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ONLY SEVEN DAYS

GAY NOVEL 2006

Project

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About this novel

Dear friends, I ended today publishing, in pdf edition, my first short gay novel in English. It's about an older man who meets by chance two young guys. It's a love story, a story about how difficult could be for everyone of them to accept what's happening because everyone needs to get used to love. The novel, written in a single week in 2006, needs to be improved because besides the possible (and probable) language errors, it presents a first-person narrative that sometimes slips into the third person.

I will be immensely grateful to everyone who can report me any errors or communicate his impressions.

I apologise for my bad English, I'm not a native English speaker.

Project

Chapter 1

By chance

This is a particular story which comes from a little town somewhere in the U.S.. Everything looks always normal here, nothing out of traditional rules, nothing openly against the common behaviour of the average middle class people. I was walking around like I'm used to, just to go somewhere, I have no dog to walk, no children, no one at all, only me and my lonely soul. Well it was early morning, about six o'clock or so, I love to get up when it's still dark, have a coffee or something and go out when it's cold, I like to feel the harsh sensation of the wind blowing over my face, that's a big contrast with the worm of inside my room ... Well ... an humid early morning, it was about starting raining, you couldn't ever notice the little drops falling on you, just extremely little drops, but then you could feel your hair covered with a moist of cold water ... I didn't get any umbrella, I don't like umbrellas, I'm used to look at myself as an athletic man, I'm no more an athletic man like I was years ago but fortunately I'm still healthy and keep in shape as I can do it better. That time I had only my walking clothes on. I started my peace meter and began to walk fast to warm up. I was breathing and the air out of my mouth condensed in little clouds. I thought I had to walk by the walls in order to get less drenched. Obviously I chose to repeat loops around my house and the blocs of flats nearby. I made a fist loop, about ten minutes, then a second, I used to turn the corners speedy because at that hour in the morning no one was around. Well it happened when I turned a corner speeding up ... Ouch! ... What a terrible crash! I was not aware of myself for at list ten seconds. I don't remember what happened next, the first thing I saw distinctly was a young man moving hands in front of me to check my self consciousness state.

- Are you fine?
- I hope so ... sure I'm a little confused ... but just a little ...
- If you like I can get you to the hospital for a check up ...

- No thanks ... I think it's not necessary ... just wait for a while, just a minute and tell me what happened, if you don't mind ... I wouldn't make you waste your time ... but really I don't remember what happened ...
- Nothing special, you where coming very fast from around this corner and I was coming on the other site and we crashed into each other ...
- And did you hurt?
- No! Everything goes well ... but you went down ...
- I understand ... thanks ... tanks, if you have to go ... please don't stay here it's not necessary ... thanks ...
- No, I have nothing to do right now, I'd like to give you a lift home if you like ... My car is just around the corner ...
- No, thanks, my house is no more than five minutes on foot ...
- Where is it?
- 23, Russel street.
- Near the drug store?
- Yeah ... right, do you know the drug store?
- It's near my bus stop, sometimes I keep waiting over there for ten minutes or more when I go home ... can you stand up?
- Oh... I have to stand up! ... thanks ... thanks, I can stand up with no help ... , tanks.
- Be quiet! Be quiet! Nothing to worry ... be quiet ... there's my car ... be quiet!
- Thanks ... that's kind of you ... perhaps it would be better by car ... tanks ...

Just tree minutes later he came back parking his car in front of me, he eased me in then started the engine. In no more than two minutes we where 23 Russel street. He parked his car then eased me out and helped me to reach my door. When I was searching for the keys, he asked:

- Is there someone to take care of you?
- No ... but you have to go ... perhaps you have to work or something ...
- If you don't mind I'll stay just a minute ... I repeat, just if you don't mind ...
- Thanks, that's very kind of you ... here you are ... that's my house, nothing too big or too expensive ... would you like a cup of tea?... Excuse me I'm not used in receiving people ...
- Yes, I'd like a cup of tea, but I have to do everything for you because you have better to stay quiet ... and I have to suggest

another thing to do in advance ... You'd better to wear something dry ... if you like I'd bring you what you need because you aren't able to fetch it yourself.

- Hi dude what the hell are you searching for? I do not need anything ... I have to thank you but I don't need anything ...

- Mister ... what's your name? ...

- Mike ...

- Well, Mike ... perhaps there is something I would ask you for ... if you don't mind ...

- What is it?

- You have a big house I wandered if I could rent a room ...

- No rooms to rent here, I like my privacy a lot.

- But I'm not nosy, I only need a room at night. In the morning I get up very early and usually I don't come back home before nine in the evening ... and in the weekend I have to visit my parents riding my car for four hours and sometimes more ... till now I was in the hotel but it's too expensive and I can't afford such things ...

- I understand but I can't help you, I have no rooms to rent ...

- But ... only for a wick, just the time to find another accommodation ... I promise I'll go away in seven days or even two or three days if I can find soon a different solution ...

- And if you don't?

- I'll go away just in seven days ... I promise ...

- Good ... you told seven days ... I'll show you the room later ... on the second floor, now you can prepare that cup of tea if you like ... but remember ... in seven days!

- I promised ... in seven days ... can you tell me how much is it?

- I told you there aren't rooms to rent here ... you can stay for free for seven days, if you like, but then you have to go.

- That's very kind of you ... Mike, where's the kitchen?

- Please, wait ... I think I can stand up ... follow me ... here's the kitchen, cups are over there, in the cupboard and there's also the tea and the sugar ... and you ... what's your name?

- David, born near San Francisco 21 years ago ... now living ... no I'd say it more exactly, working here from two weeks, till now in the hotel and now eventually here ... I'm working as a construction worker for J & J Housing Company ... not a great job really, but my job ... I'd like to know something about you ... if you don't mind ...

- You told you aren't nosy ... well ... you'll find yourself whatever you'll like to find ... Have you baggage at the hotel? You'll have better to bring it here ... and I'll go to prepare your room ...
- Just a minute ... now let's have this cup of tea ... and you have also to change because your clothes are still wet ...
- Thanks, but I can take care of myself ... thanks for the tea, but please, go fetch the baggage ... the door is always open when I'm here you don't need any key for now ...
- I go ... I'll be back as soon as possible ... because I have to prepare for work. I start at seven ... bye.

I'm not used in such things, and all this trouble sounded very strange to me. David, 21 years old, in the green room ... He seemed to be a clever guy ... well used to courtesy formulas like "if you don't mind", "I wandered if" and so on ... very strange 21 years old guy ... for seven days ... only for seven days ...

I got upstairs ... the green room was filled with a lot of garbage, books, old furniture, as I entered the door a dust storm raised towards me, I was going to stumble on an old tennis racket ... No! I could never set up everything myself ... David was interested in the room and he had to set it up. When I was still there he got back.

- This is the room ... Dust everywhere, garbage everywhere ... but I'm not able to set things up for you ... too difficult for me ...
- No problem Mike, now I have to go to work ... see you at nine ... and I'll do everything at nine, don't worry! ... I have to go ... I'm just a little late ... bye!

What a strange thing ... He never could get rid of all this garbage starting at nine in the evening, nor he could clean everything up or make his bed ... I had to do it for him. So I started working hard ... there was a loft in my house, a loft I never used because in the summer the roof become so hot that it's impossible to stay over there ... I begun to carry upstairs every single piece of furniture, starting from the heavy desk, then the cupboards, the stools, the armchairs and so no ... then the books and the other stuff. I had worked hard for hours and was very tired but I kept working till lunch time. I'd have stopped my work but there was something that suggested me to go ahead ... I had to finish my work before nine o'clock. At three in the afternoon the green room was empty, I swept and washed the floor, cleaned the windows ... then made his bed with new sheets. I also installed

in the room a little television set ... now it was seven o'clock, I had to cook something for him ... Italian spaghetti, fried potatoes, roast chicken breast, some salad and some fruit ... Everything was perfect ... at eight forty five the bell rang ... So polite like he was he would never get into without giving me a signal. I was in my armchair in the living room.

- Good evening Mike ... if you tell me where I can set aside all the stuff in the room, I'll start immediately ...
- Be quiet ... follow me upstairs ... this is your room ...
- Oh ... did you do all the work yourself?
- This morning I was a little stunned but I like to work hard ... over there, there's a little bathroom non a king bathroom but a little one for your privacy.
- Oh ... that's incredible ... al this work for only seven days ...
- Hold your tongue! ... this is the key of your room ... and now follow me downstairs ... seat down and enjoy your meal! Because you worked hard ... or if you like better you can take first a shower ...
- The shower can wait! ... Can we come to an agreement ... about money? ... I could help.
- You have only to be quiet ... nothing else! ... no money at all!
- But I have to make you understand exactly what I think ... I wondered if I could help in case I wasn't able to find another accommodation ... because you know, it's very hard to find a room to rent at a low price ... I know, I promised but ... Mike ... what do you think about?
- I think you only have to eat something and go straight to bed, you look tired ... I put also a little television set in your room and an alarm clock ... what time do you get up in the morning?
- Usually 5.30 ... and I get out at 6.15 ...
- Do you have coffee or something for breakfast?
- Usually I don't but I'd like to ...
- Remember: tomorrow morning at 5.45 breakfast time ... ok?
- Ok! ... I ... I would ...
- Good night David! Nothing to say ... Good Night!
- Good night Mike ... you know ... I'm very happy tonight ... thanks Mike!
- Remember! Tomorrow 5.45 ... Good night David!
- Good Night!

Chapter 2

Coming out

What was I doing? It was obvious that it wasn't matter of seven days, there was something in his smile that fascinated me. Well, I use to get up early but my get up would have been somehow different next morning ... I had something to do, I had to take care of someone not only of myself like I was used to ... It's very strange to go to bed knowing that there is someone on the other side of the wall. Yes I had to keep rules to preserve my privacy, not to step forward behind the usual limits ... and I was aware of all that, but I was also aware that I was going to start a new way in my life ... something unexpected but something that I liked, that, perhaps, was exactly what I was searching for until I was aware of myself. I got upstairs and went to bed trying to avoid every noise and tiptoeing in order to let him sleep quietly. The next morning my alarm clock rang at 5.00 I got up but I was aware that something was very different. I took a rapid shower, then sheaved and got downstairs to set the breakfast ... I was strangely happy. I was not used to set the table with the tablecloth ... but I set it not only with the tablecloth but also with new dishes and new dinner set. Then prepared milk, tea, butter, jam and toasts. At 5.45 o'clock he came down, well shaved and also well clothed ... he was not the rude kind of dude ... He liked very well to show his elegance and his fairy behaviour.

- Hi Mike ... how are you?

- Fine thanks ... seat down, please, it's breakfast time, what do you like better ... or first?

- Perhaps it could sound not so polite but I like everything ... but I know it would be better if I could save something to bring at work so I could save lunch money ... I know I wouldn't ask for such things but I think I have to ...

- Right ... You can eat now everything you like, I'll prepare other sandwiches to bring at work, what do you like better, ham,

salami, fresh cheese ... or whatever?

- No problem ... but if I can, I'd like better ham and salami ... you know: something hearty, something strong ... because I have to work hard all day long ...

- Well ... four ham sandwiches and four salami sandwiches ... ok?

- Ok! Excuse me if I brushed up everything but to have such a breakfast was a pleasure ... thanks ...

- Now it's time to go ... can I go with you? ...

- I'd like better not ... There could be someone of my work mates at the bus stop ...

- You're right ... see you at nine in the evening! ... bye!

- I would never offend you ...

- You are late ... go now ... see you at nine ...

- Bye ... and thanks ... I liked everything very well ... bye.

David was right, he had to be careful, work mates are work mates and perhaps are no more than work mates, they aren't friends ... he has to be careful in trusting them ... Also this is a strange forethought for a 21 years old guy. That morning I had nothing to set up ...

I focused on some rules to follow in order to keep fantasy under restraint. First: keep out of the green room. Second: never ask questions ... only give answers. Third: never cross the border of the normal conversation. Fourth: never suggest or recommend anything. This rules seemed to me the easiest to follow and also the most useful and logical ones ... but I didn't know David well at that time ... He seemed to me only a clever guy who was searching a room to rent, well, a guy who used to be careful with his work mates, and this is strange indeed, but anyway only a clever guy. And we where at the beginning of the story ... and as you know, no one can foresee somebody's moves, and so I was, nevertheless something suggested me to be careful but I wasn't so inclined to follow such suggestions.

I wandered why a 21 years old clever guy made everything he made the day before in order to help me, to follow me into my house, to ask me for the room to rent ... there are a lot of rooms to rent in this country, he only had to watch to the for rent advices, yes, it's true, he got my green room for free, a very large room, with private bathroom ... not only the green room but also the breakfast in the morning and eight sandwiches to bring at work ... yes, everything for free ... and not only for seven days but probably forever ... What does it mean? I don't understand why this guy took all instances to press me to give him a chance ... neither I know why I gave that chance to him, two days ago we didn't get to know one another, and now I'm here

waiting for him, what a strange situation the master of the house waiting for the occupant ... I have to cook something different today ... roast beef or fish soup? Clearly I think he would like better the roast beef but perhaps he could appreciate something more spicy like the fish soup ... and what about vegetables? Fish with salad: fennel, oranges, lettuce, olives with slices of baked bread and a little garlic. What else? ... Yes, fresh white wine And something for breakfast. I went to the market where I usually buy the fish and got little cods, some mullets, two kilos of mussels, some squids and shrimps, then got to the vegetables stand to buy the necessary for the salad, then to the baker for the bread ... and then finally at home to set up everything in the fridge, because I had to cook the fish soup not before seven o' clock in the evening.

Before starting I had to wash up and to clean up the kitchen, but such things this time weren't boring as used to be, strangely I was amazed by how easily I was taking all this work ... I usually don't like changes or things not adequate to my normal behaviour ... but this time something seemed to be different, something was going to change in such an unusual way. But, you know, things have to go ahead slowly, step by step, and you can't speed it up. I had to act carefully. I told myself: look before you leap! Waiting for him used to make me happy ... his presence on the contrary worried me a lot, could I rise to the occasion?

Could I be the normal house master I pretended to be? I was usually in a stew when he was present ... I forced myself to be silent or to reply polite but nothing more, to avoid excessive smiling or confidential behaviour, to show off only a normal demeanour avoiding whatever could sound strange ... And that evening I had to talk with him at supper time with the fish soup, the white wine and so on ... He could wonder why all this stuff ... what am I searching for, cooking such strange things for him? ... I was afraid that he might be upset just thinking about our strange situation. I had better to pretend I made the fish soup for some friends of mine ... I would pretend my friends had great difficulties that forced them to stay at home ... that is why there's a fish soup ... well, this way things sound better ... I didn't cook anything for him, just for my friends ... that's more normal ...

Well, at seven o' clock I started cooking, and the fish soup was cooked in one hour, and I put it in the oven to keep it warm. Then I prepared the salad and set up the table.

At 8.50 David rang the bell.

- Hi Mike, how are you?
- Fine thanks ... are you hungry?

- Yeah ... all the day working, you can understand ...
- David ... I didn't cook anything ... but there is something to eat because I prepared a fish soup for some friends of mine for lunchtime but they didn't come and you can find the fish soup in the oven, if you like, but I can also prepare something else ...
- What a superb fish soup! Your friends must be very important for you, if you cook such a fish soup for them! It must take a couple of hours to make this master work of a soup ...

