset you?" John asked.

"A little. She's my mother. He should have told me he was going say something to her."

"But I imagine Adam has chosen her as a mother figure in his life. Does that make you jealous?"

"Uh...maybe. But I guess that's stupid, he is part of our family now," Brian said.

"And that does give your parents a need to understand how he feels. They've taken on the responsibility of raising this boy. He may be your boyfriend but he is also more like a son to them. I'm sure that can be a little awkward for you."

"But he's the best thing that ever happened to me," Brian said. "I feel silly now."

"Don't be, you're still working it out. Just remember to always tell him how you feel," John said.

"He's still got a lot of anger inside. I watched him beat the hell out of a kid in the ring yesterday."

"I wondered why you called, that sounds serious. What provoked the anger?"

"The kid cheated and tried to hurt Adam. He reacted to the kid like I've never seen him before," Brian said. "I guess it was pretty scary. He's so strong, maybe more than he realizes."

"And for so long he was weak, mentally and physically. You understand that feeling, don't you? But his brother, the man that molested him, all those things made him feel inadequate. And then you came along and gave him purpose, you built his strength. That implies some responsibility on your part, you need to guide him."

"I do," Brian said, "you're right, as always."

"He seems happiest when he is being creative," John said. "You need to encourage that side of him, keep him focused. The past will always be with him, but you hold the key to the future."

Just those few moments on the phone made Brian feel better. John really knew how to put him at ease. But he was right, Adam was his responsibility, the relationship depended upon it. They needed a summer project, something creative that would bring them happiness.

He was still thinking about that project when he followed Adam home after practice on Tuesday evening. From down the street they could see the squad car parked in front of the house and Brian panicked. He took off running with Adam at his heels, swinging onto the front steps and charging up to the door.

His mother was sitting in the living room with two uniformed officers and her look was glum.

"Mom...he began, but then she looked at Adam.

"Adam, come sit down here with me," she said, patting the sofa beside her. Adam came and sat beside her, never talking his eyes off the officers.

"Am I in trouble?" he asked.

"No son," one of the officers said, "Is your name Adam Edward Farmer?"

"Yes...?"

"I'm sorry to be the one to tell you, but your father died yesterday."

The color drained from Adam's face but he didn't blink. Brian sat down on the floor where he had been standing.

"What happened?" Adam asked.

"It...it was a drug overdose," the officer said. "Did you know he was a drug addict?"

"Yes...it's the reason I don't see him anymore," Adam said. "It was only a matter of time before it killed him."

Brian shuddered. Adam sounded so emotionless, so calm. And then Brian realized he had only been waiting for this day, he expected it to happen.

"We found your name on the envelope of a letter he had written, it had this address." The officer took the envelope out of his pocket and handed it to Adam. The boy didn't even look at it. Instead he placed it on the coffee table.

"Is your mother living in the city?" the officer asked.

"She died four years ago," Adam said. "I have an older brother but he's not around."

"Mrs. Mahoney informs us that you have been living here for a while," the officer said. "I'm glad you have someone to look after you. But since you are eighteen this isn't a legal problem for you."

"I have the phone number here and the City Coroner's office will be calling to see what arrangements you would like to make regarding your father's remains. Your house is sealed now, but you can call the precinct station when you're ready to remove the possessions. I wouldn't wait too long on that, someone might decide to steal his things once they know the house is empty. But talk it over with Mr. and Mrs. Mahoney, you have a few days."

The officer handed Brian's mother a business card in case they needed to reach him. Adam stood up and shook hands with the officers before showing them to the door. Brian and his mother looked at one another. The both of them were wondering what Adam was thinking. The letter sat on the table and Brian wondered if the boy would open it now.

Adam came back in and sat down in the same spot, the letter before him.

"I'm sorry, Adam," Brian's mother said.

"I don't know what to think," Adam said. "For years my mother said the drugs would kill him. It was something I knew was going to happen. He was my father and I know I should have some feeling about this...but I don't. He was like a stranger in my life."

Adam sat there and Brian didn't know what to do. He had been prepared to see tears but not this. Had the man been that bad?

"You think about what you'd like to do about his burial, a funeral service or something. When Bill gets home we'll talk, maybe after dinner," Mrs. Mahoney said.