And saying so he seemed to smirk at me ... I pretended I was deep in different thoughts and had different things to do.

- This fish soup is delicious, the backed bread is still crisp ... and the fish broth is still warm ... and the oven was cold ... Mike, what do you think about? ... can I serve your share?
- Thanks...
- What did you do today?
- I just went to the market and cooked the fish soup ...
- You are a very master cook ... this soup is very palatable and just a little spicy like it has to be ... and you friends?
- I don't like nosy people ...
- Excuse me ... I'd ask another question, but I know you are not in the right moment to answer me ...
- What have you to ask?
- Nothing important ... don't mind ...
- Please, tell me ... You can't suggest something and pretend you didn't.
- I think it will better to play dumb ...
- I'm waiting, what is it?
- Perhaps I can be wrong, but I think the fish soup was too warm in a cold oven, I suppose you cooked it no more than one hour before, and also the crisp bread suggests me you baked it no more than one hour ago ... that's why I suppose you weren't really expecting for friends at lunchtime, therefore I was wandering if you could have cooked all this for someone else ... that means for me ... if I'm too rude or intrusive ... you can tell me ... perhaps I have no right to tell you such things but it's what I have in mind ... I apologise if I crossed the board and broke the rules ...
- Tell me at least, did you enjoy your fish soup?
- I enjoyed it very well because it was my fish soup, something made for me ... that's very unusual for me ...

- Do you like a glass of an Italian white wine?
- Thanks, just a little wine ...
- There is also a big salad ... if you like ...
- I love salad ... fresh vegetables are the top for me. ... Can I ask you another thing?
- Whatever you like ...
- I'd like to set up for breakfast tomorrow morning ... just if you like ... because I'm at ease here and fell very comfortable ... but I have no help somehow ... I don't like to take advantage of your open heart ...
- You only have to stay quiet, nothing else, I appreciate your being at ease here but you aren't taking advantage of anything ... it was my pleasure to cook the fish soup ... yes I cooked it for you, that's true, nothing else, you have nothing to pay for ... I'd ask you some questions now, can I?
- Of course ... whatever you like.
- Well, to talk turkey, what are you searching for?
- To be loyal and spontaneous ... I don't know yet ...
- That means?
- Simply I don't know yet ... nothing else ... at the beginning I was only searching for a room to rent, you seemed like a good person, we got in touch in such a strange way and I took my golden opportunity, nothing else, I had to search for a room to rent and so I did ... then ... well, it's not so easy to say ... you were so crusty at the beginning but also so friendly, so helpful I thought perhaps you wouldn't turn me down ... Was I wrong?
- No ... good, that's enough ... now you have to go to bed ... remember, tomorrow 5.45.
- Thanks, 5.45 ... and the fish soup was special, tasted good ... thanks ...
- Good night David!
- Good night Mike.

When I entered my room I was upset ... no, I could better say I was anxious and distressed for David's heart-to-heart talk, I didn't foresee how directly he could get to the core. He was a 21 years old guy and I didn't even remember what a 21 years old guy can be ... I considered his behaviour and I was surprised. He was clever, right-minded, hard-working guy, confident, faultless ... in a word he was perfect! I tried to fall asleep but a strange wakefulness entered my brain and my soul and till midnight I kept turning over in the bed, I usually have a light sleep and fall asleep

easily. This time it was different ... I had to fall asleep because I had to get up at 5.00, it was midnight and my brain was perfectly awake. I switched the light-night off then tried another time to fall asleep and this was the right moment.

No need to say that when my alarm clock rang at 5.00 in the morning, I felt awful, I couldn't even stand up, I couldn't even hold my eyes open, but I had to get up ... this time I hated David. How nice would have been to keep on sleeping ... but David was here and I had to get up ... so I did. With an enormous effort, finally the breakfast was set up just in time. David was cool as a cucumber.

- Hi Mike, how are you? ... I could say you can't even stand ... what's the problem?
- I was awake till two in the morning, I don't know why, I'm not used in such things.
- Well, nothing to worry, it happens ... have a cup of coffee and you'll wake up immediately ... you bet!
- Ok but I'm a little stoned today ... I hope it will soon subside.
- Can I suggest a little thing?
- What is it?
- You have to go to sleep as soon as possible and don't worry about cooking ... you are a master cook, that's taken for granted, but a steak with potatoes is everything I need ...
- No, stay quiet ... sandwiches are in the fridge ... I wasn't able to stand but I did all my job ...
- You have to promise me that when I'll go to work you'll go to bed to sleep without even thinking about cooking ... I'll do everything when I'll go back home at nine ... this is not to give you a chance to rest and sleep in the evening ... no! That's in order to let me cook for you just a single time ...

And he smiled and got out.

Now I was alone another time. My brain started to speed up like a full gas engine. What about David? I wandered, what about his smiling and his being always on the border, telling you something and the same time avoiding to explain it clearly. I had been so many times ... no, I thought I had been so many times close to understand something else but nothing real came to the surface. David was able to upset me with this sort of behaviour. It's like he would guide you somewhere, like he would let you tell him something else. I usually don't like such kind of playing cat and mouse. And he really had me to admit I cooked the fish soup for him ... Perhaps he had to understand it but he wouldn't press me to admit such things. It's not polite, it's something

usually friends avoid with each other. Therefore David isn't a friend of mine ... no! Sometimes friends use to play with each-other, that's why so he did. Certainly David always seems to be on the verge of something not spoken, throwing stones and pretending he didn't. Probably he only likes to make a show ... And what about me? Do I like to play this way? I could dismiss him, kick him out end so on ... but I would never do such things ... David is here and he must stay here ... no doubt! He had such a pleasant and charming way to do everything, never ostentation or contentiousness, just something vaguely provocative, never wild or angry. He had his own very particular way to resolve and to come to a conclusion, always with a light smile to remark that he was happy. His happiness was really now the most important thing. Why did I cook the fish soup? Naturally to make him smile, or more exactly to make him feel happy. Yes, I think it's true, David's happiness like higher aim, carefulness only like instrument to achieve that aim. I wondered what would he like to find here? He never acted up to me nor acted neutral. David was probably trying to realize some project of his and I was certainly part of that project ... or at least I hoped so. Was I dreaming, or something very unusual was going to start? ... David ... What do I like better? My privacy, my peacefulness, or his happiness? This was the question! Stay quiet, go ahead with my unremarkable and a little boring life or get involved with David's life? And what does it mean to be involved with his life? Who is David? What do I know about his life? ... David smiles always, I really couldn't ask for a better tenant. Neither I have to complain about his habits that I don't know at all. Who's David? Can I pay heed to him or I'd better to bring the matter to an end as soon as possible? Some days ago when I was thinking about such situations I told to myself: "Remember Mike: never get involved in strange things! Better to stay alone than being involved with some odd fellow." But was David an odd fellow? I don't think so, I don't picture him like a bad guy, rather like a guy who is probably playing hide-and-seek with me. Yeah he's playing with me, he's my playmate and it's a fair game, I have nothing to worry about. If it had been a foul play, I would have noticed something strange, but I didn't ... David foul playing? No ... it's impossible! Can someone smiling the way he smiles deceive you? ... I think he can't. He's a trustworthy guy ... I don't know why but I know very well, I have a real feel for right-minded guys and he behaves in a fair way that can't deceive me ... David, sleep on it! You have nothing to think about ... no ... perhaps you have a lot of things to think about, yeah, perhaps you are lost in your thoughts and I can't even notice it ... You were on the other side of this wall, were you sleeping? Were you thinking about your life, or were you thinking about me? I'm out of my mind, I'm going from bad to worse. And now what is going

to happen? I feel the strange temptation to enter the green room ... No, I have to keep my set purpose, I have to keep away from the green room, it's his room and I'm not allowed to cross the threshold. Yes I would be just a little nosy ... but I know my duty ... what a terrible conflict between curiosity and duty ... I'm searching for some theoretical justification for going into the green room to poke around his stuff. But what pretext can I invoke? Only my obsessed curiosity! Nothing else ... or have I to lie to myself about my reasons behind? Become nosy but why? I'd never thought about being nosy, I was the respect embodied. I never tittle-tattled about someone's secrets. When someone told me something confidential I always guarded it secret. I never let the cat out of the bag, I don't like open secrets ... That's why I have to keep away from the green room. I gave him the key but I bet he didn't lock up ... No! I have to stay quiet! whatever he has in his room is not of my business, I told: first his privacy, If he would like to tell me something about himself I'm obliged to listen, otherwise I only have to wait ... what for I don't now but I have to stay quiet ... to be an honest man. All my thoughts will probably end up as nothing ... Eventually I have to settle with David ... I must find as soon as possible a well-balanced rule, a golden rule to follow, because I can't resist the stress and people under a lot of stress may experience headaches and I don't like stress-related illness ... and this is a very stressful situation. No ... I have to get rid of all this thinking aloud ... I have to be honest with myself and also with David ... No! I'm a well-minded man, what is to come must be ... definitely I'm not nosy, at least not so nosy to poke around his room! That's all!

So, thinking about a lot of such things, I ended up to sleep ... finally to a deep sleep. I'd say better I crashed. And I was so stressed that I overslept till 4.00 o'clock.

When I woke up I was still a little stunned ... I had to go prepare for David ... yes ... I thought: I have to prepare for David ... It sounded unusual to me, but I was strangely happy to wait for him ... I had to prepare ... I started up ... frying pots, pans, steamer, colander, and whatever. I opened the fridge searching for something suitable for David and had an idea: pizza with artichokes, buffalo mozzarella, and mushrooms and just a little tomatoes, parsley and pepper. In the fridge I found also a cube of yeast. I arranged the flour, melted the yeast in a coup of warm wader then mixed up the flour and the warm water with the yeast. Then started to knead everything till it became an easy mass, then coved everything and set it in the oven. My oven is very particular, you can set also the low temperature from 30°C up, well, I set it at 37°C, the right temperature to reach a perfect yeasting. 45 minutes later the mass was grown up, increasing three times hits volume. I laid it flat into a large cake pan, then added the artichokes and

the other ingredients and put everything in the oven well heated, 45 minutes later, just some minutes before switching off the oven, I opened it and spread parsley pepper and olive oil on my master work.

I had to conduct an experiment, I'm non a scientist but I would have loved it, I had to experiment on David in order to determine whether or not he worries about me if he doesn't find me at my usual place. I have to set first the background, I'll pretend I'm sleeping and then I only have to wait for what he will do. I think he's about to come home ... I have to lay on the bed full clothed and pretend to sleep. Some minutes later I heard the door open and close with a low noise almost undetectable, David would never slam the door... then I heard clearly:

- Hello Mike ... I'm back home ... Mike ... Mike ... where are you?

Then he knocked on the first floor bathroom, twenty seconds later he knocked on my room's door.

-Mike are you fine? ...

I had to answer but what? I thought that let him enter my room would have been too free and easy, that's why my response was much more formal:

- Fine thanks, I was asleep, I'll be in the living room shortly please only a minute
- Be quiet, you aren't in a hurry ..., then he went downstairs.

I combed my hair set my clothes and wearing my best smile, I have to underline: my best spontaneous smile, I got down.

- Hallo, David ... problems at work?
- No, not exactly.
- What do you mean?
- I suggest first we have dinner, then if you like I have something to talk about, but for now, we have better to have dinner ... I think it's pizza because I smell it ... be quiet. I'll share out into pieces with scissors ... you are a master cook ... artichokes pizza! Something fabulous ... And you? What did you do today?
- Not a big business only cooking an sleeping.
- No thoughts at all?
- Clearly when I'm cooking I'm thinking about something,
- Clearly. ... ,

- Would you like some salad, but something very simple?
- Yeah ... just some lettuce ...
- You have to wait just a minute ... the salad is my business ... lettuce, olives, walnuts, green tomatoes, a little oregano and just a squirt of olive oil scattered on.
- Wonderful!
- And what was it that you told me you where going to tell?
- Just a minute ... and I'd like some cold white wine ... perhaps it could help ... but please. If you like, I'd prefer to go to the living room and seat down in two armchairs ...
- Whatever you like ...
- I have to tell you something and to ask you a question. Good ... now I'm ready ... and now I have to call on all my bravery and get out with it ... I think it's necessary ... well ... I'm gay.
- You may feel a little discomfort now, but you have a big moral courage, on the contrary I was always a coward, all life long ... and what's the question you have to ask me?
- I don't need any question ... no more.
- You're right ... I'm speechless.
- Another thing ... nobody knows I'm gay.
- The same for me David now someone would guess that the situation is much more difficult, but I think it's much more easy ... can I ask you a question?
- Of course ...
- Do you have a boyfriend?
- Yeah ... I have a boyfriend ...
- If you'd like better to avoid to speak about ... it would be all right all the same.
- I told him about you and I have to tell you about him ... don't worry ... I only told him you where my house master ... a special house master, but only an house master ... his name is Jason, 21, born just two days before me, we where kicked out by our parents when they found out we where gay ... obviously ... he was hired by a delivery service company and I by J and J construction company ... his company was a delivery company but he was only a living wage waiter, at the beginning it was terrible, I had no money at all, he had a little room near the railway station, I'd better say a little cubicle on the basement, below stairs, He couldn't afford to pay for anything better ... sometimes we had nothing to eat at all, neither a dime for the

day, then I was hired by J.J. here ... to leave Jason was terrible, but I had no choice ... I can see him in the weekends but only for a little time, because he sometimes has day-shifts, sometime night-shifts. I get there the Friday about midnight and usually he has two shifts to work, that's why time flies when I'm there, he's a lovely guy but we work in different places ... now I get some more money but he works hard and has to be half-starved ... sometimes I give him a little money, what I can do, he must only obey his boss and stay quiet because he has to hold down his job ... And we can't even talk on the phone because it's too expensive for us ... He got an old mobile but if I want to save money I can't call him ...

- David, here is my mobile ... go to your room and call him ...

- Thanks.

When David got upstairs ... I felt invaded by a terrible melancholy ... They are in love and have to stay apart ... They are so young and are down and out ... perhaps Jason could be hired here ... And then, a single gay boy in my house could be a problem, but two would never be ... Strange situation? No! The right situation for me ... something exactly fitting ... and my neighbours? ... Because they sometimes worry me ... because they are fucking idiot! No! Never worry about fucking neighbours!

Chapter 3

To be three

David handed me the mobile.

- Thanks...
- How are you? Something wrong? ...
- He was sad and depressed because the boss gave him a slap in the face in public ...
- David, call him again ... what are you waiting for? Call him again! And then give me the mobile...
- Thanks David.... Hallo, are you Jason?
- Yes, who are you?
- I'm Mike, the house master of David ... and I have to tell you something ... give hear to me ... David told me ... you have to resign, to leave your home and to get here as soon as possible ... without any hesitation ... do you understand?
- But I work without labour contract and have no need to resign, and for my room I pay each week ...
- That's better ... jump on a bus and get here!
- That's impossible ...
- Why, the hell?
- Because I have no money at all, not even for the bus ...
- Get ready! We'll come soon to pick you up ...
- Now?
- Yes, now! David knows how to get over there, how long will it take?
- In the night about 90 minutes ...
- Now it's 11 o'clock ... we will arrive as soon as possible! Bye! David will call you in 30 minutes in case you need something. Bye, Jason.
- Bye ... I'm waiting ... bye!

- David! As soon as possible put in a bag whatever you find to eat and to drink ... and carry everything onto the car, in my car! The keys are in the pocket of my sport coat ... I'll take money and car documents ... David, take also your documents! ... we have to go!

In no more than 5 minutes everything was ready. I switched on the engine and our strange trip started.

David was speechless, he begun to tell something only when we entered the highway.

- Mike ... you are great!
 - Hold your tongue! ... or, better, tell me something about Jason ... if you like, or even better set some sandwiches for him ...
 - I brought the artichoke pizza ...
 - Yes but it's a little ting ... he needs something special And remember ... when we'll go back home you have to set the bed for him ... No queen-size beds in my house!
 - We never used a queen-size bed, it's not necessary ...
 - David you didn't understand, I mean that I never got a queen size-bed. I'll buy a queen-size bed for you ... and for Jason, I think it wouldn't be so much expensive ...
 - That's very kind of you but we needn't it at all.

Our conversation went on for about an hour.

- Mike ... pay attention, we are going to go out of the highway, slow the speed ...

The precinct near the railway station was frightening, no one seemed to live over there, when we approached the house, David told me:

- Jason is there waiting for us!

When I stopped the car, David rushed toward Jason and they hugged each other tightly. I never saw such an emotional hag. The guys loved each other. David thought he had to seat near me ... but I told him he had better to set in the back seat with him ... so they did. David started to explain how we made our resolution.

- Jason, you don't know Mike, he is a great person ...

Then I entered the conversation.

- Jason, you'll stay at home with David, you have your room and you have to sleep on whatever happened today, tomorrow, after breakfast, we'll look for a job.
- At my company J & J. they where chatting about hiring someone ... perhaps it could be possible.
- It will be, Jason, it will be!

- Jason and David gobbled the sandwiches then they became silent till we got back home. I think they where hand in hand, I had to let them feel how it can be wonderful to be finally together. When we got home I introduced Jason in a familiar way. David set a folding bed, I gave Jason the sheets in order to make his bed, asked him if he'd like to eat something else, he said not.

- Good night ... I'm very tired and I have to go to bed now it's two o'clock and tomorrow we have to wake up early ... remember, 5.45 breakfast time!

And I went to bed.

Not any noise from the green room, but I thought they where making love, they are in love ... are so young, so beautiful ... they are the picture of whatever I like ... at least I can help, help to build their happiness and it's really well worth it ... to help two guys find out their happiness ... I can help them, not two simple guys but two gay guys ... I think it would be very hard for them to get some help everywhere ... kicked out by their families, slapped by the boss ... that's right, but am I aware of what does it mean? I got involved in their lives, with no come-back, I can no more drop the situation, or turn from them, or forget them for any reason, I only have to encourage them to go ahead step by step ... and they will afford harsh and unpleasing situations ... they came out to me ... and I to them ... they trust me, and I have to trust them ... they don't hope in something, they hope in me ... I think, I'd like it, I hope ... I'm very troubled and concerned by what happened today, but I'm also happy, I feel greet, my life seams to have changed.

I'm starting a new life ... perhaps my life ... love, yes, love, something I never experimented before, yes, love without sex, just love ... what a strange happiness, not even a little regret, not event a little doubt ... only peace, a great interior peace, my soul is now waked up, my journey is going to start and this time I'm not alone, no more, we are three, two young guys and an old man, I got something to do eventually, I got my life ...

I woke at 5.00, set up everything for breakfast ... this time I set up for three, at 5.45 o'clock they came down.

- Hallo Mike ...

David said, Jason kept quiet and just smiled. What a sweet smile! Like an angel smile.

- David, can you find out something about whether or not Jason could be engaged by J. & J.? Because working together would be the top ... go to work together, go back home together ... You could stay together all day long ...

- I'll see immediately ... but I think it would be really possible ... we are starting a new building and they hare short-staffed ... If I can find out something I'll call you ...

Jason only smiled ... not a single word by his side. Then I asked him a question:

- Toasts or sandwiches?

And finally he answered:

- Sandwiches please ...

hearing his voice I understood how easily David fell madly in love with him, a shy guy, I think very embarrassed by the situation. David was bold, at least faced everything with bravery ... Jason was clumsy, unassertive, bashful, I had to be very careful with him in order not to scare him.

After breakfast David hugged Jason tightly without kissing him then got out. I was now alone with Jason ... what a difficult situation. Clearly I had to do something in order to break the ice and to start at least a little conversation, but I wouldn't be too much intrusive or inappropriate.

- Jason is there something you'd like ... whatever ... do you prefer to stay alone? ... to go somewhere? To sleep in your room? You only have to tell me.

- I don't know ... whatever you like ...

- Well ... I'm embarrassed ... I would never press you ... you have to feel at home ... that's all.

- You know, it's not so easy to settle into new situations ... I'm worried about my job ... now I'm here but I can't stay without a job ...

- You're right, but David will think about ... he's a clever guy and I'm sure you'll find your job immediately, but you're right, to be down and out is terrible, but you are non alone, David will find a solution.

We went on with the difficult conversation for about two hours, Jason began to feel more comfortable.

- Jason, I bet David will find the solution today ...

- I hadn't even ended my sentence and the mobile rang ... David told me to bring Jason at J. & J. because they'll hire him immediately. David was on top of the world.

I opened my eyes wide in front of Jason and he understood immediately.

- Jump in my car ... I'll take the documents ... be happy Jason, your problem is no more a problem ... David is really a wonderful guy ... You and David working together!

- Oh ... great!

- By car it would take about 50 minutes to get there.

- Jason seemed to be unable to think.

- Jason ... do you understand what is happening? ...

- Yeah ... but I'm frightened ... a new job ... and I'm absolutely unskilled in building houses, yes, I could learn something but now I'm not learned in such things and I would never make a poor showing or make David hide his face because of me ...

- You can learn everything ... and you have to remember that people know about you only what you let them to know, therefore, if you look strong, people will consider you stronger, if you look weak people will consider you weaker. You can be yourself with David and if you like with me, but at work you have to look strong and assertive, otherwise you'll look an hit-and-miss guy.

- Ok, you're right.

I had thought about waiting there for them to the end of the work-shift, but it was probably not the right time. Jason got down near the J. & J. building and I got back home.

Jason was cute, cuter than David, but David was bolder. The two of them were well-matched. I only had to get home and prepare for them. David's dream was finally fulfilled ... Jason would probably take his time to get used to such a different behaviour. And what about me? what was my role? First never be intrusive. I had to remember that they needed me but I needed them much more. That's why this time I had to care of them, to be friendly, to respect them, to help, to keep at my place, to let them go where and when they like. Two young guys that can achieve whatever they like, because they are two guys in love with each other. I have to avoid any

remark about myself ... but I did so today, I told Jason only about how clever David was ... and I'll keep doing so, I have to be only a support if they like it, otherwise I have to withdraw without any waver ... I have a lot of things do learn about love ... about this kind of love ... gay-love? Perhaps their gayness helps ... yes I can't deny it, but nevertheless it's a very particular kind of gay-love ...

I had to set everything for dinner ... that was my job ... And really I started going to the store ... now I had to think about two guys, and aged 21 ... the market was empty like in normal work-days ... I had to search for something not too strange and not too common ... Then I found a solution: ravioli with ricotta cheese and spinach, dressed with tomatoes, carrots and minced beef sauce Italian style ... and second floor roast chine of pork ... first find a chine of pork without fat and the butcher stand had some first option chines of pork ... then ravioli and vegetables ... At home, I spent a lot of time to cook the pork in the oven avoiding the meat to burn. It took about one hour, then I prepared the soup and sat at my desk ... and I heard a signal of a message on my mobile and opened it:

“It's our lunch break ... Hi Mike, we work apart but at lunch break we can stay together ... and talk about you! ... You're great! See you at nine. Bye. David & Jason”

Reading such a message was far-out for me. I had never got such messages ... now I can understand why people like to get short messages by mobile ... Well, I was very touched and started to smile while walking around, something I never experienced before. Had I to send back a message? ... yes, certainly I had and as soon as possible, something not too personal and not too tender:

“Thanks! I enjoyed your message a lot!”

I sent the message. Then got upstairs and laid flat on my bed ... what a sweet feeling to lay down thinking about my two guys. I wondered what could David have told Jason about me, we know each other just a little ... but we can see trough each other as well. To be present, useful, willing, available that was what I had to do in order to help them, and I had to remember that they where in love with each other and I had to relate with them as a couple, and keep out of the scene, never I had to enter the show, it wasn't my show. Well all this things seamed to me to be obvious, but in earlier times I had never accepted such things, but it was long time ago, when I was much more younger and liked to be the leading man, but many years went by and

eventually I started to think about someone else's happiness as something not hurting or scaring but as something to help, to support, to encourage, not to destroy or to envy. And now I was laid on my bed thinking about my two guys in the green room, two gay guys ...

In other times I never had accepted to come out to someone else but eventually I did ... and they came out to me ... two 21 years old gay guys ... what they may wait for? What may expect or desire? How they picture me? Well, I got their message and it's not a little thing but ... perhaps they look at me like a father or a brother, or like an old friend who may help ... I was so lost and absorbed in my thoughts that lunch hour elapsed and I kept fantasizing about my two guys ... and so went by the afternoon. At 8.30 I started to set the table, for the first time with three seats. My place here and the two of them across the table, close to one another.

The bread must be sliced, the sparkling mineral water must be on the table with a little bottle of fresh red wine.

At nine o'clock David and Jason rang the bell, this time they didn't get into. I opened the door and got them into.

- David, Jason are you tired? ... now right away to wash hands, the dinner is waiting for you ... in the green room or if you like better over there, the second door on the left ...

They got upstairs and, I waited for them for about ten minutes ... I thought they were hugging each other but I was wrong, when they got downstairs I was surprised, they changed clothes and shaved.

- Oh! I'm very pleased for your kindness but I think you are tired that's why you don't need shaving or changing clothes ... otherwise I would have also to change clothes and to shave ... isn't it? Too difficult ... if you like you can do everything you like ... always ... Jason seat down ... are you hungry? ...

- Yeah ... my back hurts, my bones hurt ... but I'm hungry like hell ... Ravioli with minced meat sauce ... something special.

- Mike is special ... you don't know him yet but you'll know shortly ...

- Hold your tongue David, let Jason take his time ...

- Right ... but if I hold my tongue, he'll be like I thief in the night ... you don't know how he's shy ...

- David, you aren't polite, do you remember how shy you were when you got here the first time?

- But I made you understand everything right then and there ... do you remember?

- Jason ... I wonder how can you tolerate such a guy...
- He has always something to point out ... needless worrying, you just need to pretend to be interested ... He's inclined to preach ... Mike, can I address you this way?
- Of course ...
- Well, Mike, I'm shy ... yes, that's right, but I have something to tell you ... no, to ask you ... why did you do whatever you did?
- Jason ... I'm disconcerted ...
- Excuse me Mike, when I try to act like David, I only put someone to a lot of trouble ... I'm sorry ...
- Boys ... can I ask you something?
- What?
- Are you in love or not?
- Why do you ask us this question?
- Because there is something you must learn ...
- What is it?
- You have to learn to hold your tongue! You have to respect each other. Chitchatting may be dangerous ... Now you are eventually together and living together is much more difficult than stay apart ... Here and everywhere you needn't to change clothes or shave for dinner ... but you have to hold your tongue, not for me, but Jason for David and David for Jason. You now can be aware of each other ... that's why before talking nonsense you have to think whether or not it may hurt someone, and notably the one you love ... well, what are you waiting for? ... Do you like another slice of roast pork? David, some wine? ... I'm sorry ... perhaps I didn't hold my tongue ...
- You're right Mike ... thanks ... it was necessary ...
- If you like to know why I did what I did I can tell you shortly ... because you are two gay guys in love with each other ... I never did something like that ... but now I'm happy just doing what I can do ... when you can see someone's happiness you have to help, not to envy, that's why you needn't to point anything out and you only need to love each-other and not only each-other. Nothing else in the world can make you happy. You needn't get awarded, or similar things ... you only have to respect and to love everyone in the world ... perhaps I'm also inclined in preaching ... I'm sorry ... Jason ... sorry, sorry ...
- I'm touched ... and when I'm touched I start to cry ... sorry ... I know that assertive guys don't cry at all, but your preach

was something that touched me intensely ...

- Mike ... do you understand why I'm in love with him?

- Yes, I do ... but I don't know what to say ... I'm not used to such situations, Jason ... please ... what can I do? ... I don't know ...

- Mike ... I'd say I feel inappropriate ... but I can't stop ... I'm happy ... I'm here with David ... I started a new job today ... and you cooked a dinner for us ... No one ever cared about us ... our parents kicked us out ... and you are here non only cooking but also teaching us something I like well to hear ... something about me and David ... usually we had to hide from everybody ... we hadn't friends ... not at all, only us, me for David and David for me ... He told me about you but it seamed incredible ... someone who might care about us ... might listen to us ... someone older ...

- Jason I have to be honest with you ... I'm not a saint, I'm gay and you are two cute guys, you know it's not only generosity or unselfishness ... there's also something physical ... nothing to worry about, I can keep my role, but you don't have to think I'm what I'm not ...

- Mike, can I ask you a question?

- Of course ...

- Inside yourself what have you in mind about us? - I don't know exactly ... I know I'm going to start a new style life ... but I don't know where I may end up ... I'm very happy that you are here, but I can't foreseen what's to come ... I'm not sure that something else couldn't be hidden somewhere in a dark corner of my soul ... some hidden meaning ... I'm not sure, but I don't like to keep my thoughts hidden ... at least not with you ... I have to tell you everything, especially whatever might scare you ... Perhaps you would have expected another kind of response ... but it wouldn't be honest by the side of me ...

- I'm speechless ... what an uncommon statement! ... We are not so used to the truth ... we are used only to half-truths ... you told us the absolute truth ... and we have to respond the whole truth ... honestly I'm a little scared about you, perhaps David knows you better and he can stay still and unruffled, but I don't know what I may expect from you ... I have to make my ideas more definite ... it would take some days to have a more correct picture ... for now I'm impressed by your talking about your feelings so openly ... but I have to understand something

else.

- Mike ... Jason is always well-advised, prudent and careful, he only has to know you better to laid aside all this carefulness ...

- Well ... boys ... it's bed time ... tomorrow you have to wake up early ... breakfast time at 5.45 ... good night boys ...

- Mike, have I to be scared of you?

- No ... nothing similar ... thanks, your smile is the better response I could get ... good night Jason ... good night David.

The guys went upstairs and I put the dishes into the water and followed them after two minutes ... My brain was speeding up ... what to think about them, David was bolder but Jason was such tender and lovable, something very uncommon nowadays ... A guy who can be touched listening to my preaches ... but the same time he had to wait before pronouncing a judgement ... I was happy but the same time was perplexed, we had to know each other talking and living together before getting used to one another ... Jason cute, clever and emotional, used to cry ... at 21 ... And David looked at him with such a warm expression ... two guys in love ... yes, or better two guys who'd like to learn how to love ... And ... what can I teach them about love? I'm not so skilled in similar things, this is my first love story ... love story? Yes, love story, loving two guys at a time, because I never got involved in something real ... writing a lot, reading a lot, also love poems, but I was never seriously involved in a love story ... perhaps now I'm involved in their love story ... I'm the one who might stay apart but got involved in something that belongs to other people ... Do the three guys love stories exist? Or am I involved in something that doesn't belong to me?