Adam had his father's remains cremated and they buried him two weeks after school let out. There were no tears at the small graveside ceremony, just the Mahoney's and the burial crew assembled to see the man laid to rest.

It was a mark of how much the man had given up in his life, for his son didn't shed a single tear. But Adam felt relieved when it was over and they returned to the house. He had used his savings to bury the man and now he would have to start saving all over again. This time he would have a real family, and that let him know how much he was loved.

For it was the Mahoney's who had attended the graduation ceremony to see Adam receive his diploma. Brian and family, along with most of the boxing team had come to see Principal Moore of Brooklyn High hand Adam his certificate. They shook hands and then Claude Hanson stepped forward to give his congratulations. It was a great moment between student and coach. Adam shook the man's hand and then after a brief pause the two of them hugged. That brought wild cheers from the assembled audience.

It had taken some time, but Adam was well regarded on the team and that had brought him some popularity during the final months at school. Maybe it was the loss of his father, but many kids he didn't know very well came up to him in those last two weeks. At first they offered condolences and Adam didn't know how to reply, but he soon found himself thanking them. It was what they expected him to say even though he had already stopped thinking about his father.

But even if Adam had needed the time to grieve for his loss, Brian had started something that would take up most of his time. The first he knew of it was when Evan Wood at Brighton Studios called to schedule a meeting.

"Adam? I hear you graduated...congratulations. So, are you working on that new recording?"

"New recording...of what?" Adam replied.

"Oh, didn't Brian tell you? He's planning a preliminary session here next week. He wants to do an album of Irish favorites. I thought you knew about it," Evan said.

"Oh, maybe he just forgot to tell me when it was," Adam said.

"Yeah...maybe. But either way, I want you to help engineer the whole thing with me. It means a job, Adam...are you up for that yet?"

Adam smiled, "Yes, yes I am."

"We pay pretty well for studio time. I think you'll like it here. You have the basics already but I will need to teach you a lot more."

"I'd appreciate that," Adam said.

"Well get Brian to call me about it, will you?" Evan said.

"Sure thing, he ought to be home in about an hour."

"Ok. Bye for now then, see you soon," Evan said.

Adam hung up the phone and stared at the receiver. Now why hadn't Brian mentioned a new recording?

"I wanted to surprise you," Brian said when asked. "And...and I wasn't sure you would like my choice of music."

"What's wrong with Irish music? I like it well enough. I might not be Irish like your family, but at least it's not like some of that trash they're playing on the radio these days," Adam said. "But will it sell? I mean there's a whole lot more popular stuff out there that you can sing."

"Not unless we pay for it or write it ourselves. Besides, 'Danny Boy' will sell any day in this country," Brian said.

"That just proves we don't know anything about how to sell music. I've written a bunch of stuff, but I realize it isn't what people want to hear, and that's what sells," Adam said.

"How do you know it isn't good enough?" Brian asked. "You never showed it to me."

"Then I will," Adam said.

From the few things Adam had taken from his father's house was a 'trunk full of memories' as he described it. The blue footlocker contained many things his mother had given him over the years before her death and some items he had saved since then. But Brian had never asked Adam to show him the contents, realizing it might bring back some sad memories.

But now Adam opened the lid with reverence and Brian saw dozens of pictures and pages of writing. In one corner he saw the letter Adam's father had written, it was still unopened. But there were dozens of letters from his mother, many of them written as she was dying. It was these that Adam lay gently to one side, his most prized possession he explained.

And underneath it all were the pages of music he had written. Brian saw that a second hand had gone over the sheets correcting the mistakes. The additional notes written in a different hand were his mother's attempt to guide her son's venture.

"We spent hours at the piano with this stuff. I was just a kid and she showed me how to do it correctly," Adam said. "It's one of my best memories. I will always remember her for that."

Brian stared at the photos of mother and child, Adam when he was a baby and then as he grew. It made him feel sad to see her now and know that she would never get to see her son all grown up.

"She would have been so proud of you," Brian said.

Adam gave him a sad smile in return. "Thank you," he said. "I've kept these for such a long time and never knew what to do with them. She liked my songs. See, she even wrote some of the lyrics." Adam pointed to her handwritten words beneath his musical notations.