What a strange threesome ... two young guys and me ... what's my role, if I'm playing a role. Tomorrow breakfast time at 5.45 ... I have to get up early! This time I fell asleep easily ... and when the clock rang at 5.00 I got up with a strange enthusiasm ... got to the kitchen and started to cook ... this time not only breakfast but also eight sandwiches to take for dinner-time. At 5.45 the two of them got downstairs.

- Hi Mike ... how are you?

- Fine thanks ... and you?

- Fine ... we slept all the night long ... we where so tired ... and get up at 5.00 was terrible ...

- Well, I set sandwiches to take and also a little coffee thermos, everything is in the green bag over there ... I put also something else, if you'd like to have different food ... you'll see later ... - Mike, today is Friday ... and we where wandering if you'd like

to spend the weekend with us ... wherever you like ... we can stay home or to go somewhere else, no matter ... we discussed the thing and decided to ask you ...

- Of course ... I'll stay with you ... do you like better go to the falls or to the lake? I think we don't have to stay at home. I have a little cabin near the lake ... I never go there ... if you like, we could stay there...

- Ok! This evening we will establish everything ... for me the cabin near the lake is wonderful, and for you, David?

- Very good ...

- Ok, now you have to go, be careful!

- See you at nine!

Chapter 4

A new life

They went out. My brain started to work about the weekend ... a weekend at the cabin near the lake ... it's a cold place ... we have to bring sleeping bags ... I have just one sleeping bag, today I have to buy a double sleeping bag for them, it's too cold at the lake blankets aren't usually sufficient ... the heating plant has been checked in June and will probably work ... I have to catch the feed for three persons and for three days ... this time only rice and beans, steaks and canned vegetables, milk, sugar, tea, bread ... and so on ... They have to find everything set up to start, and we have to start Saturday at 5.00, no ... better at 6.00 ... we'll get there at 8.00 ... the boys have to enjoy their weekend ... well I have to wash up, because I must be at the superstore at 8,30 ... I have to hurry up! The morning went by, I bought the sleep bag, the food and whatever we needed to spend a weekend in peace, set the luggage in the carrier, because I have a carrier ... Cooked something for dinner, I was very tired and plopped down. The mobile rang for a message.

“Hi Mike, we are looking forward to the weekend trip ... we have a lot of things to talk about ... See you at nine. Jason and David”

I had to respond and so I did immediately:

“I just set everything up ... and have been thinking about a lot of things ... good things! See you at nine.”

I decided for a low profile language, but appreciated a lot that the short message was going to become an habit ... They used to call me at lunch-hour that means they used to talk also about me at lunch hour. Certainly I couldn't understand the exact meaning of their talking about me ... What can two young guys think about an old man? But certainly I was thinking

about them every single hour of my day ... Life may change suddenly into very different directions ... You can run into someone else when you hardly expect something to change ... and your life can be fully upset, so that you can't control it no more. I only had to spend the afternoon cooking for them ... my duty was cooking and not only cooking, my role was more complex and all-involving ... I was aware that two 21 years old guys are not two boys to foster or to take care of, they are two adult men with a lot of problems and a lot of preoccupations to worry about. I never had to play the part of the old man ... no! Neither the part of the playmate. I only had to avoid playing a role, whatever it was. I'm Mike, just Mike, not dad, foster-father, or big brother ... no! Nothing similar! I have to mark this clearly ... and they will agree with me: never wear a mask, never overact!

At 8,30 everything was set up. Dinner was cooked: rice salad with pickles, wiener schnitzels, lettuce salad with potatoes, carrots, anchovies and olives and backed bread with garlic.

At nine the bell rang.

- Hi Mike ... how are you?
- Fine, thanks ... go wash hands ...

They went back in five minutes, without changing clothes and without shaving ... Jason realized that Mike was looking at him.

- Didn't you say we needn't change clothes or shave? ...

And added a little smile.

- I did ... right, I did ... but now seat down and enjoy your dinner ... you have to go to sleep early today because we will leave at six tomorrow ...
- Mike, excuse me, can I ask you something?
- Of course.
- Do you think we are allowed to stay here as long as we like? ...
- Of course, but why such questions? You have nothing to ask here ... you can stay as long as you like and always for free ...
- Mike, don't become angry ... but now we have a little money to burn ... and we thought we have to help and pay our rent ...
- No! I told David from the beginning that I hadn't rooms to rent ... and excuse me, I don't like such an offer ... No! I don't like it at all! ...
- Mike, don't be angry, but we talked a lot about this ... We use a big room, with private bathroom, you cook such superb meal for us every day ... you bear the expense, and we only have to

take advantage, you have to recognise that it's an exploitation

...

- ...

- Mike ... my God ... no! ... oh my God tell me something, are you fine?

- I'm fine don't worry! Let's have dinner quietly, then all the three of us have to seat down in the living room ... nothing happened ... and nothing will happen ...

- Mike, I apologize to you for my stupid remark ... I never would have offended you ... I and David thought only about giving you some help ... I swear that we appreciate everything you did, you are a god person, you never have to think bad

- Don't worry Jason, I know all that very well, know you got a job ... and you have to save money ... I have another thing in mind ... I'd like to tell you, but I'm not so sure it will be understood ... it's not a difficult thing but perhaps it could sound strange to you ...

- What have you in mind Mike ... tell us shortly.

- Well, I'll tell you, but you'll give me an answer only Monday at nine ... ok?

- Ok what is it?

- I think you had better go to College ... that's it ...

- We graduated at the same high school, David was the best, but I was a peachy guy ... we where also called by a College for courses about physics ... our parents would have agreed but then they found out everything about us ... and kicked us out ... therefore no college for us ... at least we got a job ... but at the beginning it was terrible ... we where literally starved ... Mike, to go to college we need a lot of money, much more than what we can save working hard, even staying here for free ...

- Now be quiet ... If you like, it's possible ... I'd afford the cost ... be quiet ... you don't have to give me an answer today ... take your time ... it remains firm that I don't have rooms to rent ... you can go to college and come back home in the summer, and I would come to visit you at your college ... well I told you everything I had in mind ... you are perplexed ... well they admit rather guys just out of school, but you aren't much older ... now good night, see you at 5.45, breakfast time.

- Mike I'm speechless ...

- Good night David! Good night Jason! ... remember you never have to think bad ... that's your statement.

Jason and David looked at each other then stood up without a word, looked a second time at each other then nodded and got upstairs, they were clearly interested.

Next morning I got up at 5.00 as usual, this time they were awake and came down at 5.10.

- Mike ... do you think we are allowed to speak clearly?
- Of course!
- Well this year it would be very difficult ... to enrol ...
- No! You are wrong ... physics courses start in 10 days and at Y.Y. University ... you are still allowed to enrol ... I checked the site yesterday and they are searching for physics students ... because they are under number ... if you'd like to enrol I just downloaded the forms. But be quiet, now you have to enjoy your weekend at lake ... we can discuss everything there, if you like ... there isn't television over there and the evenings are boring ... I'm happy you agreed ... thanks ... you have to build your future, and physics I think is the better choice ... I don't know anything about physics but I think you can find there everything you need in order to study at high level ... you can also stay in a double room in the dorm, with no people nosing around ... I checked also this possibility ... and you are allowed to ... And overall you are major and don't need any parent's consent ... I think you are about two or three years late ... but you have good possibilities to go ahead ...
- How much does it cost all this?
- Yeah, it costs a lot ... I can also give you a little pocket money but no more, because I absolutely can't afford other expenses ... that's all! ... Well ... Jason, open the fridge and hurry up with sandwiches ... You, David ... milk and tea! Do you like help? Now you have to. Let's have a breakfast quickly and leave as soon as possible ...

The trip was pleasant ... we chatted about a lot of things, high school, physics, university, the future, how to survive in an university dorm ... but every argument was discussed with calm and as the most natural thing ... They were quiet ... I was happy.

We got at the lake ... my cabin was icy-cold, we started the heating plant, I showed them their room and we set up everything ... then we went out to walk around the lake ... I walked between them. The morning was sunny but cold, the air clear and clean, the lake calm. A peaceful feeling invaded me, they smiled at each other, sometimes laughed openly, playing

and kidding in the most familiar way ... they seemed to be the cutest boys in the world ... we stopped, onshore there was a fisherman who told us something about the lake, about the ice age and so on, he seemed a learned man. There was a boat nearby, David and Jason asked the fisher.

- Mister, would you be so kind to allow us to use your boat ... we'll get back shortly ...

The fisherman agreed and they boarded.

- David, Jason ... remember you have to get back shortly, no more than half an hour ... good?

- Yes ... don't worry, no more than half an hour.

Then the boat came off the wharf. The fisherman told me:

- You are a blessed father with two sons like yours.

I told nothing and just nodded.

No more than twenty minutes later David and Jason went back, fastened the boat to the quay, gave thanks to the fisherman and we got back home, it was about noon. We started cooking.

- Boys ... what a beautiful day What a beautiful world!

- Mike do you remember Luis Armstrong's song Somewhere over the rainbow?

- Oh yes, I love this song.

- We too ... when we were enduring the worst situations, once we heard this song ... and I started crying ... and it became our song.

- I'm dazed, sometimes when I feel bad I lay down in my armchair, switch off the light and listen to this song ... and it relaxes me, it communicates a wonderful sensation of peace, of quiet, of rest ... and all my bad thoughts go away ... Armstrong ... the top! I saw him in concert many years ago, just singing that song, it was marvellous!

We saved something for dinner then they started asking about college ... I had brought whatever I had found on the net in order to let them understand exactly what they were going to choose. And talking, we went inevitably to an end: gay life in college. I obviously referred to my college times ...

No gay people were allowed in College, probably gay people attended classes, but I never met another guy openly gay, everyone was in the closet ... I had heard some news about a guy

kicked out because he was gay ... but asking something about was dangerous and I never did. The private contacts were very different things, tight friendships were frequent ... friendships that seemed something else ... you know, sex or not sex, when two guys spend a lot of time together and they don't care dating girls ... if they are room mates ... and if they never speak about sex when talking with their friends ... and especially when they attend lectures together, go to the cinema together, go to the gym together ... and so on ... clearly they are in love with each other ... don't you think so?

- Well ... yes ... are you telling us we have to avoid such behaviour?

- I can't suggest anything ... you have to explore the environment.

- Someone told me that now there are gay fraternities, gay clubs and so on ... I think life is very different now ...

- Jason ... college wasn't the gay haven at my times neither is today ... Be careful ... you have a lot to lose and you really risk to lose it ...

- You're right! I have to think before speaking ... you're right!

- David ... are you ok?

- I'm worried about new college life, we have not only to study physics but also environmental sciences, or so to say, gay sciences, in order to survive ... it will be not so easy ... now at work we can stay together only at lunch time ... everything is easy ... but over there things will be more complicated.

- Perhaps well could be not so complicated, we don't know ... you just have to discover ... Boys, why physics? Are you sure?

- Yeah ... I got mad about physics, every kind of physics ... David was a genius of physics ... the teacher always used to put the lesson into his hands ... in reality he was the teacher ... and the teacher restricted himself to earn the wage. I think we are very enthusiast ... To go to college means restart a normal life ... Mike ... I think I will cry never more ...

- Oh ... no! you have to do everything you like ... with David ... and with me, if you like ... only you have to be prudent with someone else ... if you don't trust them ...

In the afternoon just a little walk to the village to get fresh vegetables. At five o'clock it was so cold you couldn't even warm up neither skipping, neither wrapping in a double overcoat, we got on the car and went back to the cabin

... David and Jason had red chicks and red noses ... we got into the car, started the heating plant and warmed up easily. The cabin itself was well wormed up ... Jason ordered me to stay quiet and to seat down in the armchair. He and Jason heated up the rice, cooked three steaks and set up a salad bowl... dressed the table and everything.

- We have to help some way ... we can't help with money but at least doing whatever is necessary ... David, do you think it would be easy for us to get used to such a new life style?

- At the beginning it will be hard ... but you'll muddle through it in few weeks. I have to keep outside ... I'd like to come there with you and to come to visit you on a regular basis but I think it's not so appropriate, you can find me on the mobile or on the net ... My soul will be there, needles to say ... the college is one hundred kilometres from my house and there is the railway, it takes only 55 minutes to get home ... You can come back home every weekend if you like ... perhaps the first time you go there I can go with you ... obviously if you like ...

- Mike ... I'm scared, David is bolder but I'm very upset ... you have to promise that if I need you, you catch a train and go there right away.

- I promise ... but such things will never happen ...

Then Jason started talking about school memories ... that was about David, how clever he was, how skilled, how loveable. I asked him:

Where you in love already at that time?

- Yeah ... not exactly ... I was in love with him or at least needed him but he wasn't in love with me and probably didn't even need me ... at that time he was a little selfish ... I moved heaven and hearth to make him notice me but he seamed offish ... I was desperate and he seamed distant and regardless. I started crying at that time, we where about 16 or 17, then his heart melted ... but it happened suddenly ... one afternoon he got a prize for physics, he was expected to be pleased, but he wasn't ... walked up and down the corridor, someone complimented him but he looked peeved, I wondered what to do, then I went to praise him for his success ... and he showed me his best smile ... I wasn't aware of myself then dared and hugged him tightly and he hugged back ... our love story started this way.

Jason told the story from his point of view.

- ... but I had noticed him previously ... at a glance he was exactly what I was searching for ... but at that time we didn't know each other yet and I was well aware that to come out to someone else could have been a very risky choice ... That's why I was totally in the closet ... in such things Jason was bolder ... probably if he wouldn't have played a risky game, we never would have been aware of each other ...

- And what happened then?

- Then the life changed, we became best friends, our parents approved, they didn't know anything about our real life ... and we went on being in the closet for everybody ... we graduated very well and just in the graduation party the bomb burst, because we were caught by my mother while hugging and kissing ... kissing like friends or just something more, nothing sexual or whatever ... from this point on you know the story ... what do you think about?

- I think you have been very lucky, because you found the love at 17-18 ... I found it at 56 ...

- Yes at 56 – told David -... but you found it really ... there's a lot in common between us, problems, troubles, preoccupations, wishes, fears ... and to stay between us is marvellous ... it's wonderful to talk freely, to tell someone else that I'm gay without any concern ... to compare experiences ... we are between us ... how many guys are still now totally in the closet? ... and we stay here ... in this cabin the three of us ... and what is the link between us? ... It's to be gay, (Jason raised his eyebrows) it's not to have or own something but to be something and we are very similar I know it instinctively (Jason raised his eyebrows a second time)... I could never fear anything from your part ... set upon me would be like set upon yourself ... we needn't any sex to be in love with each other (Jason raised his eyebrows a third time).

- From my part I don't exclude something similar anyway - told Jason. - Yeah, good clarification, but doesn't matter at all ... yes I know that ... David knows but doesn't make any difference ... we are in love, well sex is something similar to the love ...

- Obviously ... I must assure I never, and say never, would act something against you or keep something hidden to you ...

- Yes, you needn't repeat such things, we know yet ...

- Boys ... where would you like to go tomorrow?

- I'd like to stay here ... and you, David?

- Me too ... only walking by the lake, and we have a lot to talk about before we leave for college, we can't waste the time going somewhere else.
- Ok ... but now ... it's bed time ... Jason ... you can set the sleep bag on the carpet ... good night boys ... don't be afraid about anything, love is wonderful ... and you are in love ...
- No! We are in love, the three of us ... good night Mike!
- Good night Jason, good night David.

Somehow I was happy, somehow I was afraid, I wondered how to behave, I had always to remember that we were not three guys in love, they were really in love and I was something like an helping figure. They were the same age, I was much more older, life was something that belonged to them, I was just ending up my life, perhaps not exactly ending up but for sure not beginning it. Years can really separate generations. I wasn't, neither I'll be any more, an absolute beginner ... something similar to the envy started walking around my brain, but I had to stop this walking ... they were young guys, something natural, I had to love them like fathers love sons ... Probably my offer about college wasn't so philanthropic, perhaps I had to get rid of them as soon as possible, because to look every minute to the image of the happiness is not so easy when that happiness is their happiness not yours. When I locked the door I became aware that my life was in danger, two gay guys are something too difficult to face, their smiling is something I love but also scares me ... My life is different ... wishes and dreams don't belong to men my age. Right they have to go to college and I have to stay here and go straight on my way ... It just seems too easy ... stay here and get it over, nearly forgetting them and leaving behind wishes and dreams ... First I had had to get involved, then I have to forget ... But can young guys picture in their mind this sort of consciousness raising? Probably they don't care at all, they have to live not to think about life ... I had to encourage them ... to let them rest upon me ... this was the heritage of the older age, my own heritage ... I was happy to see things go on well, to make them happy about starting university and also to give me my usual piece and quiet, this things had to go together, I never would let them out only to gain my quiet, they gave me their trust and their confidence, something special I had to be grateful for, something I wasn't used to, and I had to take care of their wishes and their dreams ... yes, and also of myself, avoiding too much involving adventures. Keep away in order to prevent any kind of too strong involvement ... short, to avoid sex involvement, because such things happen, and you normally can't avoid it. It would have taken a month, two or more, but it would have happened eventually. It's better to prevent, this way I

have nothing to worry about, nothing difficult to explicate, nothing to be ashamed of. Am I too complicated? Perhaps they wouldn't even get upset about such things ... but I don't know. Fathers and sons have different attitudes towards life. Sons love it, fathers fear it, sons feel strong, good, happy, fathers feel anxious, worried, doubtful. Is that true? ... I just built such a building but is it well grounded? I don't know "I don't know" this topic sentence is the normal end of my thoughts. Then I fell asleep.

Chapter 5

Just friends

At 5.00 o'clock in the morning I got up to set the breakfast, this time nothing enthusiastic I felt it was my duty to tell them the truth, to love them, to set breakfast for them ... a lot of duties ... like usually fathers do ... was I a father? Somehow yes, I was a father ... usually sons move away from fathers ... and fathers try to hold them back, but usually fathers don't risk to fall in love with sons like I do. At 5.45 David and Jason didn't come to have breakfast. I sat down and waited. At about seven some little noise came from their room. Then they went to the shower. Shower was a magical word at my times, used to mean nudity, something sexual, how many stories I was reading about mates in the shower, this time nothing similar. It wasn't my time, no more, it was their time. I noticed that they used the shower one at a time entering and getting out fully clothed ... it was very cold, that's right, but I think they were shy with each other, perhaps not always but usually. They never caressed or kissed in front of me ... many people do that with naughtiness, they don't.

At 7.20 we were chatting about college and having breakfast in a very relaxed way.

- Mike, are you worried about something?
- Not exactly.
- What is it?
- I'd like better to keep it for myself.
- No ... you have to share ...
- I have?
- Yes you have to
- Well I think I'm substantially kicking you out ... I'm trying to get rid of you ...
- Mike ... please stop it! You are totally wrong. Mike do you know what we were talking about yesterday before we fell

asleep?

- No, I don't know.

- We were wondering what to think about you ... especially if you would have something sexual in your mind about us ... well that wouldn't upset us at all, perhaps we aren't a family but we can change into a real family, no matter what the father has in mind about the sons, sexual love is real love ... Mike ... you are what you are but now, you can't help it, we are three and we'll change into a real family ... you can't get rid of us any more ... I think ... no matter what you have in mind, whatever it is ... love has something sexual and more than something ... you have not to worry about anything, not to be ashamed of anything, if you love us it's a good thing, no matter if it's sex or something else, love is always love, we don't fear you ... you'll never act against us, we know it very well ... we think that's impossible, ... that's taken for granted ... what you did for David and for me till now is something we like well, nothing to highlight yourself or to mark what you were doing ... just struggling to do something for us ... never promises, never pointing out, never asking, never impinging privacy ... with respect, with care, with love ... and that's enough.

- Well, I'm confused ... probably you are less worried about me than I'm worried about you ... I'd never make mistakes ... your life is important ... it's important to me ... letting you go to the college, perhaps, I can love you and the same time you are allowed to be free, to get out, to live for yourself ... love is love, yes, but you have to enjoy your being young without me, or also with me but in the distance ... we can meet every weekend but no more ... I love you, but you have better to go ... college can give you a lot of chances to meet young people ... to make friends ... I'll stay at home waiting for you, but if you some Sunday would go somewhere else you have to go there ... no matter if I'm alone or not, if I know my two boys are happy I'll be certainly happy ... do you understand?

- Not exactly. You need us ... it's something evident, and you don't need us because of you ... no! You need us because we need you ... Mike ... you can't abandon us, you can't at all. because we need you, and you know that very well ... Yes, we'll go to college but not to get rid of you neither to let you get rid of us ... no! Only to build a future ... Mike, we can't put down each other, perhaps we'll make friends over there ... but we'll

never find another family over there, our family is here ... no ... you are our family ... do you understand?

- Yeah ...

- And now, what about today? I have something in mind ... David ... can I ask him?

- Certainly, we have been talking about a lot ... you have to.

- Well Mike ... we would ask you about your life ... that's not curiosity ...

- I'm very upset ...

- Don't worry ... we'll tell you something before ... so you can relax ... do you like to know something about us?

- Whatever you like ...

- Dave ... go ... tell him everything ...

- Mike ... I have to tell you ... we aren't in love with each other ... I can understand that it sounds strange to you ... we are only friends, like brothers, I'm really gay, perhaps Jason too is gay but he thinks he's not ... or he thinks he's not exactly aware of what he really is, do you remember when you told me about the queen-size bed and I told you that we needn't queen-size beds? I'm in love with Jason but he's not sure he's in love with me, I think he is, but he likes better to say we are friends in a particular way ... but when I was kicked out by my parents because they find out I was gay he told his parents he was in love with me and they kicked out him too ... he probably couldn't stand being alone ... and he has broken up with his family to stay with me ... facing very bad difficulties ... but he did ... he always tells me he did it for me like a friend ... I'm non sure ... but I have to let him search and find his own way toward happiness. It's a very hard exercise of abstinence but I love Jason ... and his life is much more important than whatever else ... we can stay in the same room but we don't sleep together ... neither yesterday night ... there was only a sleeping bag and we got into fully clothed ... that's our little secret ... we don't are lovers, I don't know what we are, but we aren't lovers, or, if you like, we are, but without sex, at least from his part ... Strange? What do you think about? I think I'd like to know, and Jason too would like to know ... now you know everything ...

- Oh ... I'm speechless ... I supposed you where in love ... I'm very perplexed ... but if Jason thinks otherwise, we have to respect his point of view, perhaps love can be love also without sex ... I think at least somehow you are in love, yes perhaps without

sex but you are in love ... if someone puts aside whatever else in order to follow you he's in love with you ...

- Or he's so much alone and desperate that he likes better whatever else ...

- Jason ... yes, I'm an old gay guy ... perhaps my point of view is a gay point of view and I'm inclined to this kind of interpretations ... but can I ask you something more personal?

- I'd like better not ...

- Well ... you are right ... you can choose or think whatever you like and no one is allowed to horn in ... no matter why ... you are right ... David ... No! Love is love ... and we can't force him ... right?

- Yes, right!

- Jason, you have to take for granted that gay or not we'll be a family, we three ... right?

- Right Mike ...

- Boys, there's a thing to talk about ... the college ... tomorrow morning we'll have to fill forms, seat down and take a pen ...

We kept chatting and planning about the college settlements, we agreed I would never come there, Jason agreed only after long discussions on the opportunity of me getting there, but at the end accepted this resolution as the lower dangerous ... He wasn't so interested in college like David. David looked forward to starting the new life, Jason was searching for something else and I had difficulties in make him accept to go.

- Jason, remember, you have to go ... it's not the much important thing in the world but this way you can realize your future ...

He answered that he didn't know anything about his future ... and he hoped to stay with me and David here, to work in order to have a little money and no more ... yes, study physics was a good thing but he thought he would never come to an end with physics ... yes, he had to go to college ... but he probably would never be a scientist ... He liked better to be a simple man living his simple life which he didn't know at all ... with David, probably, but perhaps without him and perhaps without me ... He was going to go to college with this thought in mind, only starting for now, waiting for whatever would come, without wishes and without dreams. This boy had something uncommon, he was different ... perhaps he wasn't gay, but certainly he was something different. He liked being accepted, loved without questions about his most private life. David was openly gay, Jason

liked better to avoid any definition, he was only Jason ... you had to love Jason not the gay person that Jason could be, you had to love him, the single person without any specification ... He was tender, and needed incredibly to be loved. Probably he was searching for love when he came to David to greet him for his physics prize ... David was searching for something specifically gay, Jason wished only to be hugged tightly ... David was tentative and doubtful but somehow he had a choice, he was not so desperate like Jason, who had no choice. For Jason there was nothing to think about ... he had to go, no matter if David was gay, what Jason knew very well, in fact it was exactly because he was gay that David could have loved him. A young guy, substantially a boy, who surmounts any psychological and also relational difficulty in front of his friends to be hugged by a gay guy, just because the gay guy could love him. Perhaps David too was searching for love and not only for sex ... and Jason undertook the risk and went on ... The life of this guys was something like a novel, nothing simple, nothing like a play script, everything absolutely original ... and their feelings weren't so simple as I assumed. And at that time they where only 16 or 17! ... Yes they experienced a lot of thinks I can't event imagine ... the matter isn't about dealing with two gay guys following the play script ... no! I have to deal with two young men with their personalities, their feelings, their weaknesses, I had to deal with two young men that could teach me something about life ... they weren't in the closet all life long like I was, somehow they loved each other ... and David accepted Jason with no doubt, with no hesitation ... because he felt how strong was the love that moved Jason toward him ... yes, without sex ... but love is always love, you can live without sex, but you can't live without love.

In the evening we packed everything end went away. When in the car I told them what I had had in mind and the conversation became something incredible, something very sweet, they seamed totally free, speaking without any restraint in front of me like they probably used in front of each other ...

Boys ... can I tell you something?

- Of course!

- Today I learned about love a lot of things I never taught about ... I can understand that I experienced nothing at all in my life ... I taught a lot of stupid things about love ... and also about you I pretended to myself to be experienced in such things but I wasn't at all ... Love for me was something sex-related, no ... I have to explicate it better ... I never fell in love ... yes sometimes I presumed to myself to be in love, but to be in love must be two and I was always alone ... I never got in touch

with another person, no matter if male or female, I lived only for myself ... till now ... and now I'm upset looking at you, you know what feelings are, not what is literature about feeling ... Jason ... I love you ... David I love you ... I don't know what does it mean but I know that I love you ... no matter if gay or whatever, I love you, you Jason and you David, like single persons ... What you are is great for me, you are not like standard models of my fantasy, no! You are different and you are a lot better, you aren't pictures of literary characters ... no! You are two real men ... like me ... very like me. I love what you are, because my life changed into something really new, into a love life ... Boys ... I love you with all my heart! Thanks for giving me something so marvellous.

- David ... I can't help crying ... but for happiness ... What do you think, David, are we a family?

- I'm, very blessed with all my love life, and I can't find out why ... At that time I was upset by my coming out, yes, I was worried about my coming out, so worried that probably I never would have come out ... but Jason somehow came out to me and hugged me ... I was helped and saved by Jason at that time ... but we had to separate ... then I literally crashed into Mike ... perhaps at the beginning I had something in mind but he went beyond my better wishes he made me and Jason join eventually ... I have to tell I'm very lucky ... perhaps I'm looking forward to college but I'm sad that we have to go to college because with you, Mike, we felt very good ... perhaps you didn't fall in love before but you know very well what love is, I think that you know it better than everyone else, perhaps instinctively, but you know it at the higher level.

- Boys, when we get home ... we have to fill forms so that I'll send the forms by net tomorrow morning ... I'll send you a message with the responses of the college ... but after filling forms you have to go to bed as soon as possible, because you have to wake up at 5.00 tomorrow morning ...

At home, we filled the forms, that wasn't too difficult work then we said goodnight and went to bed. Next morning I had something to do, something real and necessary. I was so tired that I crashed in no more than five minutes. At 5.00 o'clock the alarm clock rang, I got up and set the breakfast, and the sandwiches to take away. When David and Jason got downstairs they were tired like me and even worse, they were sleeping standing up ... ate coffee,

milk, some toasts and went to work, we agreed they will not resign till the official response of the college ... Now I was alone with a lot of things to do ... I started typing forms into the related section of the college website, then I got the enlisting numbers, the room number in the dorm, the lectures hours, the number of health insurance and so on. I took note of everything in my computer and made also a short table to give them, then I send a message:

“Ok! College gave a response, everything is ok! Now you can resign, perhaps you could have to work for almost seven days ... and you have to. See you at nine. Now you are enlisted.”

I got no response, they had told me they had to leave the mobile in the locker room because they weren't allowed to use it during the work shift. I had to wait till 13.00, the time they usually called me. My life was changing they where going to go in two days ... in two days ... I got used to them and I had to let them go ... After last weekend our relationship had changed, and let them go was very hard for me, I loved them, I knew they had to go, I knew that this was the only right thing to do ... let them go ... but how difficult was to let them go ... but I only had to encourage them, with love, with respect, with tender feelings but I only had to encourage them to go ... this time I thought I had to make all this against my own feelings ... no! I was wrong because my real feelings pushed me to let them go, not for me but for them. I loved them ... but I loved them because they loved me, between us had started something special, we all where trustful with each other, something I never experimented before. I had only a few days to show them that I loved them ... I had at least to make them feel better when going to my home ... they had to feel like they where my sons and I was their father ... I remembered the rule I had established in order not to get involved ... I'm only Mike, not a father or something ... but now every thought about prudence was over, they had to remember this latest days with me ... my boys ... I had a dream a lot of years ago: meet a guy to make love with ... I met two lovely guys and I'm in love with them ... and what a different love ... You never can foresee what love may be ... you spend all your life dreaming about something you think is love and finally, and absolutely by chance, you get involved in something you never could even imagine ... not what you where hoping or dreaming about but something real, human, strong, something, you know it's really love ... the real love, very different from dreams ... love without certain rules, without defined rules ... love, only love ... upsetting every prevision, not something distressing, but something relaxing and nevertheless involving, something that helps you, that makes you feel alive another time ... You

can recognize that waiting time is over, that hope and dreams time is over and you are starting a love time ... I had to do something to make them feel happy ... yes, something to eat, something special ... and also ... also something to bring to college ... clothes? ... no ... it's too private ... a camera? Suitcases? ... Money? ... Yes, that's the problem, have I to tell them about money? Now they own money they earned at work ... but in just a few weeks it will finish ... how introduce the speech about money without harming their pride? There's a lot of problems to settle and a lot of questions to decide ... Then I remembered a quote from "Another country" by James Baldwin:

"there's nothing here to decide, there's everything to accept!"