Brian knew he couldn't hear the music in his head like Adam. "Will you play these for me?" he asked.

Adam smiled. "I hope I still can, some of it is pretty complex. We listened to a lot of records back then. Some of them were classical recordings, you know, like Beethoven, Mozart and stuff like that."

"They wrote church music too," Brian said.

"Exactly," Adam said. "It's why I love what you sing."

"Then let's give this a try," Brian said.

They spend four hours that afternoon at the piano. And with every piece that Adam played Brian became more entranced at how wonderfully the music flowed from this boy's fingers. And Adam sat patiently as Brian began to work out the melodies, and smiled as he began to sing along.

The combination of classical tones and lyrics born of a mother's love for her son gave the music life once again. Yes, there would need to be changes, they both agreed, but the basic scores wouldn't change. If anything they agreed, this new music would become the basis for Brian's new recording.

After several repetitions, the music seemed to soar along with Brian's voice. It gave them a chance to think about how the songs might be played with an orchestra or choral accompaniment. It was large enough for them to dream about success and then leave them searching for the means.

The first step would be to record several pieces to demonstrate that they had the right idea here. But a small piano sitting in the family living room couldn't compete with Brian's voice. They needed something better.

"I have an idea," Evan Wood told them when they laid the problem at his feet. "It may not be the way you finally arrange the music but how about we record your demo with a small string group and a decent piano. I know just the folks to help you out."

And so one step followed another until Brian and Adam found themselves standing in a beautiful conservatory practice room at the Julliard School of Music. It didn't hurt one bit that John Martin had chosen to accompany them for the appointment Evan had arranged.

The good professor seemed to know just as many people here as he did in the rest of the city, but then Julliard was one of Baltimore's most prestigious institutions. The

woman at the piano was a professional musician, although Dr. Benninger was also head of a department here at the School of Music.

They had met for lunch first to discuss the music Adam had brought. She perused the sheets most carefully, her head nodding as she read the music. Brian could tell she was hearing the score in her head and that amazed him. He realized that with training a person's mind could probably play music just by reading the notes.

"This is quite good," she finally exclaimed. "And you wrote this yourself?"

Adam nodded, "Yes Ma'am, but my mother helped me too."

"There's a great classical influence here, a little Beethoven in this piece, a little Hayden in this one. And you have no formal training?"

"No Ma'am."

"First off, let me tell you that your music is very good. With the proper arrangement and some small changes it might even be great. But I'm amazed at how well the phrasing echoes the lyric." She turned to Brian, "And you have learned to sing this music?"

"Yes Ma'am. Adam and I have been practicing for some time together."

"Then let's hear it as you have learned it," she said.

Adam sat comfortably at the grand piano placed in the center of the room. Brian placed his copy of the score on a music stand as the two professors sat nearby. He looked at Adam and they both grinned. It was time to sell the piece.

Adam began to play and Brian heard the sound fill the room. And then his voice joined the music and it soared. For five minutes they felt the joy of the piece filling the room and not once did they take their eyes off one another until the final notes faded away.

There was silence in the room and Brian turned to look at John. But the man deferred to the music professor who looked simply stunned.

"Oh my," she said, "that was the most amazing thing I've ever felt. Do you agree, John?"

John smiled. "Yes, but then I've seen their chemistry before and you haven't."

"Imagine what an orchestra could do with this, it would be magnificent," Dr. Benninger said. And that was how she signed onto the project without the slightest bit of prodding.

The effort was eased by John's powers of persuasion and his solid financial backing. But then he had only been waiting for Brian to step forward with something, anything that would allow him to become a part of the boy's life once again. And in this he saw the chance to do some good, while at the same time opening a door to further scholarly pursuit. Yes, this would be a great opportunity for another great literary endeavor.

Jane Benninger took the opportunity to teach Brian about reading music while coaxing Adam to make the needed changes to his music. But within three months they had developed a full score of all fourteen pieces, complete with choral and orchestral parts.