Wonderful! I loved that astonishing book, a master work, I think the most moving book I read, the most important book in my life ... a sort of love school, something tender and touching ... And now I was going to experiment what I learned there, and actually my way to love was very similar to that of the Baldwin's novel. Nothing to worry ... I had only to level with them, but can two 21 years old guys understand what an old man may feel ... Yes they do ... I think they do ...

In the afternoon I cooked in the oven a big lasagna with mozzarella, meat balls, tomatoes sauce, and white sauce, and a lot of parmesan on top ... they had to sniff something different ... then a big salad with a lot of ingredients, from the walnuts to the oranges, from sun dried tomatoes to little mushrooms ... everything was set for 8.30. This time I was waiting a little more ... at 9.30 they didn't yet come back ... I was becoming a little worried, then the mobile rang ...

"Mike, don't worry ... we missed the bus, we'd tried to ask for a passage but everybody was gone ... we don't like hitch hiking and we caught the bus at nine ... we'll be there at 10.15 ... problems?"

"Not at all ... but you did right calling me ... I was just a little worried ... I'm waiting for you at 10,15 ... see you."

Chapter 6

Thoughts

At 10.15 the bell rang ...

- Hi Mike ... what a smell! Something special ... another master work of yours! I think when in the college we have to forger such things ... Mike ... I don't know what Jason thinks about ... but I'll stay here ... Naturally I'm kidding but ... I'm not at ease with going away ... not for the college but for leaving this house ... and you ... Mike ... I don't now what I have to say ... I'm a little sad today ... I'm starting to realize what college may mean ... we have to go away ... and that's not easy to accept.

- Mike, David is right ... college could be too hard for us ... we had a lot of time to stay together but in college it would be very different ... and we feel better here ...

- Whatever have you in mind?

- Nothing at all, we know we have to go, for us and also for you ... we'll certainly go but with an anger in the soul ... when we missed the bus we where afraid because you had to wait for us ... and now ... sniffing and looking around we can see that you are here and you are here just for us ... to wait for us, I was not used to someone waiting for me ... someone older than me, someone who don't set upon me, who waits for me, someone to talk to, to tell everything I have in mind because he will never reproach me ... we'll never find such things in college ... yes we are not alone because we are two, but stay with David is something different, sometimes we have our incomprehensions, our misunderstandings and sometimes we may also feel depressed because of it ... and no one is there to minimize all that ... we have to surpass all this with only our strength ... and this way it's much more hard

to do.

- Jason ... don't overestimate me ... I'm a poor man ... yes, I feel better because of you ... I feel I'm starting something new and important but I'm nothing more than a poor man ...

- Well ... right, but that's exactly what we need, someone real to help us to face the reality ... we have a lot of wishes and a lot of dreams in mind ... and you can help us to deal with real life ...

- That's very strange ... you can't even imagine how many wishes and dreams I have in mind ... I'm not able to help anyone, I'm searching for someone who could help me ... and just found out two guys who did it ... because you are helping me ... you are helping a lot ... right, when you'll go to college I'll be sad, I know that very well, but you aren't going away in order to get out from my life ... no, you are going to get away just to get back ... it's very different, we'll see probably every weekend if you like ... and there is the mobile ...

- Mike ... can I ask you about money, I'm sorry but it would be important.

- Do you prefer to open a little bank account?

- No ... we prefer get here every week and get a little money for the week ... this way at least we have to get back every week ... we thought 300\$ a week will be enough all inclusive, also the train ticket to get back ... is it possible?

- Yeah ... I thought 400\$ a week ... but I have to stop here.

- Good ... but 2400\$ a month for the college and 1600\$ a month for us are 4000\$ a month can you afford such expenses? ... it's about 50.000\$ a year and physics course lasts for five years ...

-I know but drying all my savings I can afford it ... but you have to calculate that depending on your results, college expenses can come less than 1000\$... and I suppose you can reach this goal ... one student out of three reaches this goal ... and it would be about 15000\$ saved ... you can help studying hard in order to get out of the college as soon as possible ...

- We'll do everything in order to save money and to study hard ... I promise What is this? ... Lasagna! Wonderful ...

- Seat down and have your dinner ... and what about your resignation?

- They accepted it right away ... from now on we don't have to go to work any more ... and about college?

- I think we have to go there and check everything out ... We

can go tomorrow morning, leaving about at 6.00 we'll be there in 60-70 minutes ... we can have a breakfast and then go to the college office to set everything up.

- Perfect ... tomorrow morning ...

- That's why you have to go to bed as soon as possible ... now it's quarter past eleven ... we can discuss everything while going there ... Boys ... you are starting a new life ... you have to be strong and clever ... achieving a good physics graduation you could find also a little job within the college ... and that could be in three years ... and now let me tell you something else ... I know very well that I have to let you build your own life, yes, I know that, but you have to take for sure that I will be always with you whenever you need something, no matter what. I'm not getting rid of you, only you have to build a better future ... and with a college degree you could find a better job ... I don't know what you are going to make with your life, neither I know what you, Jason, would make with your friendship with David ... you are two guys ... I think you'll stay together all life long but if things will go otherwise nothing will change for me ... each one of you means something special to me ... I hope you'll be a couple, but if things will turn otherwise you have to remember that my respect and my love will be always the same, I love you individually, not like a couple, you aren't something similar to a symbol of something I never got ... no! You are two guys I love because of what each one of you is ...

- Mike ... I'm worried about college life ... no one will cook for us over there ... no one will show his love to us ... and ... oh ... tomorrow we'll go there together all the three of us ... but eventually we'll stay alone over there ... that sounds bad ...

- You have to stay with each other, you have to help each other, you have to love each other ... Jason no matter if sexually or not ... love is something that can exist also without sex ... perhaps you could separate, your lives could take different ways ... nevertheless you have to love each other, love is respect, care, affection ... something that will never die ... Love isn't for now ... when you'll become older you'll much more need each other, if it's possible ... love means no loneliness, no depression, no bad feelings, means to love and to be loved, to let the other love you ... Now I understand I'm preaching far beyond the edge ... Boys ... come upstairs! It's bed time! You have to wake up at five tomorrow.

- Mike can I hug you?
- Certainly ... you can do everything you like ... Tanks, Jason, David ... the three of us hugging tightly ... that's something I'll never forget ... And now straight to bed ... go!

Clearly I was deeply involved in this new adventure ... will it go to an end or will it last forever, all life long? Now the college adventure ... then I don't know what, and this starting college adventure was even something hard to deal with ... I wondered if it was adequate to their real situation to live together in the same college, to study together the same subjects ... perhaps love needs distance. When you are alone you can be aware of your sadness, of your need of someone else, what hardly happens when you live with another person ... Is love something that grows up with loneliness and decreases when you really live with the person you love? Probably I'm building such thoughts castle on my own loneliness based culture ... but they are young ... perhaps they need the physical presence ... they hugged tightly when they met ... when you hag tightly the person you love there's something special, something physical that flows trough all your body and trough all your brain, you can feel physically the presence of the other, not sexually, but physically, you can hug the body of another person, it is like you were hugging the soul of that person ... they hugged me tightly ... it was wonderful. But now I have to go back to more concrete problems ... how to start college ... and how to catch that enormous amount of money ... I can't tell them I'm afraid of all this situation I'm going to afford ... Money is only a problem of mine ... yes money ... and I hope they will make everything at higher level to get graduated as soon as possible and also to save a lot of money ... are they aware of money problem? I think not, but I have to keep it for me ... Money is always an old people problem ... we have to catch money and they have to spend ... that's natural, at least it seams so natural ... Perhaps I could contact my former editor to agree for another book ... and now I have a lot of things to write about ... clearly changing nouns and situations ... but I have a lot of new stuff ... I'll try tomorrow ... now I only have to stay quiet and go to sleep ...

Next morning Mike woke up at four and couldn't get asleep any more. He started thinking about the day that was going to start ... about the trip to the university town, about the college, but much more about what he was going to tell Jason and David ... the evening before Mike had been satisfied of himself but he was not sure about what he was going to do or to tell next morning, he would never have broken what he had built the evening before ... Mike was happy for the image he gave them of himself but was afraid about what he was expected to do. What choice could be appropriate not to

destroy what the three of them just built?

To be easy to speak or to stay quiet? To show them my affection or to make an effort and keep away from too much intimacy, especially in public. To talk or not to talk, this is the problem! To talk to show them something they know very well or to keep silence, or at least a relative silence, to let them speak about whatever they like ... I don't like to give someone a bad image of myself ... a wrong image of myself ... no ... it isn't matter of an image ... I want them to love me ... I want them to be happy, with no worries and no fears at least about me ... perhaps I have to let them lead the situation ... I will never plan anything about my two guys, no more, they aren't kids so that I have to play a role for them ... no! They are real men ... like me ... they are much more younger nevertheless they are like me ... perhaps not facing the oldness and such things ... but facing the future they are certainly much more motivated to than me ... their time is the future, my is the past ... no ... my time is even the future, perhaps a near future, certainly I don't have to worry about what is going to be in 30 years ... but ten years and better, to make a wish, twenty could be a future possible even for an old man like me ... my two guys ... are sleeping together, they aren't making love ... no they aren't, ... or somehow they are ... yes probably somehow they are ... and somehow I'm too ... my two guys ... one is gay, the other doesn't even know himself whatever he is ... but does that make any difference? ... I don't think so ... Can I love them in two different ways because of their sexuality? All this sounds very absurd ... love is love ... and is always something reciprocal something you can't control at all. Love ... as old as I am I'm thinking about love ... what a strange situation ... but what a real situation. Well, it's time to get up!

I set the breakfast, David and Jason got downstairs.

- Hi, Mike ... how are you?
- Thanks, Jason, I'm fine and you ...
- I'm very upset ... we have to settle the college matter ... and then we have to really start it and it will not be matter of a week ... we have to get used to a new kind of life ...
- He's easy to get scared of everything ... but when he's in situation he gets away with everything ... Well, it's an issue we have

to confront at some point, no matter how unpleasant it could be

...

- Don't worry ... thousands of young people go to college every year and you are older than them ... I think you have better to worry about different things, you probably don't consider at all

...

- That is?

- I'm thinking about your new mates ... and about some aspects of college life ... you'll meet young people, nice people, people who can take you in a different environment ... your mates are young guys, they know nothing about you and they probably will be attracted to you, because you are older and because you are a couple, I think somehow they will realize it ...

- Well, clearly we have to keep away from trouble ... and to mind our own ...

- Yes, but I think there is another aspect you have to consider

...

- And what's it?

- I think your mates or at least someone of them could be attracted to you not only because they are nosy ... someone of them could be very interested in your behavior ... and you have to pay attention not only in order to keep your privacy and to avoid trouble ... but also not to harm them ... You are a couple, or at least you somehow are a couple, you aren't in closet to each other, but you could meet some guys that didn't come out to anyone at all ... that's why you have to let your mates take their time. If you only mind your own you can scare them, set them out, and I think you have to be careful ... do you understand?

- Yeah! ... that's a very uncommon advice ... you think someone of them ...

- Well I not only think but I'm sure there are a lot of gay people over there ... you have to consider that you'll find guys and girls attending lectures but the dorm is a guys-only dorm ... with about two thousand students ... you have to calculate about 10% are gay ... that makes about two hundred gay guys, ninety percent of them are in the closet and I think much more, they have to study hard ... right, but you can take for sure they are searching something different at College ...

- Do you mean sex?

- Perhaps it could be ... but I think a lot of other things, first friendship, then respect, maybe love ... but they are weak

like I was when I went to college many years ago. When you can see some fear signals, like hesitation, nervousness, aggressive responses, some insistence you would like to avoid, something strange whatever it could be ... be careful ... never react roughly, no hard words at all ... give time to time ... let things flag, make less intense ... it's never too late to make mistakes ... You have already passed your coming out ... they could be now in the middle of the wading ...

- What do you think would be better ... I mean in order not to harm them ...

- No rules about arguments such this one ... it's your choice ... you can also get wrong, yes, you can also scare or harm someone ... you have only to follow your feelings and your brain ... when you'll find something you don't understand you have to respect it ... you are going to be in the midst of a lot of young people ... a single smile can help, can avail, can make easier a lot of things ... and when someone will flash you a smile, you have to give back a smile or better to tell something friendly or nice. Remember, when people smile at you they probably are searching for love ... not for sex but for love, and people that need love, at least must be respected ...

- Well, Mike, and how to distinguish nosy people smiling from people who really need love? ... Perhaps I'm rude but I think no one could distinguish them just at the beginning, don't you agree?

- Certainly ... you have to be mindful that nosy people spread over and you can find them everywhere, even without recognizing them ... yes ... first take care of yourselves ... you're right ...

Breakfast was over, we jumped on the car, David was the driver and Jason sat near him on the front seat ... I was in the back seat, and conversation went on while we were going on the highway, but somehow not so easily as I'd have hoped. My arguments were too theoretical and abstract, but they were rather thinking about something concrete ... and finally I was going to get back in some hours they instead had to face the real college life, their perspective was very different ...

I felt just at that moment how far reality could be from my dreams and also from what I used to think as my duty or my perspective on life ... I was an old man, they were young guys, between us years dug an abyss, something nobody could even think to overstep, no matter whether or not you like it ... the distance can't really be reduced ... starting something and come

to the end are very different things ... that's why, probably, David and Jason seemed to be, or I have to say better where really in a different world. Something frightened me ... was I really able to understand the two guys? If I had asked them this question they would have answered certainly ... probably ... yes ... but I would never ask them such questions that belong only to me ... old people questions ... And I? What could I answer myself? Yesterday probably I'd have answered yes ... but today my answer is very different ... I clearly can't understand them ... I think I can play a role ... not pretending to play but really playing my role, but was that for coherence or for love? They are to me what I pretend they are ... no one can ever get into the soul of another human being ... neither can I ... My life, until some days ago, was only mine, only internal ... but now I'm very perplexed ... I got a flash of something new, I thought it was love, but it was only a flash of something ... was it love? Can I at my age experiment something that is really love? Or I'll only pretend to see somewhere love flashes in order to feel alive? Was I only pretending to play a role that involved something similar to love, just to keep away from loneliness and desperation? ... Probably the guys needed really me to tell them something encouraging, to afford expenses they couldn't afford ... or, yes I can tell also ... to love them, or just to find someone who pretends to love them ... because is there any difference, on the side of the beloved person, between loving and pretending to love? Love isn't something emotional, love is a duty, something that consists in acting like you where in love ... is there any difference between loving and acting like you where loving someone? And really I think there isn't any difference at all ... if loving consists in doing everything in order to let someone feel beloved with enthusiasm and participation ... and acting like you where loving someone consists in doing exactly the same things because of duty ... I love them ... I have to love them ... I must love them ... perhaps there is a difference but only from my point of view, I certainly don't have to worry about such differences that involve only myself ... I have to hide this thoughts and to keep them for myself ... loving my boys or at least avoiding to hate them, because sometimes when love can't grow up it becomes hate ... hate that is confused with love, that is hidden under a coat of love ... but hate really exists, not hate because of the guys ... no ... hate because of the concrete situation ... I'd liked it to happen many years ago when this dudes hadn't even been born ... at that time everything could have happened, today is no more my time ... gay or not I'm going to my end, I have nothing to start just something to complete ...

Suddenly I asked them:

- Do you think we can really get in touch with each other? Be-

cause I think we can't... somehow we can't.

Jason looked at me right in my eyes ...

- Somehow we can't ... but somehow we can ... we somehow need you ... we have really something to share ... perhaps we can't understand everything now but we need you, we need exchanging ideas, getting your experiences, knowing how an older man can afford his problems ... don't mind if I spoke about you as an older man, we need you just like an older man ... we too are somehow worried about how to get in touch with you ... it's something we aren't already used to, ... no ... never think you aren't able to get in touch with us ... you are much older than our parents ... but we prefer to stay with you ... we feel much more free and also much more the object of your thoughts ... you know how to take care of us, respecting us ...

- Jason ... things are probably much more complicated ... I think my good feelings dried years ago ... I'm not really involved in your story ... I told a lot of things ... I promised a lot of things like I was really involved but I'm not ... I'll certainly do everything I told ... but I take it for duty, for gay duty, if you like, but for duty ... I'm not really involved ... I think I pretend to be involved but I'm not ... do you understand what the problem is?

- Mike ... do you remember James Baldwin's novel "Another country"?

- Of course ... yes ... I know that book by heart ...

- Do you remember the quote: "There is nothing here to decide but everything to accept?"

- Of course ... I remember ...

- Well there is nothing here to understand or to think about but everything to accept ...

- Yeah ... perhaps it's true ... I'm confused, I don't know what to say ... an old man in a strange situation ...

- No ... nothing strange ... love isn't strange ... or love is always strange ...

- ... nothing to decide ... everything to accept ... right ... when I read that sentence it seemed to me like I could accept it as something that belonged deeply to me ... but between reading a book and deal with real life there's an enormous difference ... that sentence sounds today very different to me ... probably you take it now just as I took it many years ago ... you are something

like myself when I was your age ... If you had met me like I was many years ago, probably we had had the same feelings, the same thoughts ... but between me and you there is an entire life you don't know at all ... something that I could share with you but you probably couldn't understand at all because it's matter of too many years ago ... I think I envy your youth ... I think old people envy young people ... It could seam something bad ... but probably it's the truth ... I would have met you when I too was young ... but I'm no more ...

- Mike ... how were you, when you where our age?

- I can't even remember ... probably ... I wasn't like you are now ... no ... when I was young everything was different ... probably because I was different ... but, yes, I think a lot of things where really different ... At that time talking about being gay was impossible ... you couldn't even think about ... I had friends ... yes I had also a thing for someone of them ... but they had their own life ... girls, dating ... and so on ... at that time everybody was straight acting no matter if gay or not ... was a general rule and you couldn't even think to brake the rule ... I used to keep out of my friends ... yes, sometimes we went to the parties, sometimes to the cinema, but I didn't like to stay with them too much ... the less we used to know each other the less I was frightened about being detected ... and being detected at that time was a very unpleasant affair ...

- Did you ever fall in love with someone?

- Yeah ... it happened ... but he wasn't a gay guy ...

- Too bad ...

- No! ... I think if he had been a gay guy it couldn't have been better ... I think he loved me ... his way, clearly ... we spent a lot of time together ... chatting about nothing on the phone ... or in the car ... I was happy ... I think we where happy ... something tender, honest, clear ... something absolutely particular ...

- Did he know?

- Certainly and there was no need to tell him anything ... he told me that this way he was aware I had a better reason to love him really ...

- And now where is this guy? ... I think he's very extraordinary ...

- Yes, really he is ... where? He went to Europe many years ago ... he married, had children ... I think now he's happy ...

- But are you still in touch?
- Yes, we are ... I never call him but he calls me one or two times a week ... and I think he's happy to hear me ...
- How many years it lasted?
- It never came to an end, I think it will last all life long ... when he married he didn't stop to call me at least one or two times a week.. and so on for years ... for his children I was something like an uncle ... his wife was, I think, a clever woman ...
- Do you think he told his wife about you?
- No ... certainly he didn't ... not in order to hide something from his wife ... no ... only to avoid me to feel out of place ...
- Mike ... is this story true?
- Certainly ...
- I thought you could have created it for me ... there's something similar to my story with David ...
- Yes ... while I was speaking I taught the same ... but no ... the story is really true ... and I can assure you that some way we were in love and we are even now ... we were friends ... but very best friends ... you know when you feel the love of another person? Sometimes when he calls me we speak like lovers ... as old as we are ... he told me: I need you ... I really need you ... I was looking forward to this minutes of conversation ... I really love you Mike ... you know very well ... Just last year he's been sick for months and I flew to Europe because I thought he was going to die ... he was affording a very bad time, in the hospital with the oxygen mask, he wasn't always conscious ... when he was aware of himself he opened his eyes and looked straight at me and started crying ... I was there holding his hand and repeating: you'll get out of all this trouble, I'm sure you'll get out ... and I was terribly afraid about my own words because they seemed too much inappropriate to a similar situation ... I tried Lord not to get him away ... it would have been terrible if he would have gone ... but month after month he became more and more healthy and finally doctors told us he was ready to go home ... Jason I think that was the better day for me ... three weeks later I was newly at home ... I think that some way my life was happy because of him ... like now I'm happy because of you ... You know? When someone loves you ... then you became very different ... then you are happy, no matter sex or whatever Love is love ...
- How are you Mike?

- Fine thanks ...
- Did black clouds go away?
- I think yes ... Thanks ... Jason ... you have something really similar to my friend ... he used to deal with me the same way ... and you, David, are now experimenting something I knew many years ago ... boys ... I think you are really in love ... like I was at that time ... because if you are in love you are happy and I think you are really happy ... Nothing is better than loving and being loved ...
- But when we'll feel depressed with no one around to let us be happy ... I think it would be hard to deal with our feelings ... and I think you too feel at least just a little depressed without us ... Mike ... I noticed that you avoid every physical contact with us ... isn't it?
- Yeah ... it is ...
- I think you are worried not to scare us about something that could sound like something sexual ... but ... perhaps we might need also holding hands ...
- Jason ... I don't know what to say ... perhaps you are right but I'm really not used to such things ... there is something risky ... I have to set rules and to follow what I stated ... I'm not so sure about myself that I can feel free to hold our hands ... I'd like it very well ... but I must keep the distance ... avoid whatever could be too much involving ... I have to keep my feelings under control ... you have to trust me and I must respect my rules ... you are for me something religious, something I have to worship ... you are two guys that trust me ... is there something more important? ... If I have to love you I have also to respect the rules ...
- Well ... if that's true why did you let us hug you?
- That's a different thing ... I will never stop you ... that's very different ...
- And if I would hug you right here and now?
- You have not to ... it wouldn't be something spontaneous ... no I wouldn't accept it ... it could sound strange to me ... it sounds strange to me ...
- Jason ... tell Mike about what we were discussing last night ...
- Oh ...
- What is it?
- Nothing important ... just about the remote possibility you

could ask for something more physical ...

- I don't understand ...

- David told me if you had asked him something sexual he perhaps could have done it ... and perhaps I would have done the same ... it would be like a love exchange ... something possible ...

- Jason ... please hold your tongue ... now ... fortunately you are going to land to the university ... far from me ... and I think that this is the best thing in order not to get out of rules ... These things are totally out ... remember it's not because you are much or less complying that I keep away from such things ... it's only by my choice ... The fantasy is something very different from real life ... I would never waste our friendship, or whatever it is, just to fulfil what is no more than a simple fantasy that I have better to keep for myself or even better to delete at all ... and I think perhaps I'll delete it at all, honestly I'm not yet at this point but I'm not so far from it ... it's a very difficult problem to deal with but our family, so to tell, it's too much important and I'm really aware of it.

- Mike ... I apologise for my stupid thoughts ...

- No! You don't have to apologise for nothing at all ... the problem is that these thoughts aren't really so stupid ... I think they are very important ... but I have to tell you whatever I think about ... remember, Jason ... I think I can feel free to tell you whatever I have in mind only if you feel free to tell me whatever you have in mind ... never avoid anything just because you think it could sound strange to me ... And if you find out there is something I could hide from you because I think ... I think you aren't able to understand it ... How could you react? No! Nothing to hide ... no more ... we ... you and me have a lot of experience about hiding something from people ... we never have to hide something from each other ... it's not a question of kindness or urbanity ... no! Nothing similar between us ... we have to feel with each other just as we feel with ourselves ... I don't know what you think about but now I'm experimenting a freeing sensation ... nothing to hide ... speak clearly about everything ... and then, I'm an older man and you are young guys but I have to consider you exactly as I consider myself, you aren't too much young to understand me ... no! You are able to understand everything ... good or bad ...

I was going to add "at least I think you are able".

- ... but not! Such expression would mean that perhaps you are not ... and now I'm aware you really are ... and I think you have to think that I'm able to understand whatever you could tell me ... otherwise there could be no love at all, no friendship, nothing at all ... We have to trust each other otherwise we have better take each his own way ... isn't it?

- Mike ... now you can get angry, if you like, but I have to tell you that I feel a little ... I don't know how to say ... too strange, too inappropriate ... shortly too stupid ... David pretends he's asleep ... and I feel so stupid because I told you what we told each other last night ... I had better to keep everything for me ... because he's pretending to sleep ... this way he lets me explore the ground ... and you, Mike, are just too much assertive ... I can appreciate what you told me, but I think something sensual is too much necessary to love someone, but it seems you don't care about it at all ... David and I aren't lovers ... yes, but we have some physical contact ... isn't it David? David ... wake up! ... sometimes he hugs me or holds my hand or caresses my hair ... not too much ... never too much ... but he knows I need it and he does it for me ... I know very well that such things are hard to take under control for him but nevertheless he knows I need it and he complies ... Mike, don't you understand me?

- Jason ... oh my God ... you are terrible ... I can imagine how you can stress the poor David ... and you are now making the same with me ... No! ... You are wrong ... there isn't any theoretical problem ... David is David and I'm Mike ... you can obviously get in touch with him the way you like better, you are two young guys ... you can build your life together ... sex or whatever, you are searching for love and you'll find it ... but I'm an older man ... boys ... you can't understand ...

- You told us just five minutes ago that there was nothing we weren't able to understand ... didn't you?

- Right ... I did ... Jason you are a little fox! ... but why are we keeping on talking about sex or whatever ... there are a lot of things to talk about ...

- Are you worried about speaking about sex? ... yes ... you are ... that sounds strange to me, I'm not scared at all ... probably I would never make love with a male but absolutely I'm not worried about sex discussions ... but you are scared, Mike ... I think you are ...

- Jason ... you are terrible and I'm looking forward to starting academic year ... this way I could be safe and not worried at all ... you are very terrible ... but don't you know that for an aged man such things are out of touch ... don't you understand what's the difference? ... yes ... right, you are young ... David is young ... but I'm not ... we are gay all the three of us but nevertheless our life is very different, my sun is going to set down ... and you are going to start ... do you know the difference? ... became and old man ... dealing everyday wit the idea of getting ill ... of being able to face the death ... that's what you don't understand at all ... you only think about sex or not sex ... sorry, about love ... oh ... yes ... it's much more high level matter ... but you never think that time flows and you can't stop it ... I was young years ago but I'm no more ... what's my future? the future I'm going to really face? ... do you understand what I'm trying to tell you? ...

- Somehow ... perhaps ... but ... perhaps I don't really understand ... really ... I think I don't understand at all ... probably it's impossible ... well ... I feel stupid pretending I can understand ... but neither you are able to understand us ... perhaps you remember something that happened to you years ago ... but sex isn't eventually your real life now ... that means it's not your real life ... because what was real in the past is no more real now ... perhaps neither love is your real life now ... I think I'm too rough but it's what I have in mind just now ... sorry Mike ... I wasn't allowed ... sorry ...

- ... Jason ... I don't know what to say ... I'm really perplexed ... probably you are right and I can't even feel something similar to love ... because I'm too much deep in my thoughts ... too much selfish ... I'm pretending that I love you but perhaps I'm very far from all this ... I thought it by myself ... you entered an open door ... you probably are right ... well ... and then? What to do next ... so are things ... good ... I only have to accept ... I can't change anything.

- I think you can ... something at least ... certainly you can ...

- I don't understand ... is there something I missed?

- No ... but I have to ask a question ...

- Go ahead ...

- Not now ... if I need it ... could I touch you? Hag you? Take you hand? ... This way you can't even think whether I could

like it or not ... it would be my choice, only my choice ...

- Obviously you can make everything you like ... but I'd like better not ... you have nothing to experiment ... I love you ... at least I try ...

- Yes, right, but you take it as a must ... and this sounds strange to me ... you aren't really free, you don't even feel free ... and I have to say I'm not totally at ease with you ... I feel like you where keeping me away ... I don't like the idea of scaring you ... But you could make something better for us not keeping us away ... because you do ... you really do ... with love ... with care at least, but you really do ... Did you ever thought about taking my hand or David's, to hag us tightly, to make us feel you really exist ... yes ... it would be more difficult to deal with all that stuff but we don't mind at all ...

- Jason ... no ... perhaps you can understand, perhaps you can't even tolerate my behaviour that probably seams to you something that comes from fear or whatever ... but I have to go on this why ... I must to go on this way ... you are a couple ... really you are ... I'm a friend ... a gay friend ... a gay old friend ... and if I have to preserve this strange kind of love I must keep on this way ... no matter what your feelings could be now ... no ... we must work for the future, for your future, probably also for mine ... but it's different ... it's very different ... Jason, if I had found guys like you when I was young, things would have been different ... but I didn't ... if it had happened probably my life would have been completely different ... but nothing similar happened ... that time was time of fear ... of loneliness ... do you understand how your freedom, how little you can consider it, is different from the absolute closeting of that times? But that years where my years ... and now my time could never restart ...

- Why are you holding our youth against us? What did we against you? We too will come to face oldness if God wants, if now we are young you can't blame upon us ... can't you discover what's common between us? ... I think there's a lot in common, why are you trying to emphasize your oldness ... to hold you oldness against us?

- Jason ... you probably can't even understand how difficult it could d be for Mike to deal with all the situation ... no ... we have to understand ... and now we aren't able to ... it will take time ... I think college is really a good idea ... just in order to

accept ourselves ... we have to experiment what it could be to need Mike ... and he has to do the same with us ... we have to get used to each other ... step by step ... we too have to learn how to love him ... and to use too much words isn't useful, to build a lot of thoughts, of theories of abstract reasoning could only distress us ... understanding has nothing to do with thoughts, to understand is a matter of love, not of brain ... Mike ... why are you still? Did we hurt you?

- I have nothing to hold against you ... nothing at all ... neither my oldness ... and, right, chatting a lot about such questions may only unnerve you ... you are right ... it's no more really than speaking only about myself what as nothing to do with love ... I'm not used to love things ... but I have to learn ... really it will take its time ... but ... I don't think that your going to the college will help ... no ... to get used to each other we need to stay together ... to feel free ... to make mistakes ... just as I did two minutes ago ... I'm not perfect, I'm a real man, with a lot of ... how could I tell you ... with a lot of doubts, of ambiguities, I'm selfish ... I'm really selfish like people used to loneliness, I never had children, or relatives at all ..., only myself ... and you to deal with an older man like I'm is very boring ... I'm what I'm ... yes, selfish, why not ... and you have to take me like I'm ... You can reproach me, if you have to, but never be angry with me ... I can make a lot of mistakes ... but a can't help it ...