Adam was exhausted both physically and mentally and Brian realized that they needed a break. It would be their final fling of the summer, and what a time they were having. Adam was turning nineteen; Brian was to begin his senior year and they were going to record their first album together

Just knowing he would be at school alone was depressing, but he was encouraged that Adam would be working with Evan at the studio. It would be the first time in almost

two years that they wouldn't be doing things together. But Bill Mahoney already had plans for his family. He'd booked a quiet week at the New Jersey shore.

As vacations go, it was the best that either boy could remember. They learned to sail a small sailboat, fished off the long pier in town and generally just lay about in the sun. Brian had promised himself that they would not talk about the recording sessions that were coming up, but then Adam had to express those feelings somehow.

"I just don't think I'm good enough to work on this recording," Adam finally said as they lay offshore on the sailboat Bill Mahoney had rented.

"Jane is on top of it, she told you that," Brian said. "From what I heard last week the piano solos sound just great, you are doing fine. It's the best you've ever played."

"Maybe I'm just too close to the music. I wish my mother were here to help me."

And there it was. Brian had wondered when it would come out. The music was all about Adam's relationship with his mother and she wasn't there to reassure him. It wasn't like Adam hadn't received accolades for his work so far. In fact some very professional people had told him how wonderful it was, but the boy had shrugged it off.

"But she is here," Brian insisted, "she's still very much a part of your creative side, the inspiration if you will."

Adam smiled. "Thanks, I know you're just trying to make me feel better. But you are the inspiration for what I do now. I see the love in your eyes every time you sing. She would have been very proud of you too."

"Then we should dedicate the album to her," Brian said.

"But you want that angel Pat drew on the cover," Adam said.

"And where is she now? Don't you believe she is up there watching out over you? If anything, she is the angel in your life."

"So Gabriel isn't a part of yours anymore?" Adam asked.

"Sure, he always will be. He's just a part of my past; he started me on this wondrous trip we're sharing. But the drawing is still great and I did promise Pat I would use it on the cover...well, after the changes I want to make."

"You don't have to change it just for me," Adam said.

"But I do...I want to add you to the picture."

Adam was silent for a moment. "You mean that?"

"Yes. It will only mean something to us, don't you see, but it will be better like that."

"Won't Pat be upset if you change his drawing?" Adam asked.

"No, he'll love it. I really believe he would have added you to the first one except he was afraid people might figure out the relationship. But I want to have us both there with our arms around one another. Let people think what they want, but I imagine most will think we are brothers."

"That would be sweet."

"And I want to name the album something special too. How about 'Mothers and Sons' for a title? The lyrics alone suggest that, and we could use a picture of your mother and one of mine on the back if you want."

For the longest time Adam didn't say a word. He was often silent for a time when he had his most profound moments of thought. Brian thought it was an endearing habit. But then Adam grabbed him and jumped overboard, dragging Brian behind him. Away from

the prying eyes on the beach Adam kissed him under the water until they both ran out of air. Brian took that as a positive answer.

It was hard to tell Coach Hanson that they would be missing practice for several weeks, but it had to be done. The recording sessions were due to start and that meant every afternoon would be booked solid. Brian knew they would lose points and lower their standing in the club but it was necessary. And to his surprise the Coach was agreeable.

"You've always had bigger plans in life, Brian. I've seen that from the beginning. Just don't forget what you've learned here. You can always come back."

"It's only for a few weeks, Coach," Brian insisted.

"But when you find success with your music it will sweep you off your feet. A lot of people will be making demands of you; I've seen what fame can do to a man. Just remember to duck when the punches come fast. I'll always be here for you both."

But the ride began much sooner than Brian or Adam could ever contemplate. The call from Jane Benninger came one evening before the planned session. The Mahoney's piled in the car and drove off towards the center of town and the stately building that housed the School of Music.

Jane met them at the door and took them down the hall to a small conference room. Here they met Alan Lebrun, the vice-president of Morning Star Records.

"Alan and I are old friends," Jane explained. "He has produced two albums for me in the past, and done a very fine job of it. I thought we might give him a chance to get in on the ground floor of your first recording."

Brian didn't know what to say, this was the final piece of the puzzle they had been trying to solve. Sales and distribution was always going to be out of their hands. But if Morning Star took their music they would be assured of a much larger exposure.

Alan began to explain how the system worked and he talked for almost twenty minutes before Bill Mahoney interrupted.