- ...

- Jason ... how are you?

- I feel really strange ... I had in mind that it could have been easier than that ... I feel like a stupid who presumes to understand everything and isn't even able to really let you tell what you have in mind ... I feel like a stupid boy ... Mike I would never ...

- Stop! ... No! you have nothing to add? Did you hear what David told just now? ... Never too much words ... I love you Jason ... you have to take it for granted ... and now you have to think only about college ... you have to get rid of all the thoughts that aren't about college ... you can take everything else for granted ... I'm just waiting for you to come back home graduates ... right Jason?

- Right ... but I'm afraid I couldn't achieve the goal ... I think it could be too much difficult for me ...

- Nothing is too much for you ... David and I will support you anyway ...
- But I'm scared all the same ...
- No matter scared or not you have to face all the problems college will imply ... and let me tell you clearly: all the students face the same problems and all of them are scared starting college ... you aren't going to start nothing such strange or difficult ... it's a normal thing for guys your age ... isn't it?!
- Right ... it is ...

Our journey was going to the end, we went out of the highway and ten minutes after we entered the campus ...

Chapter 7

Need of love

It was 7.00 o'clock and we had two hours to spend waiting for the admission office to open ... we went to the campus cafeteria ... something decent, non really exceptional ... then we did a tour of the campus ... there was a list of student organizations recognized by the student government association: Geography, Architecture, Delta Sigma Pi Business Fraternity, Theatre, Pool Sharks, Sigma Nu fraternity, Volley Club ... whatever you like ... but a gay community ... about 2.300 students and no gay club ... but it's a coeducational University ... about 1.200 male students ... at least one hundred gay students ... and no gay club ...

- Guys ... noting about gay life here ... you can find everything but gay association ... it sounds a little strange ... you must be careful ... isn't it?
- Yeah ... You're right ... Mike ... I don't feel at ease here ...
- Yeah ... I understand but you have no choice ... It will be hard to deal with but you must learn as soon as possible how to behave in this campus ... let's go to the dorm ...

While we were going there, the conversation went about gay organizations ...

- Mike, what do you think about gay organizations?
- Gay rights associations?
- Yeah ...
- Gay-organizations, in my opinion ... right, made something good letting people understand that gay people exist ... showing gay people in the streets ... but I think some of them are much interested in something else ... in politics, in making money with parties and public happenings ... somehow in using gay people

for different purposes ... I don't like such associations ... they perhaps make the gay situation even worst ... because people commonly associates their shows in the streets with being gay ... but sometimes they go much more ahead ... naked happenings in the streets ... using scandal like an instrument against something ... and this way there are a lot of people that could never understand that gay isn't something abnormal ... like walking naked in the streets ... gay is something normal ... but this way people will never associate the gay name wit normality ... and I think that would be something wrong ... completely wrong ...

- But there are gay associations that aren't this way ... I got one in Canada ... yes about an adult site ... but everything was public except writing in the discussion board ... on this board a lot of people posted regularly ... and something very interesting ... nothing to do with pornography ... One of them got sick and needed money for a surgery ... and they paid for him ... immediately and went there to support him and his family ... they prayed Lord for him a lot ... hoping for him to recover immediately ... he was going to die just before the surgery ... and his friends where really destroyed ... then ... after five days ... his brother posted a message that surgery was over and he was recovering quickly ... They made a party ... and put pictures on the board and they were really happy ... such things are real ... really happen ...

- Certainly ... and it happens when there isn't any other purposes in gay associations ... but when politics or money are mixed to gay world ... the mix risks to be explosive ... I think.

- You're right ... you're right ...

We went there ... it was quite a good room wit a private bathroom with a shower ... two beds, two desks, two little closet with drawers ... they where quite pleased ... no people around ... just something for them ... only for them ... we unpacked and set everything to the right place ... it was easy ... each of them got a key ... a security key ... I was doing everything as it was for me ... but I was aware I had to go in the evening ... and never go back there ... or at least only exceptionally ... their new life was going to star and my old life was going to restart ... what was going on was the beginning for them and was the end for me ... the end? ... no, not exactly ... my life really changed into something new ... I had firs of all to earn money ... a lot of money ... and for a retired man like me it was very difficult to get newly in touch with my old editors to propose a new book ...

and what a book? ... One of my usual love books ... or something new, something absolutely new? It was a problem? How would my old editor accept a new line? Was such a choice according to the marketing? And also ... had I better to keep my feelings for myself, for David and Jason ... or had I to write thinking also to the people, the gay people? The young gay people and also the older gay people ... I newer proposed to my editor a gay novel ... I wrote five or six ... yes but for me ... only for me ... and published nine novels about being two ... in the straight meaning ... even those novels were really gay novels ... but no one read them in the right way ... this time I had to get out myself ... as I gay writer ... what I'm ... I'll choose to write not for the public but for gay people ... at least I can understand them a little better ... and perhaps they could also read something real about gay life ... my story ... my real story that was damned to finish with my life ... but I have something to tell gay people ... I have to tell them that our world is a good one and no one has to be worried about being gay ... in the world people make a lot of horrible things to gay people ... but we never will be defeated ... Well, that's my way to keep in touch with David and Jason ... that's how I have to put in practice what I learned from them ... All this thoughts were already well defined in my mind ... and perhaps I would face also gay-organizations ... because I'm non at ease with some of them ...

Eleven o'clock ... everything was set up ... forms had been signed ... university documents had been delivered to David and Jason ... nothing else lasted to do ... we had to go for lunch at 13.00 ... out of the campus ... we could have booked also to the campus self service ... but I had to keep out ... Campus wasn't really crowded ... we went to see the Physics building ... an enormous building that smelt strange ... like paraffin or oil ... courses hadn't started yet and David and Jason had four days to learn everything about campus life ... My God ... they were scared ... too big buildings, too formal service, everything out of their usual range ... The dorm like a hotel ... the laboratories like something strange ... the library like an enormous hall where an unreal silence reigned ... and a few people moved without a word ... My God ... they were scared ... we got out of the library ...

- Mike ... I never would have imagined such things ... it's terrifying ...

- Jason ... no ... it's all normal ... this is an university ... a lot of smoke ... a little roast ... you have to remember that students that come here come from high school ... therefore you have nothing to be worried about ...

- But it seems the culture temple ...
- No ... culture has nothing to do with awards, or grades or colleges ...
- I don't think so ...
- Culture has only to do with how you can deal with the world ... culture is respect and love ... sometimes respect and love that are very hard to accept ... when experiences are different, social conditions are different ... feelings are different ... it's very hard to respect and love someone else ... it's not a spontaneous thing ... you must be training yourself, you must force yourself ... if you don't you have nothing to do with culture no matter if you got a PHD or whatever ... clearly ... here you can study physics at an higher lever ... yes it's also the temple of culture somehow ... but of a specific culture not of the Culture with capital letter ... I'm very rhetoric today ... sorry, this is a strange day for me ... Jason, David ... tell a word ... perhaps you aren't at ease ... well ... I'm sorry ... My God, we are spending this way the last day together ... no ... I'm not at ease now ... perhaps I have to go straight now ...
- We are not used to such things ... David and I ... yeah ... I'm not at ease ... it seems that everything we did till now is going to vanish ... also our feelings with each other seam vanish ... word after word ... it's terrible ... it's physically terrible ... it's strange ... I don't like such feelings ... when we were at the lake everything seamed to go well ... now ... the atmosphere is very different ...
- Well I think I'm going now ...
- Mike ... no! ...
- You're right ... no ...
- Thanks ... I don't know why but I can't help crying ... it's terrible ... it's terrible ...
- What's terrible?
- You told we where a family ... but we are not ... we are only strangers to each other ... it was too much difficult for you to deal with us ... that's why you send us here ... to get reed of us ... yes clearly a quite fairly way to get read of us ... but what have you in common with us ... you are an older man ... you hate young people because young people remind you of your totally wasted life ... yeah we are young today ... and you'll be never more ... that's true ... David ... I will never stay in this campus spending his money ... his money not our money

... He's buying us ... is not a friend of us ... I don't stand him any more ... we are going to become his slaves ... don't you understand? David! ... I hate him ... what are you waiting for ... you have to choose or with me or with him ... perhaps we can catch some job ... but our job ... David! You have to choose ... now! or nevermore!

I started walking away ... sadly, slowly ... Jason cried and yelled out against David. David wasn't even able to answer ... I was terrified ... but kept walking away ... nothing happened ... I turned the corner ... I was destroyed ... What had I to do? ... Never get involved in someone else's life ... I repeated to myself ... I wasn't even sad about myself ... a lot of money wasted ... for nothing ... and even worse I had destroyed the love story of David and Jason ... two gay guys ... yes ... but how far from me ... just another country, another world ... a world I wasn't even allowed to approach ... their world not mine ... I waited for a few minutes but nothing happened ... I would have got back ... but there was a total silence now ... everything had ended up in a minute ... then I got back really but no one was there, the guys had vanished, the silence was total ... I felt devastated ... got back to my car and went home. My God ... I was upset ... I told them how difficult it could be to respect and to love someone very far from you ... two gay guys that hated me ... how was it possible? ... then I remembered that I had their mobile numbers ... had I to call Jason ... perhaps in order to scare him even more ... had I to try to recover the situation or to let them go their way? ... I entered the highway ... my brain was upset ... I was searching for something wrong clearly from their own point of view because from my own I had nothing to hide from myself ... what could have let the bomb burst? It was a money problem? Or a dignity problem? Or both of them? And was there something to do? When at home I went upstairs to the green room, that one of Jason and David ... everything was empty. Steps echoed in the late afternoon ... everything was in perfect order ... the bed ... the single bed ... it seemed like David and Jason never entered the room ... only an unusual amount of food in the fridge reminded me that it wasn't a dream ... only the food in the fridge and two numbers in my mobile ... nothing else ... I was hoping to receive a call from them ... but I was hoping also just the contrary ... life has its rules and I broke that rules ... everything is mechanical, no matter what you want or what you like, as usually there is nothing here to decide, there's everything to accept ...

The night came, my soul was empty, an absolute quiet invaded me, physically and emotionally ... my old life restarted with all its emptiness and its usual

nothingness ... I only had to come back to myself ... my guys were out not at college as I, not they, planned ... where were they now? I wasn't even allowed to ask ... they had gone their way ... and all my getting afraid of their future was worth nothing ... they had gone ... perhaps not David ... but he had to go to follow his friend and he did exactly so ... not a word to add ... he had to go ... and Jason that shy boy ... what was he hiding in his soul? ... Fear, I think just fear ... fear of everybody ... I probably scared him ... He perhaps couldn't even imagine everything was real ... yes probably I was getting reed of them sending them to the college ... but ... had I really thought about buying their souls? ... No ... I think I never did ... but he was scared all the same ... no matter my thoughts ... only his thoughts where worth not mine ... and I never asked really them about their future ... the telephone rang ... my heart skipped a beat but it was only a friend of mine to ask me to a wedding party ... I told him I was sick and I had to go to the hospital to take care of my high blood pressure ... but ..., I had to ad this "but", but my doctor told me I could get back home in two or three days ... When I hung up I was perplexed ... I never lied to a friend ... I wasn't a liar ... I only had to stop that conversation, I wasn't able to stand it ... I had to go back to Jason ... was he really hating me? For fear or whatever else but was he really hating me? ... And David that poor David who was desperate ... the mobile rang ... David!!! ... Oh my God!

- Hallo Mike ... we are in our room at college ... Jason has been crying desperately all the day long ... I'm very concerned and worried ... it was impossible to calm him down ... he cried desperately, shivered ... Mike ... I think he's not able to control himself ... I never saw him this way ... Mike, I fear for his mental health, he seams panic-stricken ... I'm worried he could commit suicide ... Mike ... come here ... come here Mike ... now ... immediately ... perhaps it could help ... perhaps it could help ... now Mike ... now ... I'll call you ... I have to go now ...

- I'll get there as soon as possible ...

I jumped off the bed and three minutes lather I was newly riding my car ... I had to go there as soon as possible ... I had to go there ... and I was frightened ... how to help ... was Jason really aware of himself? ... He was probably stressed ... he had a lot of problems to deal with ... He wasn't a boy ... he was a real man with all his problems ... a man who was never a boy ... a desperate man ... my brain started melting ... but I

had to control myself ... I got finally out of the highway and turned to the campus ... David called back ...

- Where are you?
- Just parking the car ...
- I can see you from my window ... stop in the hall ... you are not allowed to come to our room till seven o'clock ... nevertheless I could ask the receptionist to let you go ... you only have to show him your documents ... ok?
- Ok.

A second later the receptionist's telephone rang ... he nodded me to approach the desk and give him documents ... then he put my license into a mail box with the number 891 and gave me a form to sign with all the rules visitors had to follow ... then showed me the lift and told only "eighth floor". I nodded him back and entered the lift ... while rising my heart skipped another beat ... David was waiting for me on the door ... he let me in and closed the door. Jason was on his bed fully clothed ... but his clothes seemed dirty and moody ... his eyes were closed ... I took hold of his hand ... he instinctively withdrew the hand but then he opened his eyes and started crying and gripped my hand tightly ... I think heaven can't be so much different from that moment ... then I caressed his forehead and his hair ... he was going to tell something but he nodded to be quiet because it was a quarter past five ... he nodded back ... David sat down nearby ... Jason started newly crying, I took hold of the tip of his nose and he flashed me his sweetest childish smile. Not a single word was spoken till seven o'clock then the bell rang in the corridor and some noise started being heard ...

- I'll wait for you down the hall and we'll go for breakfast ... take your time ...

Ten minutes later they were in the hall ... shaved and smiling ... the receptionist gave me back my license and we went for breakfast ... Jason in the middle, David on his right and I on his left. The night, an horrible night was over and I was tired as hell ... the coffee helped, I would have had another coffee but I didn't ... my heart beat was regular as if nothing had happened at all ... Jason was silent ... I had to break that silence ...

- Jason ... I'm happy now ...
- Me too ... me too, really ...
- I don't know what to tell ...
- Mike ...
- Yes ...

- Can you stay here a couple of days?
- Certainly ... no problem ... -
- Good ... Mike ... am I mad ... something pathological? Tell me the truth ...
- You need love ... all of us need love ... and am I something pathological when I can't even live without Jason and David? ... Certainly ... somehow I'm something pathological ... right ... but I need love ... nothing else ... I need love ... just like you Jason ... just like you ...
- Sometimes I feel like I were upset by your presence ... I need love ... yes but I don't even understand what love could be ... it's hard to me to accept you can love us ... love not lust after ... just love ...
- Jason ... I don't know if ...
- No, Mike, no! Just love ... nothing else ... loving David or at least be friends with David is something usual ... I can understand or I think I can understand why he loves me ... he can at least pursue his own purpose ... but you Mike ... what are you searching for? Why are you here now? ... I had to put you down yesterday ... I had to ... but then I felt terrible ... Why? Do you know why? ... Just stay here a couple of days ... and I'll find out why ... I think I'll find out ...

THE END