"Mr. Lebrun, none of us understands how your business works, but I would guess we need to get some legal advice before we agree to anything."

"Yes, you're absolutely right and there are some fine lawyers right here in town that handle the music business. But for now I just want you to understand that Morning Star wants to work for you and not the other way round.

"Jane will tell you, we always do the right thing for our artists and because of that we both benefit." He looked at Brian and Adam. "I've heard what Jane has to say and she played me your demo tape. On her word alone I would have signed a contract with you sight unseen. But she insisted that I see the chemistry of the singer and songwriter first. You are so young and yet the talent that produced this music is incredible, you both are to be commended. For now I just want to see you work, will you play something for me?"

Brian and Adam both smiled. "That will be the easy part," Adam said. "Did anyone remember to bring a piano?"

It was Jane's turn to smile. "Right down the hall. I arranged this meeting tonight because I have a special place you can use."

She led them down the hall to a soundproof door. Once through they took a short flight of steps and Brian gazed in awe at the concert hall which spread out before the stage. Sitting at the front of the stage was a grand piano.

The Mahoney's and Alan were led out into the auditorium where they took seats in the front row. Adam found the score of his music sitting on the piano waiting for him to play.

Adam's fingers caressed the keys and he felt the power of this instrument respond to his touch. Brian stood in the crook of the long piano, a place where he could see Adam play. And they began.

The hall resounded with the piano's lush sound and Brian couldn't wait to begin his part. The acoustics reminded him of the church only better, this would be great fun. And then it was his turn to take the melody and Brian sang of love to the boy at the keyboard.

Their sound filled the vast space and yet Brian could hear every nuance of the music. Just one look at Adam's face told him the boy was enjoying this as much as he was. They had never sounded so good together, but Brian was sure they would when the recording sessions began.

But when the song was done Adam segued right into the next. The tenderness of this second melody spoke to Adam's love for his mother and so Brian put all of that in his voice. It was so much like an old Irish lament, he was sure his parents would pick up on that. But soon he was lost in the sound of his voice resounding throughout the hall, that and the smile he saw on Adam's face.

But this time when the piece ended there was applause from their small audience and Alan came quickly up onto the stage.

"Amazing, utterly amazing," he said. And then turning to Bill Mahoney he smiled, "Please find that lawyer tomorrow. I can't wait to get a contract on your boys."

They went into the recording session two days later with a firm offer from Morning Star while the lawyers worked out the details. And the studio occupied all their free time that first weekend and then the next and the next.

It was hard for Brian to pay attention in school, but he did. He was not going to make himself a casualty of this process and end up in study halls this year. And then the phone call came one evening during dinner.

Bill Mahoney answered and spoke at some length and then set the phone back in its cradle. He sat back down at the table but his face couldn't contain the excitement he felt.

"That was Mr. Walpole, our lawyer. We have a contract with Morning Star and they gave us a retainer." He let that sink in and then grinned. "One hundred and fifty thousand dollars up front."

"Oh, My God," Alice said, and then she quickly crossed herself.

Brian looked at Adam and the boys both burst out laughing. The final pressure point was off, but the race had just begun. It would be weeks before the recording was finalized and the master tapes were sent off for production. But with Morning Star's involvement the boys were going to have their music pressed on LP albums and in the new format called CD.

The essential recording had been done with orchestra and choir but now Brian was going to add his voice to the music. It was a new experience and he welcomed the challenge. At least Adam would sit beside him, and provide the inspiration he needed to perform his very best.

Evan was in total control during those sessions, it was just him and the boys now until the very end. But even as he engineered the recording, Evan felt something special

was happening here. They had worked hard and accomplished so much, but it almost seemed easy compared to their first efforts.

All that remained was the mix and a few tweaks of sound added here and there. And then one day it was over. The Mahoney's and assorted friends gathered in the studio to hear the results. The assembled group waited with anticipation as Evan pushed the start button. And for the first time these people heard the opening strains of the orchestra playing Adam's music.

Twelve songs, each of them tailored to fit a certain time segment that could be played on radios across the country. There had originally been fourteen, but Adam had decided he wouldn't cut two of them down to fit the format. It was his choice and Brian agreed. Adam was asserting himself, a good sign for their future together.